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

ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

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THE ROSE AND THE KEY.

CHAPTER XXXVI. IN THE GALLERY.

"WHAT a beautiful clear evening it is," said Miss Max, doing her best to find a topic. "The stars look almost as brilliant as they do in a frost. You have come a long way, Mr. Marston, I dare say."

"Coming here, it seemed nothing," he answered, with a look at the young lady.

"It was a very fine night, also, when we took leave after our little tea-party at Cardyllion, do you remember?"

"I do remember," he said very gently.

"You'll turn up at the ball, of course?" answered Miss Max.

"That depends on who are going," he answered. "Is there the least chance of your being there?"

"Who? I?" with a little laugh, said Miss Maud, to whom, nearly in a whisper, the question had been addressed.

"I think that was a cruel question," she continued, "that is, if you remembered what I said, when we last spoke about this ball."

"I remember every syllable you said, not only about this ball," he answered, "but about everything else we talked of. I ought not to have asked, perhaps, but changes, you know, are perpetually occurring, and you, I think, forget how very long it is since I last saw you."

"The interval has brought no change for me—no good change, I mean," she answered. "I shall be rather busy to-night, and tired enough in the morning, I dare say. My gay cousin, Maximilla, is going, or coming, shall I say, as we are here, to the ball with a young lady whose dress I have seen." And here Miss Maud laughed very merrily. "And I shall have, I think, to help her maid to put it on her."

"Maud, will you be quiet?" said the old lady, very much vexed. "I—I—well, it is very disagreeable."

"It vexes her my telling it; but it is quite true," whispered Maud. "I must see that young lady's maid in ten minutes."

"You don't mean to say you are going so soon?" exclaimed Mr. Marston.

"I must leave this in about ten minutes," said Maud.

"Well, I believe you must," put in Miss Max; "and so must I, for that matter. And, Mr. Marston, your sister is to be at the ball; she is coming with the Tinterns; of course you will look in? And I really want to introduce you to a very particular friend, and you must look in; if you don't, I give you my word, I'll never answer a note of yours again as long as I live."

"Under that threat I shall certainly turn up," he said.

He glanced at Maud, and thought she looked a little sad.

"Where will you be when the ball commences?" he inquired, with a hope that he might have divined the cause of those looks. "Here?"

"Certainly not. Oh, no!"

"And, surely—I have so much to say. It is two months since I saw you, and you can't think how I have longed for this little meeting, and lived, ever since, upon the hope of it. You can't think of reducing it, after all, to a few minutes!"

Miss Max understood, though she did not hear the terms of it, this ardent murmur close to Maud's pretty ear, and she said, good-naturedly:

"I have not had time yet to read old Heyrick's letter, and I really must finish it, Mr. Marston. I know you'll excuse me for a moment."

And this spacious document, which she

luckily had about her, Miss Medwyn unfolded, and proceeded to peruse, with her glasses to her eyes, greatly to the relief of Mr. Marston.

"I have ever so much to say, and I've been looking forward to this chance of telling you a great deal—everything; and—may I say it? yes, I do say it—I thought you did not seem so friendly as our old acquaintance might have warranted. You were cold and indifferent—I am sure it is all right; but, oh! if you knew how it pained me—as if you did not care ever so little to see your old Cardyllion friend again. And I, who have never thought of any one but you all that time! And—oh, Heaven!—if you knew how it tortures me, thinking of the cruel injustice of fortune that condemns you to a life of so much trouble and anxiety, and how I have longed to tell you how I honour you, how, if I dare speak it, I adore you; how, every day, I long to lay myself and all my hopes at your feet. But you will never like me; you will never care for me. It never yet was the way to be loved to love too madly."

"What am I to say to all this? Who am I? You may know something of Miss Medwyn, my cousin Maximilla, but of me you can know nothing. There are inequalities everywhere. I have often wished that fortune had placed me exactly where she is. But good people tell us that whatever is is best, and now you must promise me this—you must, if our acquaintance is to go on—that you will not talk to me so wildly any more. Why can't we be very good friends, and grow better acquainted, and come, at last, to know one another? Why should you try to force me to say begone, and to lose an acquaintance: I who have so few? I think that is utterly selfish."

Her cheeks were flushed with a beautiful colour, and there was an angry fire in her vexed eyes as she said this.

"I must go away in a few minutes, but I shall be back again somewhere about this room to-night, and you will have little difficulty in finding me again to say good-bye. As for me, I feel sad to-night, as if I were parting with an old friend and a quiet life. I am half sorry I came here.

She pressed Miss Max's arm lightly as she spoke, and that lady lowering her letter, looked rather sharply round on her, a little vexed.

"What is it, dear? I wish you would allow me to read my letter," said the old lady.

"It is time to go. I must go, at least," said Maud.

"Well, go you shall," replied the old lady, crumpling up her letter, and standing erect, with her head a little high. "There's nothing to delay me a moment."

And relenting a little, she added:

"Mr. Marston, would you mind seeing me across the street? We are going to the Old Hall Inn, exactly opposite."

You may suppose that Mr. Marston was very much at her service.

"Shall I be sure to find you?" he murmured, very earnestly, to Maud, as they turned to go.

"I think so," she said. "Now, you must take care of my cousin."

The young lady went down, and crossed the street at the other side of Miss Max, and seeing her maid about to mount the staircase of the inn, she joined her, passed her by with a word, and ran up the stairs, without once turning her pretty head to look back on her friends in the hall.

Maximilla was vexed for her friend, Mr. Marston.

"I did not say, in my answer, because it embarrasses me, sometimes, trying to write what I feel, how very nice I thought your letter—how particularly nice!"

"Oh, Miss Medwyn, do you think she will ever like me?"

"I only know she ought, Mr. Marston; but, as you see, she is an odd girl. One thing I assure you, you have a very fast friend in me, and, mind you don't fail me. You must come to the ball, for I want to introduce you to the only person living who, I think, has an influence with her. I shall expect you at about a quarter to eleven. I shall be sure to be there about then, and so shall my friend. Good-bye, till then."

And without giving him time to answer, and with a very kind smile, she nodded, ran up the broad stairs, and disappeared.

CHAPTER XXXVII. THE BALL.

When Mr. Marston returned to the hall, he loitered a little in the cloak-room, he rambled through the building into the refreshment and waiting-rooms, wherever he thought it possible the beautiful girl who alone gave this trumpery scene its magical interest, might be.

He was a little late, and also a little dispirited. He began to fear that she might not appear again that night.

What a bore it was, his having, in such a mood, to look out Miss Max among the chaperons, and to be introduced to some insupportable person, girl or matron, he forgot which!

Here and there, as he made his way up

the room, a friendly voice among the men recognised him, and cried:

"I say! Is that you, Marston?" or, "What brings you here, Marston, old fellow?"

At length he caught a glimpse of Miss Medwyn, in high chat with his sister; then she was hidden again, as he slowly moved through the people; the band was braying and thundering now obstreperously from the gallery, and the stewards were clearing a space for the dancers.

And now, again, he saw Miss Medwyn, much nearer, and she advanced a step or two with her cheery smile to greet him. She said something pleasant to him, smiling and nodding toward his sister, who was busy at that moment, talking to old Lord Fondlebury. Mr. Marston did not hear Miss Medwyn's remark, for his attention was fixed by a figure standing near her, the outline of which bore a marked resemblance to the lady of whom he was thinking; her face was turned away; she was speaking to a tall, rather handsome young man, with good blue eyes, and light golden moustache.

Miss Medwyn tapped her gently, and the lady turned.

She was dressed, I am enabled to tell you, in "a pale blue tulle, with a very graceful panier, the whole dress looped and studded with pale maize roses." It was the work of the great Madame Meyer. All these particulars were duly set forth in the county paper.

She had diamond stars in her rich brown hair, diamond ear-rings, and a diamond necklace. These were remarkably large diamonds, and the effect of the whole costume was dazzling, rich, and elegant.

Old Mr. Tintern was a little pleasurably flushed and excited in the consciousness of having, in that room, such unparalleled brilliants under his wing.

She had turned about, at the touch of Miss Max's hand, with a regal flash, and as the old lady introduced Mr. Marston to Miss Vernon, he grew pale, and hesitated:

"I am introducing only a name, you see. You have known the lady some time," said Miss Max, smiling very cheerfully.

Maud looked beautiful as a princess in a fairy-tale; but in all her splendour, more good-natured, and somehow more simple, than ever.

She was smiling gently, and put out her hand a little, as it seemed, almost timidly.

He took it, and said something suitable, I suppose. Perhaps it seemed a little cold and constrained, contrasted, at least, with his talk at other times—happier times (were they?)—when he suspected nothing of her great name and fortunes.

Had he been trifled with? Had he been fooled? How did these ladies regard him?

These questions were quieted. Neither was capable of enjoying his strange mortification. Whatever had passed was in good faith. But however good-natured the masquerading, still the truth, now revealed, broke up and dissipated, with an indescribable shock, his more Quixotic, but in many respects happier, estimate of their relations.

What had become of his unavowed confidence in his rank and reversions? Here was no longer the poor and beautiful idol of a half-compassionating love.

Here was in fortune absolutely, and in pure patrician blood nearly, the highest lady in England. Despair was stealing over his sunny prospects. He began, in an expressive phrase, to feel very small. Being proud and sensitive, he was not only a little stunned, but wounded.

Something, however, must be said and proposed. It would not do to stand there doing nothing.

Accordingly, Mr. Marston asked Miss Vernon to dance. She had number one. Had she kept it for him? There was not a moment to lose. It was a quadrille, as is the inflexible practice at public balls.

They took their places in a set just forming, with Lady Helen de Flambeaux and Captain Vivian vis-à-vis. Mr. Marston recognised the tall young man with azure eyes and yellow moustache, to whom Miss Vernon had been talking.

The music was roaring over their heads, so that people could not in the least overhear their neighbours' talk.

"I have been very much surprised this evening," he said.

"And shocked," she added.

"No, Miss Vernon; amazed a little—dazzled."

"It is so odd a sensation, being ceremoniously introduced to an old friend," she remarked.

"It is, somehow, so like losing an old friend and finding only an acquaintance in exchange," he answered, "when first impressions, very much cherished, are proved to be illusions, and circumstances change so entirely. Everything becomes uncertain, and one grows melancholy—it is enough to make one suspicious."

"That is very tragical," laughed the young lady.

"Happy are those, say I, for whom life

is a holiday, and the world a toy—I mean the people who have a good deal of satire and very little compassion, who are not unkind, but very cold, who enjoy the comedy of life, and can even smile at its tragedy; they can afford to laugh when others suffer," said Mr. Marston. "It can be of no consequence to you, Miss Vernon, how the strange delusion I have—I don't deny it—in a measure practised on myself, affects me."

"Well, I hope it won't embitter you for ever, Mr. Marston; it is a comfort, at all events, it has not made you give up dancing."

At this interesting moment Mr. Marston was obliged to advance and retreat, cross over, and all the rest; and when he had set to his partner, and turned that splendid lady about, it devolved on her to execute the same manœuvres with handsome Captain Vivian for vis-à-vis.

The next subject was not so interesting.

"I don't think our Wymering friends have done all they might for the floor," she remarked.

To which he made suitable answer, and artfully endeavoured to lead back the conversation into more interesting channels.

But Miss Vernon held him fast during the remainder of the quadrille to the decorations, the music, the room, and the other details, and he began to think it was all over with him, and with his hopes, and that he had had his last serious talk with Miss Vernon.

"When this is over," he thought, "she will ask me to take her back to the Tinterns, and leave her again with Miss Max, and so she will take a friendly leave, and I shall have a theme to think of for the rest of my life."

But he was mistaken. Miss Vernon, when the dance was over, said:

"Would you mind, Mr. Marston, taking me to the tea-room? I have not had any yet."

Very happy this little reprieve made him.

How the light touch of her hand upon his arm thrilled him as he led her in!

"What dances can you give me? Surely you can give me one?" he asked, imploringly, as they went along.

"I could give you a great many," said the young lady, gently; "but I don't mean to give you one more."

Mr. Marston stared.

"You must not think me very unkind. I might have said I have not one to give—not one—earlier than number twelve, and long before that we shall be on our way home to Roydon. But I mean to be very honest to-night; and if we can find a quiet place at the table in the tea-room, we can talk a little there."

"I half dread that little talk, Miss Vernon. Some people have more power of inflicting pain than they perhaps suspect. I scarcely think that can be your case; but—don't—I think I may ask that; don't, I entreat, say anything that may give me very great pain to-night. Give me an opportunity of speaking first. I hope that is not a very unreasonable petition."

He spoke very low and gently, but very earnestly.

"What a crowd!" said Miss Vernon, as if she had not heard a word.

As they slowly made their way, many an admiring, and many an envious eye was directed on that princess, and many a curious one upon the handsome young gentleman on whose arm her hand was lightly placed. She continued: "This is the best ball we have had at Wymering for two years. It is my third. I begin to feel very old."

"Eh? Hollo! Hi! How d'ye do, Miss Vernon?" bawled old Sir John Martingale, of Whistlewhips, short and square, pulling up and blocking half the passage, with his wife on one arm and his elderly daughter, Arabella, on the other, with both of whom Miss Vernon had to exchange greetings. "You're not turning your back on the dancers so soon, eh?"

His shrewd little grey eyes that lighted up his mulberry-coloured features, were scrutinising Mr. Marston with very little disguise.

"Oh, tea is it? And right good tea it is, I can tell you. Old Mother Vaneil in the High-street here, the confectioner, is doing the refreshments this time. And I have just been telling Lady Martingale, I han't got so good a cup o' tea this twel'-month."

"Don't mind him, Miss Vernon. We treat him a great deal too well, and he's always grumbling," interposed Lady Martingale, "half joke, and whole earnest," as the good old phrase is.

Here Miss Martingale, who had been secretly squeezing and plucking at his arm, having secured, half an hour before, an eligible old bachelor, Mr. Plimbey, of Cowslip Meads, for number two, prevailed, and Sir John, with a jocular "I won't stand no more of your rubbish for breakfast, mind ye, my lady," and a wink at Miss Vernon, in which Mr. Marston, though a stranger,

was included, pulled his women through, as he phrases it, with a boisterous chuckle, interrupted, alas ! soon by a fit of coughing.

By this time Mr. Marston had led Miss Vernon to the long tea-table, that, like a counter, traversed one end of the tea-room, and at an unfrequented part of this they took their stand, and he called for a cup of tea for the young lady.

CHAPTER XXXVIII. A MAN WITH A SQUARE BLACK BEARD.

There are few loiterers left in the room; the distant roar of the band accounts for this desertion. The damsel who administers tea to them is stricken in years, thin, and anxious with the cares of boiling kettles behind the scenes, and many tea-pots, and sponge and plum-cakes, and soup and ices, in immediate perspective. She has not a thought for other people's business, and is the most convenient possible attendant upon two people who have anything of the slightest interest to say to one another.

"Yes, it is very nice tea," says the young lady; "and, I forgot, I promised this dance to Mr. Dacre. I suppose I'm in disgrace, but I can't help it." She glances up at the cornice, and thinks for a moment. "I want you, Mr. Marston," she says, more gravely, and her diamonds make a great flash as she lowers her head, "to remember this: that if we are to continue to be good friends, you must never be offended at anything I do, or ever ask the meaning of it."

Marston laughs. It is a pained laugh she thinks.

"You can't suppose me so unreasonable," he says. "I know, perfectly, I have not the least right to ask a question, far less to be offended. In fact, you can hardly feel, more than I do, how very little claim an acquaintance, founded in so much ignorance and misapprehension, can give me to more than, perhaps, a very slight recognition."

"Well, I don't quite agree with you, Mr. Marston; I think, on the contrary, that I know you a great deal better than I possibly could have known you under ordinary circumstances in so short a time; and I think we ought to be better friends—I think we are better friends—for that very reason."

That was the sweetest music he ever heard in his life, and he could not answer immediately. It seemed to him, as she spoke, that her colour was a little heightened, and, for a moment, a strange, soft fire in her eyes. But was this real, or only one of those illusions which, before the gaze of devout enthusiasts, have, in a moment of ecstasy, lighted up sad portraits with smiles, or crossed their beauty with a shade of sorrow?

The next moment she looked just as usual.

"I saw my sister for a few minutes in the cloak-room," he says, suddenly, "and she told me that she had asked Miss Vernon to her house in Warwickshire. It did not interest me, for I little knew, then, who Miss Vernon really was. Do you think you will go to her?"

"I hope I shall—that is, if I can, I certainly will. Miss Medwyn is going, I believe, and I could go with her; but I don't know yet what mamma will say to it; and mamma is the only person living who can prevent my doing exactly what I please."

"But Lady Vernon, I hope, won't dream of preventing it?" he says, very anxiously.

"Mamma decides for herself in all things, and acts very strictly according to her ideas of duty, and sometimes thinks things that appear to me of no importance whatever, very important indeed; and you know that there has been some—something very like a quarrel—and Lord Warhampton doesn't like her, and I'm afraid mamma doesn't like him—and I really don't know whether that might not make a difficulty in her allowing me to go to Lady Mardykes; but a few days will decide."

"Heaven grant it may be favourably," murmurs the young man, vehemently.

"And you have asked me to say nothing to-night that could give you pain," says the young lady, referring to a speech that she had not before noticed, "and I, in return, exact the same promise from you. You must say nothing that may make us part worse friends than we were when we met."

"And I have so much to tell you, that is, ever so much to say; and, oh! how I hope you will not refuse my sister's invitation."

"I like her so very much," says the young lady. "And this dance will soon be over. You must take me now to Miss Medwyn—she is with the Tinterns—and remember, I have a reason for everything I do, although you may not understand it. You are not to speak to me again to-night, when you have taken me back to the Tinterns."

"Then," says Mr. Marston, with a look of sadness, almost reproach, "I am to take my leave in something worse than uncertainty?"

"Uncertainty?" with a half angry, half

startled glance, the girl repeats, but in the moment that follows the haughty fire of her fine eyes is quenched, and she places her fingers lightly on his arm, and says: "Shall we come now? I'm afraid the passage will soon be crowded. Let us come before the dance is over."

As they pass together toward the great room where the dancers, gentle and simple, townsfolk and rural, skilled and clumsy, were all whisking and whirling their best, to the inspiring thunder of the band, she repeats:

"You understand? You are not to speak to me, or look at me, or come near where I am again to-night—not in the cloak-room, not anywhere—and you must leave me the moment you place me beside my cousin Maximilla. I should not like you to think me capricious or silly," she adds, a little sadly, he fancies. "So, as a proof of your friendship, I ask you to believe that I have good reasons for what I ask. No, not this door; let us come in by the other. Good-night," she almost whispers, as they reach Miss Medwyn's side.

That lady was standing a little behind Mr. Tintern and Lady Mardykes, and the door by which they entered brought Miss Vernon beside her cousin, without passing before the other figures in this group.

"Good-night," she repeated, a little hurriedly.

"God bless you," he said, very low, holding in his the hand she had given him, longer than he ever had held it before, "and come what may I will see you very soon again."

"Well, dear, you have been to the tea-room?" said Miss Max, greeting her young cousin with a smile; "and where is Mr.—wasn't it Mr. Marston who took you?"

"Yes; I think he's gone," said the young lady.

Miss Max was looking round to find him, but he had left by the door through which they had just entered.

"He has vanished," she continued, "but of course he'll turn up again."

"Who is that man with the black beard, and large eyes, and solemn, pale face, who is talking to Lady Mardykes?" asked Maud, after a silence of a minute or two.

"I don't know; rather a remarkable face, clever, I think," answered Miss Max; "she knows every one that is worth knowing. Her house is quite delightful. Warhampton having held office so often, and only awaiting the next division, they say, to be in again. She knows all the clever people of her party, in both Houses, and the foreign ministers, and all the people distinguished for talent. I do so hope Barbara will let you go to her."

The grave man with the black beard now made his bow and smile, and turned away and disappeared in the crowd, and before Maud had time to ask Lady Mardykes who he was, Captain Vivian appeared to claim number three, promised to him.

Marston did not dance this, nor the next, and he saw Miss Vernon give both dances to the handsome young man with blue eyes and golden moustache, whom he had seen in conversation with her at the beginning of the evening.

"Fine girl, Miss Vernon, Miss Vernon of Roydon, you know; that's she with the diamonds, and devilish good diamonds they are," said Marston's schoolfellow, Tom Tewkesbury, who, after an absence of five years was just what he always was, only a little fonder of his bottle, "by Jove she is; positively lovely, by Jove! Don't you think so? I do. I wonder who that fellow is she's dancing with—not a bad-looking fellow. I say, Marston, I wonder whether a fellow would have any chance of getting a dance from her? By Jove! They are going it. Do you think it's a case? I've a great mind to go and try. She's with the Tinterns. Shall I? What do you say?"

"You had better be quick. She's not likely to remain long standing," said Marston, who was not sorry, in his present mood, to lose his friend's agreeable conversation.

Marston shifted his point of observation to see more distinctly how Mr. Tewkesbury fared.

That gentleman had made his way by this time to Mr. Tintern.

"Here I am—come to ask a favour," he said, taking a button of Mr. Tintern's coat, and looking persuasively in his face. "I want Miss Vernon to give me a dance, and you must introduce me. Do."

Tewkesbury has more than twelve thousand a year, represents an old county family, is a popular man, and not the kind of fellow to excite a romance. He is just the person whom Mr. Tintern would have chosen to dance with the heiress of Roydon. But he said, with a very amused chuckle:

"I'll introduce you with pleasure. Certainly, if you wish it; but I've just done the same thing for Lord Hawkshawe, and

she had not a dance. I don't know. I'll introduce you with pleasure."

Perhaps Tom Tewkesbury thought that he could afford in this game to give Lord Hawkshawe, who was fifty, and had a couple of thousand a year less than he, some points, and was not very much daunted by the report of the nobleman's failure.

Did he succeed? Alas! no. She was again carried off by the victorious Captain Vivian; and she and he beheld Mr. Marston, who had seen this early enough to secure Miss Chevron, figuring in the next set to theirs. There he was chasséeing, for it was a quadrille, and setting to that young lady, and turning her about, looking the while black as thunder.

His eyes stole, in spite of his resolution, now and then, in the direction of Miss Vernon. Once he thought their eyes met; but he could not be certain, for hers betrayed not the slightest sign of consciousness, and no more shrank or turned aside than the gleam of her brilliants.

And now, the dance ended, Miss Vernon returned to the Tinterns, and said a word to Miss Max, and Captain Vivian led her away to the refreshment-room where people were sipping soup or eating ices.

There they loiter. The next dance has begun. She does not intend to dance it. She has refused it to half a dozen distinguished competitors. Every one is inquiring who that fellow with the yellow moustache is, and no one seems to know exactly. He is by no means popular among the aspiring youth of Wymering.

The dance is nearly over by the time they return to Miss Medwyn, and the shadow of Mr. Tintern's protection.

The youth of the county, with here and there a sprinkling of middle age, are dancing number seven, and are pretty well on in it, when Miss Vernon resolves to take wing, and drive home to Roydon under the care of Maximilla Medwyn.

She has taken leave of the Tinterns and Lady Mardykes. The devoted Captain Vivian attends to put on her cloak and sees her into her carriage, with a last word, and a smile, and a good-night to Miss Max.

Miss Max yawns, and leans back. Miss Vernon does not yawn, but she looks tired, and leans back also, no longer smiling, listlessly in her corner.

"Home," says the young lady to the footman at the window.

With the high-blooded trotters of Roydon, the carriage rolls swiftly through the High-street, and in a few minutes more is gliding through old hedge-rows in the soft moonlight, among misty meadows and silent farm-steads.

SUNDAY IN THE SEVEN DIALS.

The week-day aspect of the Seven Dials must be tolerably familiar to all who have ever had occasion to make a short cut from Charing-cross to New Oxford-street. In order to accomplish this, they are bound to traverse the locality in question. Its main characteristics may be summed up as narrow streets, dingy houses, and dingier inhabitants; men whose sole occupation in life appears to consist in loafing about, pipe in mouth, slatternly women, and squalid children. Every object, both animate and inanimate, seems to have been toned down by dirt to one common neutral tint, and the very names on the street corners are utterly illegible from the smoke and grime with which the houses are thickly coated. There is an all-pervading air of dowdiness; a decidedly depressing atmosphere, the effects of which are to be seen in the slouching shuffle forming the habitual gait of the natives, and a generally dead-alive appearance, from which, however, the place wakes up to some extent in the evening.

But it is on Sunday morning, between the hours of eleven and one, that the Dials will best repay the trouble of a visit. Let the intending visitor, however, bear in mind that it is best at Rome to follow the example of the Romans, and so avoid shocking the susceptibilities of the Dialians by a too recherché costume; otherwise, he must expect, if he loiters about the neighbourhood, to run a gauntlet of criticism upon his personal appearance. For, as the male population have nothing to occupy their time till the public-houses are open, the majority pass the morning in languidly observing all that goes on around them, and in passing thereon remarks, more free than flattering. The writer found a pilot-jacket, a pair of horsy trousers, and a slouch cap, serve his purpose of mixing unnoticed in the crowd, admirably, and he was only once discussed seriously by a group of loungers, who hesitated whether to set him down as a Prussian or a pugilist.

Let us then suppose the intending visitor, duly equipped, to have threaded St. Martin's-lane. Passing Aldridge's, he will find himself at the bottom of Great St. Andrew-street, which will take him direct to the Dials. And here let me remark that I have

written "In the Seven Dials" at the head of this article, in deference to the common rule of speaking, but had I been studying the feelings of the inhabitants, I should have slightly altered my title. For a denizen of the locality, when asked to name his place of residence, will invariably reply, not that he lives "in," but "on," the Dials.

Seven Dials proper, though the name is used to designate the whole surrounding district, is an open space formed by the junction of seven streets. To two of these notice is directed. The one, Great St. Andrew-street, is blocked up by a crowd exclusively masculine; the other, Earl-street, is almost impassable, owing to a predominance of the feminine element. Place aux dames. Let us devote our attention to Earl-street.

Here is an open-air market doing a thriving trade, just as if acts of parliament prohibiting Sunday trading had never been heard of. The staple commodity of this market appears to be cabbages. Four-fifths of the shops in the street are kept by greengrocers, and their windowless fronts are heaped up high with cabbages. Huge baskets of the same useful vegetables are ranged all along the curbstone, and a flying brigade of venders, whose stock-in-trade consists of a couple of savoys or half a dozen heads of broccoli, are darting about in all directions, and pertinaciously thrusting their wares into the faces of passers-by, accompanying this action by a most energetic appeal to purchase. In the matter of noise the stationary dealers are by no means behind their perambulating compeers, and their reiterated announcement that "Now is the time, ladies," their continued vociferations of "Here's yer fine cabbagees," and their gratuitously volunteered information that potatoes are selling at the rate of "four puns for tuppence ha'penny," are absolutely deafening. Besides the greengrocers, there are bakers, with a gigantic seven displayed in their windows to indicate the price of the quartern loaf. There is not much doing in the staff of life just now. Neither are the numerous fish-shops, which exhibit piles of dried haddocks and smoked mackerel, bushels of shrimps, cockles, and periwinkles, and boxes of red-herrings; nor the cheesemongers with their prime Wiltshire bacon, displaying its alternate streaks of leather and lard, their best Dorset butter at fourteenpence, and their eggs (warranted) at sixteen a shilling; nor the milk-shop, which is also a pork butcher's, attracting much custom. For Seven Dials bought its daily bread when it purchased its ha'porth of milk, its bloater, or its rasher for breakfast some hours ago. Still the baker has the best of reasons for keeping his shutters down this morning, for is it not Sunday, and has not the Sunday's dinner to be consigned to his care and oven? Solemnly, as though bearing a sacrifice to the altar, a long file of men, women, and children pass through his portal laden with the repast in question. A bit of meat perched upon an iron trivet over a brown earthenware baking-dish, half of which contains potatoes, and the other half a batter-like compound, representing in the lively fancy of the Dialians, Yorkshire pudding, appears to be the staple dish, though it is sometimes replaced or supplemented by a pie.

But these are not the only shops; there are sweetstuff-shops, and tobacconists, and crockery-shops with rows of blue dishes and yellow jugs, and ironmongers, open presumably in expectation of any one having bought the materials for a more sumptuous repast than usual, and finding himself or herself without the necessary utensils to cook it. Then there are stationers whose windows offer especial attractions, adorned as they are with the last number of the latest sensational publication, and grocers where you may be supplied with "The People's Tea" at two shillings, or superior souchong at half a crown, to be sweetened with moist sugar at threepence per pound, or varied by coffee sold at the rate of two ounces for three halfpence, the rest of the stock-in-trade consisting seemingly of stick liquorice and sweet biscuits. And there are butchers. Not many of them, though, for the great meat mart of the neighbourhood is just a stone's throw off in Newport Market, and there is a constant stream going and coming from that direction. Still there are one or two butchers here who cater indifferently for the human and for the canine and feline races, displaying upon the same board the sheeps' heads, the tripe, the dark-coloured lumps of liver, and the pigs' feet intended for the former, and the neatly skewered rolls of paunch and bits of horseflesh destined for the two latter. There are also pork butchers with their legs and loins of huge coarse-rinded pigs' meat, their black and pease-puddings, their savoury fagots, small Germans, and long strings of unsavoury abominations playfully called sausages, into the composition of which it is not for us, but rather for the sanitary inspector, to pry closely. And doing one of the best businesses in the market, despite the coolness of an early

spring day, is a ginger-beer shop. The Dialians are thirsty souls, and one o'clock, that blissful hour when a tyrannical legislature permits a man to refresh himself, is yet far off. So, in the meanwhile, they gulp down tumblers of foaming pop, and sometimes even venture as high as twopence in the purchase of soda water.

However, the shopkeepers are not alone in the receipt of custom. Besides the perambulating dealers in cabbages already referred to, there are others upon the ground. The police do not permit barrows to be drawn up here on Sunday morning, but they tolerate baskets; and so baskets of vegetables, of fish, and of crockery are ranged along both sides of the roadway, with the owners bawling encomiums of their wares, whilst boys and girls with pennyworths of onions, bunches of carrots, handfuls of greens, and cheap Sunday newspapers, add their shrill trebles to the concert. Numerous merchants of unconsidered trifles, such as sweetmeats, cakes, gingerbread nuts, toys, combs, hair-nets, boot and stay-laces, braces, tin-ware, gridirons, chickweed, groundsel, flowers, roots, &c., are also strolling up and down, and adding to the din. There are also flower-sellers, but they receive but scant patronage. The inhabitants of the Dials, and it is a bad sign, do not appreciate bouquets, and I fear the dandiest of them all would hardly venture to sport a rosebud or a "bunch o' vilets" in his button-hole.

The customers are all women and girls, and the former are all equally dowdy and frouzy. Whatever may have been the original colour of their garments, time, wear, and dirt have toned them down to pretty well the same dingy hue, and even the few faded flowers in their battered bonnets fail to relieve the sombre monotony. There is no particularising their attire, and their faces, too, are equally pinched, haggard, and careworn. They are keen and quiet bargainers, and silently and carefully turn over the piles of vegetables, or lift and sniff at the fish, quite indifferent to the smart salesman who is rattling off his invitations to purchase in their very ears. Some, indeed, have come back to resume a bargain all but concluded last night, in the hopes of now obtaining the article over which they chaffered a few halfpence cheaper, but with the majority it is a different story. They were unable to do their Saturday's marketing, for "father" did not come reeling home till the last public-house was closed, and now, whilst he is still lying in a drunken stupor upon the bed at home, they have sallied forth with whatever they found left in his pockets, in search of a Sunday's dinner. And when two of them who are acquaintances meet, they generally come to a dead stop in the midst of the crowd to indulge in a quiet gossip, such as women delight in, frequently having reference to the state in which "he" came home last night. The girls are a little smarter. Some of them have washed their faces, presumably in honour of the day, and, furthermore, adorned themselves with strings of glass beads and gilt ear-rings. They have either run out to buy something forgotten by "mother" last evening, or to indulge on their own account in an illustrated periodical of fiction, which they unfold in the streets, and read as they walk along, often in pairs, with their arms around each other. This style is exceedingly popular amongst the poorer of them, who habitually dispense with bonnets, because then one shawl can be made available for two wearers.

The surrounding streets offer no slight contrast. Here quiet prevails. Nine-tenths of the shops in Dudley-street are devoted to the sale and purchase of second-hand garments. Like the poet's bedstead, they contrive to pay a double debt, for whilst the dealer in old clothes occupies the shop itself, the cellar beneath it is tenanted by a vender of old boots and shoes, whose stock-in-trade, polished to a wonderful degree of brightness, is ranged in shining and symmetrical rows along the pavement. Boots of all kinds, from the navvy's ankle-jack to the child's shoe, from the mechanic's blucher to the lady's balmoral, all equally glittering, are to be had here. And not without reason have they been so polished; for a lavish application of the blacking-brush goes far to conceal all the cunning devices of heelball and brown paper, which have helped to restore them apparently to their pristine solidity. Avoid them, for they are Dead Sea fruit; fair to look at, but rotten at the core. Purchase a pair, and you will behold them at the first shower of rain collapse into a shapeless, sodden mass. The old clothes are mostly women's, and bear so close a resemblance to those you see worn in the streets, that you have no reason to wonder where they come from. Very remarkable are the general odd-and-end shops to be found in these streets, in which you may purchase almost every conceivable thing in a more or less dilapidated and imperfect condition, and which appear to be doing a very good

business just now, though it certainly does puzzle one to guess what a man can possibly want with a concertina, minus all its keys, half a dozen yards of tarnished gilt cornice, three-fifths of a pair of scales, an odd carriage lamp, or the upper half of a bagatelle board, on a Sunday morning. There are second-hand furniture-shops, which run into the old iron trade, and also branch out into the picture line. Pictures, indeed, are plentiful about here, both sacred and secular, including a number of saints for the Irish, who, however, are far from being so numerous in this neighbourhood as of old, and a liberal sprinkling of royal personages for the patriotic.

These quiet streets are favoured by the juvenile denizens of the Dials, since here they can indulge in their sports and pastimes without fear of interruption. Some, in clean pinafores, with their hair brushed and faces shining from the recent application of yellow soap, are sitting on the door-steps, sucking sticky sweetstuff, or munching big lumps of bread-and-dripping, given them to amuse them till the joint comes home from the baker's, or are wandering about, hand-in-hand, in family groups of four or five. Others, and by far the majority, in their natural unkempt state, are playing at battledore and shuttlecock, a game fashionable in the Dials at this season of the year, for amongst London children certain games succeed each other in regular and mystic relation, and hopscotch has just gone out. The only spectators are lounging bachelors, who stand in the doorways, four or five deep, in their shirt-sleeves, looking on.

The upper half of Great St. Andrew-street is the Sunday morning lounge of the natives of the Dials, and if there were any rank and fashion to be found in the neighbourhood, the visitor might expect to find them here. The speciality of Great St. Andrew-street, as any one who has ever passed down it cannot fail to be aware, is birds, and it is to look at, examine, admire, criticise, and even buy the speciality in question, that this crowd is congregated here. Every bird-shop has its circle of spectators, devouring the contents of the window with their eyes. There is only one exception, and that is the establishment on the east side of the street, which on week days makes such a brilliant exhibition of frogs, snakes, lizards, newts, tortoises, gold-fish, and sticklebacks. Whether the proprietor is afraid that these creatures are not sufficiently strong in constitution to bear being stared at, or whether he fears they are even too attractive, and might draw the entire crowd in front of his window, and so block up the street, I am unable to say, but it is certain that on Sundays he withdraws the glass cases containing his finny and scaly wares into the darkest recesses of his shop, leaving nothing in their place but a few weakly-looking ferns, a stuffed bird or two, and some bundles of porcupines' quills. But there is no lack of attractions left, seeing that, with the exception of a couple of hatters, a herbalist, a sweetmeat-shop, and a picture-frame maker, the street presents on either side a long line of aviaries, the windows of which are filled from top to bottom with cages. Canaries form the majority of the occupants of these miniature prisons, but linnets and finches are to be met with in considerable numbers, and there are larks and starlings, blackbirds and thrushes, love-birds, paraquets, and even sparrows. Yes, not only the Java, but the common sparrow is to be found here, and the London Arab, as I observed, devotes twopence to his acquisition, but whether to rear him, to eat him, or to pelt him to death down "our court," I cannot say. Nor are singing birds the only creatures exposed for sale here. There are parrots and cockatoos, jays and magpies, jackdaws and ravens, fowls of every breed, pigeons, rabbits, and a perfect host of such small deer as guinea-pigs, white mice, dormice, hedgehogs, squirrels, and ferrets. The cages offer almost as much variety as their tenants. There are long low hutches, each containing a regiment of the rank and file of canaries, marked for sale at six shillings per cock, and two per hen bird. There are smaller habitations of brown wood and steel wire, set apart for approved songsters of the same tribe, and eligible family residences, with inner chambers, and sliding partitions, and little fluffy nests, for the accommodation of such birds as may be matrimonially disposed. There are little green boxes, with wooden bars, for the linnets and finches, white wicker baskets for blackbirds, elegant little domes of blue and silver, or green and gold, for love-birds, and gorgeous pagoda-like constructions, of bright steel or gilt wire, for the parrots and cockatoos. And not for birds alone are residences provided, for there are tiny dog-kennels, and hutches, and cages, for white mice and squirrels, together with such miscellaneous odds and ends as dog-collars, muzzles, bells, seed-troughs, water-bottles, bird-baths, nests, &c. And every time the sun peeps through the clouds the burst of sunlight calls forth a

corresponding burst of bird-song, whilst flocks of circling pigeons, whirling up amongst chimney-pots above, join in the salute.

The crowd is essentially a loafing one, and the members of it present a strong family resemblance to each other. There are attempts at smartness in the matter of dress on the part of individuals, but they only serve to render the seediness of the mass more apparent. For the people assembled here between eleven o'clock and noon are almost all inhabitants of the quarter. Some have come out to purchase a turf, or some bird-seed, or a handful of groundsel or chickweed from the basket-bearing dealers, for the bird at home; and there are boys with cages for sale, but the vast bulk have not even such a reason as that for their presence here. They loaf about listlessly, for their object is merely to kill time till the public-houses open, and they find it hard work to accomplish this feat. There was, however, when I visited the Dials on Sunday, one old man who had an object. This was a long-bearded individual in a snuff-coloured great-coat, who was distributing tracts. He was a brisk, cheerful old man, for when a Frenchman, to whom he offered one of his little books, politely declined it, with the remark, in his native language, that he did not understand English, the old fellow observed to those around him, "Ah, non comprong, poor fellow; it ain't his fault that he's a Frenchman; the Lord 'll look after him just the same!"

The slightest incident attracts as many spectators as a fight or an accident would upon ordinary occasions, and is eagerly welcomed as relieving the monotony. A boy, for instance, after looking and hesitating for a long time, at length makes up his mind to purchase a bird. He plunges into the shop, and is at once followed by a dozen companions, all eager to tender their advice upon this important matter. He comes out, grasping his acquisition as tightly as if he expected it to fly away, cage and all, and becomes at once a centre of attraction. Grave men cluster around him, ask how much he paid for his treasure, and solemnly counsel him as to the future diet of his purchase. Many of the men themselves have dogs under their arms, and friends assemble round them to discuss the animals' points, bystanders quietly joining in the conversation. I do not notice many birds bought, and the depressing influence of the Dials seems to overspread everything, for there is an entire absence of chaff or horse-play.

Towards noon costermongers' barrows laden with nuts, oranges, cocoa-nuts, and ginger-beer, began to make their appearance, and were extensively patronised. Periwinkles, too, found great favour in the eyes of the multitude, for it takes some time to get through half a pint of these delicacies, and with that quantity in your pocket, a good store of pins, and a comfortable post to lean against, you can while away half an hour or so pleasantly and imperceptibly. A fondness for leaning against posts is, by the way, one of the distinguishing characteristics of the natives of this district, and one which they appear to have inherited from the Irish, who preceded them in their occupancy. For amongst the things not generally known may be classed the fact that the Irish element, as I have already hinted, has almost entirely disappeared from the region of the Dials, and I have not heard the brogue once this morning, though I can remember when you could not have passed down here on a Sunday morning, without noticing a dozen posts supporting stalwart Hibernians in the full national gala costume of steeple-crowned hat, swallow-tail coat, knee-cords, and blue stockings.

As one o'clock draws near the crowd in Great St. Andrew-street begins to lose its local character from the increasing stream of traffic pouring through the street. The constant passage of soldiers, clerks, shop-girls, and holiday makers generally, soon tones down the peculiar features of the thoroughfare.

The aborigines now begin to concentrate their forces upon the Dials themselves. Two of the seven corners at this spot are occupied by public-houses, and towards the clock imbedded in the façade of one of these establishments many anxious looks are now cast. The market is by this time over, and the loungers at the doorways have burst from the grub into the butterfly state, and sallied forth in all the glories of slangy swelldom, their clothes cut according to the inflexible mathematics of the ready-made system. There are gorgeous exceptions to the general mob, but there is one fact in connexion with the entire multitude which is rather remarkable. However seedy and shabby a Dialian may be in his attire, his boots, or what is left of them, are invariably polished to perfection on a Sunday morning. One side of the open space is occupied by a row of a dozen shoeblacks, who indulge amongst themselves in the playful badinage peculiar to their tribe, whilst attending to the wants of their

customers. These latter have by this time pretty well exhausted the round of amusement afforded by the place. They have been shaved, for the penny barber close by has been hard at work, scraping away the week's growth of stubble, all the morning; they have looked at all the birds, they have drunk ginger-beer, and eaten oranges and periwinkles, and now, as a last resource, they are having their boots cleaned. I verily believe that some of them go away, rub off the polish, and then come back and have the operation repeated, merely for the sake of killing time. Happy are those who can read. For their delectation comes a swarm of newsboys bellowing at the top of their voices the titles of the journals they have for disposal and their contents. A few genuine working men, mechanics in their white slops, and navvies in moleskin and corduroy, now make their appearance, for, to tell the truth, the Dials is not a working-class neighbourhood, and women and children with jugs in their hands assemble on the outskirts of the crowd, now every moment growing denser and denser, and fall to gossiping after the manner of their kind. As to the men, they are getting too anxious to talk, and puff their tobacco in silence, whilst some of the lads vent their impatience in softly whistling breakdowns, and keeping time to them in a shuffling hop upon the pavement. The excitement intensifies, and all eyes are rivetted upon the dial-plate in front of the Crown, all ears are straining to catch the notes of One from the belfry of St. Giles's. Now, ding-dong, ding-dong, ding-dong, ding-dong, dong! and as the last welcome sound dies away, there is a creaking in front, a bolt is heard to shoot, and then, like one mighty wave, the crowd surges through the opened door to break against the bar. In two minutes they have vanished. That mass of human beings has melted like snow before the sun, and has been swallowed up by the gaping jaws of the public-house.

NEWS TO TELL.

Neighbour, lend me your arm for I am not well,
This wound you see is scarcely a fortnight old.
All for a sorry message I had to tell,
I've travelled many a mile in wet and cold.

Yon is the old grey château above the trees,
He bade me seek it, my comrade brave and gay;
Stately forest and river so brown and broad,
He showed me the scene as he a-dying lay.

I have been there, and, neighbour, I am not well;
I bore his sword and some of his curling hair,
Knocked at the gate and said I had news to tell,
Entered a chamber and saw his mother there.

Tall and straight with the snows of age on her head,
Brave and stern as a soldier's mother might be,
Deep in her eyes a living look of the dead,
She grasped her staff and silently gazed at me.

I thought I'd better be dead than meet her eye;
She guessed it all, I'd never a word to tell.
Taking the sword in her arms she heaved a sigh,
Clasping the curl in her hand she sobbed, and fell.

I raised her up, she sate in her stately chair,
Her face like death, but not a tear in her eye;
We heard a step, and tender voice on the stair
Murmuring soft to an infant's cooing cry.

My lady she sate erect, and sterner grew,
Finger on mouth she motioned me not to stay;
A girl came in, the wife of the dead I knew,
She held his babe, and, neighbour, I fled away!

I tried to run, but I heard the widow's cry.
Neighbour, I have been hurt and I am not well:
I pray to God that never until I die,
May I again have such sorry news to tell!

THE THREE-EYED MAN OF CYPRUS.

"It comes to the Forty Thieves, after all," murmured Rupert, at the end of a pause, during which he had been quietly smoking an elaborately adorned meerschaum, and staring at the fire.

"A great many things come to thieves, and thieves come for a great many things," observed Adolphus, "but what particular booty falls to the lot of the renowned Forty?"

"Perhaps you are not aware," said Rupert, "that while modern philologists devote their energies to the comparison of various languages, and succeed in deriving from a common stock many hitherto supposed to have no connexion with each other, a similar process is adopted in the case of popular tales, and that it is ascertained beyond the possibility of doubt, that the same story, modified in its details, may frequently be found in countries separated by vast distances, between which no mutual intercourse can be proved. The tale of Cinderella, for instance, is to be found almost everywhere. Do you understand?"

"Perfectly," replied Adolphus; "but I fail to perceive that you have answered my question about the Forty Thieves."

"To those I was coming," said Rupert. "I have just been reading a popular tale of Cyprus, one of a collection published about two years ago in modern Greek, by M. Athenasios Sakellarios. Now, in the main, no two narratives can be more distinct than this tale and the familiar story of Ali Baba, but in one particular incident they meet, and, what is strange, this incident cannot be classed among what may be termed the commonplaces of fairy lore."

"Commonplaces of fairy lore? I do not

quite apprehend your meaning," remarked Adolphus.

"I can easily make myself clear by example," said Rupert. "Among fairy commonplaces I would class the frequent use of the number three. In tale after tale we find parents with three children, of which the third, if they are boys, is more clever, if they are girls, is more beautiful than the other two."

"Oh, yes," rejoined Adolphus, "in the good old days, when fairies were our godmothers, the third of three was the best as a matter of course. But tell me about this tale of Cyprus, which it seems is so much like and so much unlike the story of the Forty Thieves."

"Well," said Rupert, "it starts with a violation of the very rule which we have just laid down as general. A poor woodcutter had three daughters, and employed three asses to take his wood to market. His profits on a certain fine day being somewhat above the average, he purchased a kerchief of the kind that was used for head-gear, whereat the girls were greatly delighted, especially the eldest, who at once tied it about her head, and took her seat at the window, expecting to be admired by the passers-by. Nor was she disappointed; for she attracted the attention of a countryman, who was going along the street, and so highly was he pleased by her personal appearance, that he made inquiries among the neighbours whether she was married or single. The satisfactory result of his investigations led to a proposal of marriage, which was gladly accepted by the woodcutter, and the eldest daughter left her father's house, with a husband magnanimous enough to take no account of her poverty."

"But the other sisters, more especially the third——" Adolphus began to inquire.

"Are never mentioned again in the course of the story," said Rupert, finishing the sentence. "There is the very solecism to which I just now referred."

"You don't mean to say that, contrary to all precedent, this eldest girl will remain the principal female personage in the tale?"

"Yes, I do."

"Then it is very clear that the people of Cyprus never heard of Cinderella, however widely that lady's fame may be spread in other directions," remarked Adolphus.

"On the contrary," retorted Rupert, "they have a Cinderella of their own, in which the rule of three is rigidly observed, and which, in its way, is as ghastly a tale as any myth of Ancient Greece. An old woman has three daughters, the youngest of whom she loves far more than the others, who are thereby so much exasperated that they determine to put an end to their mother's life. They therefore decoy her into a spinning-match, the terms of which are, that the spinner whose thread breaks shall be devoured by the others. The poor old lady loses, and implores for mercy, which is granted; but when her thread breaks for the third time, further respite is denied, and they prepare to kill her. She contrives, however, to give a valuable hint to her youngest daughter, who took no part in the spinning-match. When she has been eaten up by her wicked children, Cinderella is to collect the bones, put them into a vessel, and smoke them, without intermission, for forty days. The old lady is duly boiled and eaten, Cinderella refusing to share in the impious repast, and taking care to obey her mother's mandate. She lights a great fire, places over it the vessels containing the bones, and for forty days keeps her place on the hearth, not quitting it for a moment. The sisters dress and go out, asking her to accompany them; but she prefers to remain at home. When the prescribed forty days have passed she opens the vessel in the absence of her sisters, and, lo! the bones are transformed to diamonds and gold. The rest of the story coincides with the Cinderella of our childhood. The two sisters go to a wedding-party, leaving Cinderella at home; but she presently follows them, magnificently attired, and attracts the notice of a prince, who is among the guests. When she hurries away she loses one of her slippers, which is found by the prince, who, of course, marries its owner. The nuptial ceremony being concluded, she pays a visit to her sisters, shows them the treasures in the vessels, explaining that these are their mother's transmuted bones, makes them a present of a portion, and takes the rest home to her royal husband's palace."

"Heyday!" exclaimed Adolphus; "so these two abominable wretches, not only kill and eat their mother, but are actually rewarded for the hideous crime. The moral of the story is atrocious."

"Your indignation is natural enough, if you regard the personages in this wild tale as mere ordinary mortals, occasionally subjected to supernatural influences, as in the common run of popular tales. The Cinderella of our youth and her two sisters are perfectly human, the godmother, as a wonder-working fairy, standing apart from all the rest. On the other hand, note the circumstances of the strange mother in the Cinde-

rella of Cyprus. She is not waylaid, but she voluntarily stakes her life on the result of a contest of skill with her daughters, who are more lenient than is required by the conditions of the game. Then, oddly enough, though she is hated by the elder daughters for the preference she shows to the youngest, they display no ill-feeling towards the latter. When they go out they ask her to accompany them, and her adherence to the hearth arises, not from any oppression on their part, but from her determination to perform a pious duty. Nor does the crime which they have committed inspire her with abhorrence. On the contrary, she presents them with a share of the wealth which she has acquired through their wickedness. The death of an old lady, whose bones are slowly but spontaneously converted into gold and precious stones, is, in my opinion, not to be judged by ordinary rules of right and wrong; but the main story is some sort of allegory, with which the tale of Cinderella and her slipper has been clumsily interwoven. Again, forty is not a number of frequent occurrence in fairy tales, and the fact that the days of Cinderella's watching correspond to the duration of Lent may be worth consideration."

"Likely enough," said Adolphus; "but we are forgetting the woodcutter's eldest daughter."

"True," rejoined Rupert. "Well, we'll return to her. The young lady was conducted by her husband to a splendid house, and presented with a key, which would open the doors of a hundred rooms. There was another room, which he told her was empty, and the door of which he forbade her to open. The key of this he retained."

"We are coming straight to Bluebeard," cried Adolphus, "and I suppose we are to be favoured with a museum of slaughtered wives."

"Nothing of the sort," said Rupert, "the resemblance of the tale to that of Bluebeard is very transient. There was actually nothing whatever in the room but a large coffer. The only object that arrested the young lady's gaze, when, in her husband's absence, having ascertained where the key was kept, she entered the forbidden precincts, was a window that looked upon the street. At this she took her post, and resigned herself to the contemplation of a dismal cemetery, to which a corpse was carried without the usual accompaniment of mourners. The sight suggested melancholy reflections. She felt that if she herself chanced to die, she would be in the same miserable predicament as that neglected body; for her husband had expressly ordered that none of her family should be allowed to visit her."

"Aha!" shouted Adolphus, with much delight, "that's the reason why we hear no more of the woodcutter's youngest daughter. Possibly she figures in another tale."

"Possibly," said Rupert, dryly; "but if there be such a tale, I have not read it. Well, the corpse having been duly buried, and the persons who carried it having retired, who should march up to the cemetery but the lady's husband. No sooner had he reached the grave than his head swelled to an enormous size, the number of his eyes increased from two to three, his hands became wonderfully long, and were decorated with nails of proportionate dimensions. With these he dug up the body, which he greedily devoured."

"There seems to be a great deal of cannibalism in the Cyprian consciousness," gravely observed Adolphus. "Two young women eat their mother, and a very ugly gentleman feasts on a newly-buried corpse. By the way, our three-eyed friend looks very like the old Ghoul in the Arabian Nights."

"Certainly he is a ghoul to all intents and purposes," said Rupert. "His appearance and conduct had such an effect upon his wife that she became violently ill, and took to her bed. Soon afterwards he returned home, entered the empty room, deposited the bones of the devoured body in the coffer, and noticed certain footprints which could not be his own. Shrewdly surmising the cause of this phenomenon, he went to his wife's bedside, and affectionately asked her what was the matter, whereat she was so greatly horrified that she plunged her head under the clothes, and declared that she was going to die. His offer, as kind as it was unexpected, to fetch her mother, was readily accepted; so slipping out of the room, he reappeared in the likeness of that excellent person."

"As the three-eyed ghoul seems able to assume any shape at pleasure, I wonder that he ever wears the hideous form at all," observed Adolphus.

"Probably if we were able to obtain the narrative in a more complete state," replied Rupert, "we should find that the horrible form with three eyes, and even the consumption of human flesh, was imposed upon our cannibal friend by a law of necessity, and was not the result of a depraved inclination. Remember, that in the tale of Puss

in Boots, the ogre, who is able to assume various shapes, remains an ogre notwithstanding. Well, the mother affectionately asked the young wife whether she had been maltreated by her husband. The invalid answered in the negative, whereupon her visitor suggested the propriety of sending a present home to her family. No, the wife would not touch the husband's property in his absence, but she promised to speak to him on the delicate subject when he returned home. Nothing could be more satisfactory than the result of the cross-examination; so when, after the retirement of the supposed old lady, our cannibal returned in his proper form——"

"Which form was that?" asked Adolphus.

"Why, of course, the form in which he married her," answered Rupert, peevishly. "You don't suppose he was such a fool as to let the cat out of the bag, by reappearing with his long nails and three eyes."

"I beg your pardon," said Adolphus, meekly; "I did not know whether the law of necessity to which you just now referred might not have come unexpectedly into operation. But go on."

"Well," proceeded Rupert, "when he reappeared he was apparently in a very good humour, and willingly consented to send a trifle to his wife's family. Indeed, as the sum she required did not greatly exceed twopence, he had the opportunity of reading her a kindly lecture on her scrupulous disposition, and of reminding her that she was the mistress of his house. All the wife's relations were now invited one by one, with the sole exception of her grandmother, and the forms of all were successively assumed by the husband, with a result as satisfactory as when he had put on the semblance of the mother. But when he made his appearance in the likeness of the grandmother, things took an unpleasant turn, for his wife, inspired by a confidence she had not before manifested, begged the venerable dame to sit down, and proceeded to describe in the fullest detail all the horrors she had witnessed from the window in the empty room. A howl of rage from her husband immediately followed the end of her narrative, and casting aside the semblance of the old lady, he stood revealed in all the hideousness belonging to what you call his proper form. His wife's inconsistency seemed to displease him even more than her inordinate curiosity. If she had been content to watch the proceedings in the cemetery, and had kept her knowledge to herself, he might, he said, have been disposed to leniency; but why in the world, when she had been so circumspect with all the rest of her kith and kin, should she be so provokingly communicative to her grandmother, no doubt, a garrulous old lady, more given to gossip than all the others put together? Such a combination of perverseness and absurdity demanded the severest punishment. So the offended husband kindled a huge fire, made a spit red-hot, and told his wife she must prepare to be roasted and eaten.

"The wife acknowledged the justice of the sentence," pursued Rupert, "but asked and obtained a respite of two hours for the ostensible purpose of making her peace with Heaven. No sooner was she out of her husband's sight than she armed herself with the key of the forbidden room, entered it, and leaped from the window."

"With a hundred and one rooms in his house, how excessively stupid the cannibal must have been that he could not find a nook where to hide his key!" objected Adolphus.

"Nay," replied Rupert, "there is an instance of a law which more or less prevails through the whole region of popular lore. The battle is always that of the strong against the weak, and the former, who is certain to be conquered, is generally overweighted with a load of stupidity which insures the victory of his antagonist. The young wife, knowing that her husband would be at any rate shrewd enough to follow her, ran down the street with all her might and main, till she came to a man with a waggon, who, when he had heard her case, said that he could not assist her, inasmuch as her three-eyed persecutor would not scruple to devour him and his horse. He advised her, therefore, to continue her flight till she reached the driver of the king's camels. This advice she took, and when the camel-driver was informed how matters stood, he took a bale of cotton from the back of his animal, and within it concealed the fugitive. In the meanwhile, the cannibal having reheated his spit, called for his wife at the expiration of the two hours, and receiving no answer, proceeded at once to the empty room, leaped out of window, and scampered down the street till he came up to the waggoner, who, threatened with immediate consumption unless he gave information respecting the runaway, protested utter ignorance, and referred him to the camel-driver. The latter, however, when overtaken, was so strong in his negatives that the three-eyed

persecutor turned back, and searched his house once more. The search proving fruitless, he armed himself with his spit, which he had again reheated, and once more overtook the driver of camels, whom he ordered to stop. The poor man, frightened out of his wits, but less frightened than the lady in the bale, obeyed the command, whereupon the monster thrust his spit into one bale after another, but took his departure when he saw that no result ensued. When he was fairly out of the way the worthy camel-driver naturally asked the lady if she had not been hurt by the spit, and learned that the point of the formidable weapon had entered her foot, but that she had had the presence of mind to wipe off the stains of blood with cotton."

"A strong-minded woman!" cried Adolphus, with admiration. "This incident of the bales of cotton and the spit is decidedly sensational."

"The young lady," proceeded Rupert, "was consoled by her protector's assurance that she was certain to be kindly received by the king, at whose palace they shortly arrived. By piling the other bales of cotton in the court-yard, and conveying the one which contained the lady into his own apartment, the driver caused the servants to suspect that he was committing a robbery, and he was accordingly brought before the king. This explanation, which was followed by the production of the young lady, perfectly satisfied the benevolent monarch, who having heard her story, ordered his physician to bandage her wounded foot. When she had recovered she expressed a desire to make herself useful, and having been provided with proper materials, embroidered so magnificent a portrait of the king seated on his throne, with his crown on his head, that every one was astounded. Nay, the king was of opinion that so expert an embroiderer, although not of royal descent, would make an admirable daughter-in-law, and his queen entirely agreed with him."

"Ah!" observed Adolphus, "whatever might have been the faults of those kings in fairy tales, they always encouraged talent."

"With the proposal that she should become the bride of the crown prince," continued Rupert, "she felt highly honoured, but at the same time perceived a difficulty."

"In the circumstance that she was already married?" suggested Adolphus.

"No," replied Rupert, "that was perfectly known to everybody. She feared that her first husband would no sooner hear of her second marriage, than he would contrive to eat her up, and her bridegroom into the bargain. She, therefore, counselled the king to have the nuptial ceremony performed at night-time, as quietly as possible, and also to build an upper story to the palace, that could only be approached by seven steps. At the foot of the lowest there was to be a large hole, concealed by a mat, and all the steps were to be smeared with tallow."

"The clown in a Christmas pantomime is familiar with the last stratagem," observed Adolphus, "but he usually employs butter."

"The attempt to keep the wedding a secret," proceeded Rupert, "proved, of course, a failure. The cannibal heard of the approaching marriage of his fugitive wife with the king's son, and immediately collected a number of black men, whom he hid in sacks, and with them proceeded to the royal castle, in the guise of a merchant. All the wedding-party had assembled at the supper-table, and the bride, detecting the unwelcome visitor, gave a hint to her royal mother that she should cause the traveller to be inquired as to the nature of his wares. His answer was to the effect that he had brought pistachio-nuts, dried apricots, and chestnuts, all of the finest quality; whereupon the bride expressed a strong desire to taste luxuries so delicious. He begged to be excused till the following morning; but the king's jester, anxious to oblige his young mistress, crept stealthily up to one of the sacks, with the design of pilfering a dainty, and was not a little astonished when a gruff voice inquired, 'Is it time, master?' Trying all the sacks in succession, the jester heard the same inquiry repeated, and lost no time in reporting his discovery to the guests in the banquet-hall. Perfectly understanding how matters stood, the bride gave orders that the merchant should be compelled to open his sacks immediately, and his speedy retreat at once ensued. The services of the public executioner were now required, and that useful functionary answering the successive inquiries in the affirmative, struck off each head as it was thrust from the sack."

"I see," exclaimed Adolphus, "there is the passage which connects your story with that of the Forty Thieves. Here, of course, we reach the conclusion, and have only to believe that the bride and bridegroom lived happy ever afterwards."

"Not quite so fast," replied Rupert. "The cannibal returned in his hideous form, and ascended to the upper story, in order to carry off the bride; but the spirited lady succeeded in tumbling him down the slippery stairs, and he fell into the hole, where he was immediately devoured by a couple of wild beasts. Now you may indulge in your blissful belief if you please. But of what are you thinking?"

"I am thinking," said Adolphus, "about our ancient friend Polyphemus, who had one eye in the middle of his forehead, fed upon human flesh, and made much use of a roasting-spit. Now, it seems to me that the monster of Cyprus is very like the monster of Sicily, with one eye in his forehead, not in lieu of, but in addition to, the ordinary two."

MY CENSUS PAPER.

I HAVE been at last recognised by the State. Officially, I mean, for in the matter of taxes, &c., any person, I believe, would be recognised, who was content to discharge its claims. But in the present case it will admit no substitute; it looks to me and to me only. Sir, I am the "Head of the Family!"

I have the blue census document now open before me, with its elaborate divisions and subdivisions, "members of this family, of visitors, and of all others who slept or abode in this dwelling on the night of Sunday, April the 2nd." I am proudly at the head of them all.

I approach the first column, where I find that nobody who was absent on the night of Sunday, April the 2nd, is to be entered in the column; excepting those who were travelling, or were out at work on that particular night. This seems to me rather finessing; no decent, well-ordered head of a house would allow any of his people to be out at work, or indeed any of his family that he cared for, to be travelling in the cold night air.

I had been away from home on business of importance, but during the whole time this great national enumeration was before my eyes. Inquisitorial, some called it; yet how important it was that every fact and figure should be recorded for our nation's good. I was eager to get back, and almost the first words I uttered, as my eldest girl ran to meet me, were, "Has the enumerator been here?" She did not know. Indeed, I could see that my rather sudden return had taken them by surprise. There was a young fellow called Tithebarn, who had been assiduously paying attentions to my Patty, and whom, on account of his irreverence as to all matters of business, I had forbidden the house. I had not time now to ask about him, for I saw the blue form on my desk. I trembled as I thought how close I had "run it." My wife treated the matter with a carelessness that really approached levity.

"Oh, there was no fear," she said. "I was near filling it in yesterday. I hear any sort of nonsense will do, provided you give them figures."

"Any nonsense!" I said, appalled. "Do you know what you are speaking of?"

"No!" she said, contemptuously, "nor do they know themselves. Collecting all the women's ages—how many nurses and cooks there are in a street. Mrs. Widgington's little girl, Polly, put them all down cooks; but they're too stupid to find it out."

I was really shocked at this sort of profanity. "Do you know," said I, calmly, "that if you had done what you said you would do, you would have put your hand to a falsehood, signing yourself 'head of the house?'"

"Fiddle-de-dee!" was her answer. "Perhaps it would not be a falsehood."

"Further," I went on, "listen to this: any one not giving correct information is liable to five pounds penalty, besides the inconvenience and annoyance—these are the very words of the form—of appearing before two justices of the peace, and being convicted of having made a wilful misstatement of age, or of any of the particulars. You see on what a precipice you stand."

"Nonsense," she said, laughing; "justices, indeed! Who has been filling your head with this childish twaddle? By the way, dear, to-morrow night the girls asked some friends here for a little quiet tea.

"Sunday night!" I said, horrified. "Tea-parties on Sunday night! oh, I can't have it! This is always the way when I go away. Heaven knows what takes place in my absence." I was really angry at this unworthy advantage that had been taken of my absence, when she interrupted me, and with more sense than I could have believed her capable of, said:

"You know they will count as visitors, and keep up our respectability. The government must take notice of it!"

I could not help smiling at this idea.

There was in truth something in it: and when I was alone I betook myself to studying the form carefully, and was aghast at finding that after all this minuteness of direction, there was a certain obscurity and ambiguity. I have often found this the case where you try to be specially simple, and to adapt your ideas to the meanest capacity. Thus it said that, "Persons following more distinct occupations than one, should insert them *in the order of their importance.*"

How was I to decide between conflicting claims? Here was I, holding an office of trust in a City house, and at the same time contributing largely to the literature of the country, many of my little lucubrations being complimented with a place in the Little Pedlington Mercury, the Camden Town Gazette, and other influential organs. How was I to take on me the invidious task of deciding between these occupations? Here was a breakdown at the start. But the most alarming embarrassment came from column number three, which described "condition," where "married" or "unmarried," &c., was to be placed opposite the names of all except "young children." What was a "young child"? There was Polly, my second girl, thirteen years old: was she a young child, or an old one? If the latter, was I to put "unmarried" against her? How many families were there in the kingdom in which the same doubt would arise, and the error be thus multiplied? What was I to do? I had to declare solemnly the truth of the matter, under my hand.

Thus distracted, and seeing what enormous difficulties were before me in what appeared a very simple matter, I looked ruefully at the form, determining to adjourn it till the morning.

On the Sunday evening I found the little party assembled. Patty ran to me. "My own dearest duck of papa, you won't be angry; but you must ask Mr. Tithebarn to stay the night. He could not help it; he is obliged, by the government, you know——"

I was speechless with indignation, for there before me was the free-and-easy Tithebarn.

"Look here," he said, "sir. Just one word, and you will forgive. I am forced to be here on account of the census."

"The census!" I repeated. "What do you mean?"

"I mean," he said, "by its stringent rules you are bound, in conscience, to give a true return. Am I not a visitor here?"

"Ridiculous," I said; "this is mere fooling. I forbade you to enter the house. Besides," I said, "you don't understand the meaning of the form. You don't know what you are talking about."

"Then where is it?" he said. "Let us see it."

"I'll convince you in a second," I replied. And I hurried him down to the study. I showed him the column, and how the visitorship applied only to such persons as stopped the night. He owned his error, I must say, modestly, and asked my pardon. It was a misconstruction, he said. He would leave at once. He knew that I felt so anxious about the government getting a true return.

"Well," I said, "you had better stay for dinner, at all events."

I must say the dinner that followed was very pleasant, every one was in such spirits; and I must also say that Mr. Tithebarn, of whom I had known little before, rather recommended himself by his stories. But, for all that, he would have to enter himself in column number six merely as "commercial clerk;" he would not do as "occupier of a house" with my Patty. After dinner there was tea. And then the party broke up. I was still thinking of my official form. There was a vast deal of work before me, collecting the ages—the women would be the difficulty there—and the enumerator would come early in the morning.

I went down to my study to think it over. Suddenly young Tithebarn came down to me hurriedly. It was midnight.

"Not gone!" I said.

"My dear sir," he replied, "what are we to do—you must tell me. For you, as 'head of the house,' will have to decide, and it seems a serious responsibility."

"What do you mean?" I said, with some nervousness.

"The simple point is, where are you to enter me?"

"I shall not enter you at all. You are not," I said, reading from the form "either head of the family, wife, child, or other relative, or visitor."

"Other relative," he said, with a sigh. "Ah, if I could be entered under this! But you are surely bound to set me down as visitor?"

"Not at all, my dear Tithebarn," I said, getting interested. "You should sleep here to night to be a visitor. That," said I, "is about as probable as that the moon should fall."

"Well, then," he replied, "see the re-

sult—I shall not be counted at all. I shall have to travel all to-night, and shall not get to London until to-morrow about mid-day. What is the result, I am left out of the census. And the fault will be yours," he added, reproachfully. "If every one behaved that way government might whistle for its census."

It had not struck me in that view before. He was right. The returns would be worthless if made up in that manner. I would have to attach my name solemnly, to what I knew was a nullity. Yet what was I to do? I could not enter him as a visitor, and would not if I could. He saw my hesitation, and went on.

"And you know there is the penalty, five pounds fine for not giving 'correct information;' besides," he added, reading from the form "'the annoyance and inconvenience of appearing before two justices of the peace.'"

"Yes, papa," said Patty, who had just come in.

"But what is all this to me?" I said. "Even on the construction of this form, you will not pass the night here, and therefore we have nothing to do with you. Yes"—he looked nonplussed at this—"only those," I continued, "be they visitors or members of my own household, who sleep in this house, are to be set down by me, as occupier."

He had nothing to say. But Patty suddenly cried, "Abode, papa!"

"Yes," he said, "I can abide here, walk about all night——"

"Or sit on a chair by the kitchen fire; that would amount to abiding," said Patty.

I could not but admire this ingenuity, which was worthy of a special pleader's office, though I tried to look angry. "He shall not abide here," I said.

"Well, if he does not, papa," continued she, still more eagerly, "one can be 'travelling or working' all night long, and return here to-morrow. You see it says so: 'no person absent to be entered here, except those who may be travelling, or out at work during that night and who return home on Monday.'"

"That is clear," said the young fellow; "so I shall return to-morrow, after travelling all night, and you will have incurred the penalty of the law. I have given you warning I shall return here to-morrow, after working all night."

It was really a serious dilemma. I turned it in every way. If I put him down as "visitor," it would be an untruth, for he would not have slept here the night before. If I did not put him down I should be the cause of a false return, thereby contributing to imperil the success of the great measure, or he might, as he had threatened to do, secretly "abide" about the premises, and showing himself next morning, establish a valid claim to be counted a member of my household. And once legally recognised in such a way, with his name coming after Patty's, I knew the coolness of the man to be such, that he would never let the matter rest, but would use it as a lever to prize himself into my household. After a short struggle I had to give way, as I felt the State had a paramount claim, and within a month, as I anticipated, he had entitled himself to a place in the second column as son-in-law.

PLOGARRIAN.

IN SEVEN CHAPTERS. CHAPTER V.

The young are passionate, but not persistent mourners. It is the wise and beneficent law of their nature that such should be the case. And it is a very great mistake, too often made, to imagine that a lad or lass is heartless because the God-given elasticity of their forward, and not backward looking hearts successfully rebels against, and throws off the weight of, a great sorrow.

Marie came to her uncle's house in Rouen a heart-broken girl enough, fully convinced that smiles and happiness were over for her in this world. But in a very few weeks her mind was opening itself to all the new surroundings—the new sights, the new faces, the new occupations of the new world into which she had come. Poor Captain Morel was still pacing his deck during many a solitary hour in distant seas, with his head sunk on his breast, busy with memory only, when Marie was already laughing her old blithe laugh as musically and as merrily as ever, and was busying herself with a hopeful outlook into the future. It was quite right, quite wise, quite natural that it should be so.

Mademoiselle Géneviève Vezin was entirely of that opinion. She was not one of those who approved of, or tolerated, what she called "giving way." Nor would it have seemed in any wise natural to her, that a young person brought from a residence at Havre to live at Rouen, should not have felt the change a consolation under any circumstances. She was a Norman to the backbone, and in her heart of hearts considered the grand old Norman

capital to be as much superior to Paris, in every respect save size, as Normans were to all other Frenchmen in every respect, size included.

She was entirely pleased that Marie should recover her good spirits, and fortunately saw other reasons for approving of the new member of the little family. She soon discovered both that Marie was far better educated than she had anticipated, and that she was quite disposed to consider herself as having everything yet to learn, from the superior experience and attainments of the gouvernante. So that the relationship between them promised to be in every way agreeable. With her uncle, the beautiful and modest Marie very naturally soon became a favourite.

It so happened that more than two months elapsed after Marie's arrival in her new home before she had any opportunity of seeing her old friend and playfellow, Jean Delaroche. There chanced to be some special examinations, or academical discipline of some kind going on at the seminary, which kept the students at home, and prevented them from visiting their friends in the city. And it thus came to pass that Marie had made a new acquaintance, before she had any opportunity of renewing her former habits of intimacy with her old one.

The matter happened in this wise.

Mademoiselle Géneviève had a brother living in Rouen, a wealthy grazier, who had only for the last three or four years established himself in the capital of his province to enjoy the ease to which a long life of successful industry had entitled him. Monsieur Vezin was wont to see a good deal of company at his hospitable house in the Avenue des Marronniers. For himself, the worthy grazier would have preferred passing all his evenings, as he did most of them, at the café. But there was a Madame Vezin, and there were marriageable daughters, whose tastes and interests it was right to take into account. And thus it came to pass that on every Sunday evening a select circle of, not perhaps quite the best, but certainly the second best, society in the Norman capital was to be found assembled in the Avenue des Marronniers. The selection of the weekly festival day for these gatherings was an especially fortunate circumstance for Mademoiselle Géneviève Vezin, the canon's gouvernante, for it enabled her to profit by these gaieties, pretty well the only chance of outlook into the social world available to her. Had they taken place on any other day, this could hardly have been the case. For it would not have been compatible with the duties of her position, which the gouvernante prided herself on never, on any account, neglecting, to leave Monsieur le Chanoine to himself during an entire evening. There was no knowing what he might not have done, what troubles he might not have got into, what deprivations he might have been exposed to. He might have gone out into the street without his cloak, or his black worsted comforter round his neck. He might have set the house on fire. It was a thing not to be thought of.

But on the Sunday it was Canon Morel's habit to pass the evening with a brother canon, much his senior, who was too old and infirm to leave his own fireside of an evening. The good canon, in talking to his faithful gouvernante, used to speak of these weekly visits as an act of Christian charity, no doubt in strict accordance with the truth. It may perhaps, however, be suspected that he was less accurate when he referred, as he would sometimes casually do, to the edifying talk supposed to take place between the two dignitaries on the occasion of these meetings. Had Asmodeus been playing his pranks in Rouen, the two old gentlemen might probably have been found intent on the great national game of dominoes.

It was on the eighth Saturday after Marie's arrival at Rouen that the gouvernante proposed to her that she should accompany her to her brother's house. She had with difficulty persuaded herself to wait so long before taking this step. But Marie had naturally shrunk from this first emerging from the quiet and shady retirement of her uncle's home, in which the daily life went on as regularly, as monotonously, and almost with as little variety of sound as the great clock that droned its sleepy life away in the parlour. Indeed, she still shrank from the ordeal. But Mademoiselle Vezin would allow her no longer respite. She had been looking for ward with considerable pride and triumph to the production of so striking an ornament to her brother's salon as this newly-found niece—the niece of Monsieur le Chanoine, of course, but that came to quite the same thing. She had boasted much at her brother's of the beauty, modesty, amiability, and charms of all sorts of her new charge, and it irked her to be obliged, Sunday after Sunday, to say that her Phœnix was not yet presentable.

It was impossible, as the good gouvernante urged, that anything could become Marie better than her thin black barège dress, setting off, as it did, her tall slender figure, and the snow-white purity of her delicate and lily-like complexion. Mademoiselle Géneviève was quite right. She knew perfectly well what she was talking about. And so the black barège was put on; a simple black velvet band bound, and in binding showed well the lovely tint of her abundant blond hair; and Marie suffered herself to be taken to the house in the Avenue des Marronniers, looking, had she but guessed it, lovely enough to have caused no little sensation in many a far more brilliant assembly.

It was the first party at which Marie had ever been present. And a girl's first party is an epoch in her life. Little Marie was terribly nervous, terribly alarmed. Again and again she besought Mademoiselle Vezin to remember that she had never been introduced into society before; that she did not know what she ought to do, and what to leave undone; that she was sure she should not be able to speak a word. The gouvernante told her that it was very easy and simple to do as the others did, and that as for speaking, les petites demoiselles were intended to be looked at, and not to be heard.

So Marie, stilling with a strong effort the beating of her heart as far as she could, and with the whiteness of her cheek a little tinged with a delicate blush, walked behind Mademoiselle Géneviève into Monsieur Vezin's little salon, brilliant with half a dozen lamps, and found herself in the presence of some half a score of stout, comfortable looking Norman bourgeois and bourgeoises, together with as many more less stout and less comfortable-looking jeunes gens of the next succeeding generation, with just for all the world the same feelings, which your grace may remember to have been conscious of, when some five-and-twenty years ago, you made your first appearance at Almack's.

Of course she soon found that the ordeal was not so dreadful as she had imagined. The three Mademoiselles Vezin took possession of her, crowding around her in their blue-ribboned white muslin robes, and endeavouring to the best of their power, and with some measure of success, to make curiosity assume the semblance of interest and friendliness. Then she found herself placed on a chair with her back against the wall, between two fat old ladies, who after a civil little speech apiece, conversed with each other across her. And Marie congratulated herself upon the safety of her position.

In a very few minutes, however, she found that it by no means afforded the security she had imagined. The master of the house had not yet been presented to her; and he now marched up to her to perform that ceremony for himself. He was a great burly man, looking much more like an Englishman than a native of any other part of France could have done, with a broad, red, good-natured face, kind, and well-meaning, but with about as much possibility of conceiving the idea of any person being caused to suffer by having their most sacred sorrows touched by a rude hand, as one of his own oxen.

"Mademoiselle, charmè d'avoir le plaisir. So you are Marie Morel. My daughters have only just told me you were here—excusez. Ma foi, mademoiselle, the captain may be very proud of his daughter, permettez que je vous le dise—mais en vérité et sans compliments. N'est ce pas qu'elle est jolie comme la plus jolie de toutes les anges, Ma-ame Bourdon?" he added, turning to one of the stout dames by her side, who having blouzy daughters of her own, thought that le père Vezin was quite getting into his dotage.

"Et comme cette petite robe noire lui va à ravir, n'est ce pas?" continued the worthy grazier, little heeding the heightened colour and painful embarrassment of the poor girl. "And that reminds me," he went on, pitilessly, "they tell me you have lost your mother. Pauvre petite. C'est dommage. But we must all die you know; and it's no good crying over what can't be helped. How old was Madame Morel when she died?"

Poor little Marie was by this time biting her quivering lip to restrain herself from bursting into tears; and, when she looked up piteously into her tormentor's face at his last point-blank question, she was utterly unable to speak a word.

Just at that critical moment of her distress, a young man, who had lounged up to the spot, where she was sitting and was ostensibly employing himself in speaking to Madame Bourbon, but whose very evident object was to ask the master of the house for an introduction to Mademoiselle Morel as soon as he could find an opportunity of doing so, said suddenly and abruptly, "Monsieur Vezin, Madame Vezin is calling you. She wishes, I think, the piano to be moved."

Monsieur Vezin turned immediately to go in quest of his wife; and Marie, who had very plainly comprehended the ruse of her deliverer and its intention, felt infinitely grateful to him for it.

He was quite a young man, of dark complexion, and very tolerably good-looking. And his black gloves, and the crape upon the hat which he had in his hand, showed that he, too, was in mourning. Having thus succeeded in his object, as has been said, he discreetly waited for awhile to allow Marie time to recover herself, before he asked one of the daughters of the house to present him to her:

"Mademoiselle Morel — Monsieur de Kergonnec de Plogarrian," said the young lady, not perhaps quite as graciously as she might have done, and then turned on her heel.

After a few words meaning nothing had been spoken between them, Marie could not refrain from saying to him:

"I saw very well just now that you perceived how much Monsieur Vezin was distressing me, without meaning it the least in the world, poor man. And I must tell you, monsieur, how grateful I was to you for your help."

"Eh! mademoiselle, I was but too able to understand all that you were suffering—all that must have been in your heart. It needed no great penetration on my part." he added, touching the crape on his hat with his finger as he spoke. "It is easy to sympathise with a sorrow which is the counterpart of one's own. I, too, have recently lost a mother."

Monsieur de Kergonnec—Alain de Kergonnec he let her know his name was—then went on to tell her that his father had had dealings with Monsieur Vezin, having been wont for many years to send up the lean kine bred on the lands of Plogarrian to the richer pastures of Normandy to be fattened, as is the wont of Breton landowners; and that that was how he came to have the good fortune of making her acquaintance. And then they spoke each of their homes, so recently bereaved, and of the blank they had felt to be left in their lives.

And when they parted, Alain de Kergonnec had won little Marie Morel's heart. He had made her grateful to him. He had spoken to her words of sympathy. He had made her feel as if there were a tie of sympathy between them, which was not shared by any of those around them. And this was all that was necessary to enable the young man to captivate the heart of the young girl. Not that if it had so happened that Marie had never again seen or heard of Monsieur de Kergonnec after parting with him that night she would have been heart-broken, or even very unhappy. But the foundation was laid, and well laid. She was sure to think of him in after hours of solitude; sure to feel that there was a wide difference between him and all the other people she had seen; sure to put him on a pedestal in her heart.

And it did *not* so happen that she neither saw nor heard any more of Monsieur de Kergonnec after that, to her, eventful evening. On the following Sunday she went again to Monsieur Vezin's house, and again met Alain de Kergonnec there. But they had met before that. For he had caused himself to be presented in due form to Mademoiselle Vezin, who had made herself fully acquainted with his name and parentage within the first five minutes after she had seen him speaking to her charge, and had obtained from the gouvernante permission to pay his respects at the house of the canon.

And then—after a few such visits, and a few more evenings spent in the Avenue des Marronniers, which social gatherings Marie had come to consider as extremely pleasant things, and to look forward to as the most agreeable feature in her life—then it had come to that pass, that Marie would have been broken-hearted had she been told that she was never to see Alain de Kergonnec any more.

And then also Mademoiselle Vezin began to bethink herself that it would be well for her to have a little serious talk with her brother upon the subject of Monsieur de Kergonnec. She went accordingly one morning, while Monsieur le Chanoine was at the cathedral, to her brother's house for this purpose, and was met by the information, very readily given as soon as she had mentioned the name of Monsieur de Kergonnec, that the young man was engaged to be married to one of the largest heiresses in the Finisterre, being himself an only son, and the heir to a very considerable property. The marriage, M. Vezin added, would have taken place before now, had it not been that the extreme youth of the lady made it necessary to wait yet a year or two.

Poor Mademoiselle Vezin was terribly taken aback at this news, and could not help feeling a certain degree of self-reproach. She was exceedingly glad, however, that her brother's readiness to tell

what he knew had put her in possession of the facts before she had uttered any word that could in any way compromise Marie; and she contented herself with hoping that no serious mischief had been done, and that little Marie would very soon forget that she had ever seen Monsieur de Kergonnec.

But the poor gouvernante was shutting the stable door after the steed had been stolen, as completely as any one was ever guilty of that piece of wisdom.

Some little time before this conversation of Mademoiselle Vezin with her brother, the period during which the seminarists were detained within their walls had come to an end, and Jean Delaroche had been able to visit his friend and patron as usual. And of course he and Marie met; and of course there were tears to be shed between them, the drops of which mingled with each other. And Jean Delaroche, as he walked home alone and silently in the evening to his seminary, began to think, for the first time, that the high and noble calling to which he, a poor foundling, had had the signal good fortune to be invited, carried with it some drawbacks of a very terrible kind. For the first time it began to seem doubtful to him whether he could fitly, and with such goodwill and zeal as he ought to feel, enter irrevocably the gates that were so soon to be opened before him. For the first time the vows that were to separate him from the world in such sort as to shut him out for ever from all thought of woman's love, seemed horrible to him. And as he sat in his little lonely cell, and lay awake for hours afterward in his pallet, he thought this renunciation would be impossible to him, that even yet he had not so put his hand to the plough but that he might still without dishonour turn back.

But yet there was only one thing, for the sake of which he would fain be loosed from the bonds which were to bind him. If he could have, if he might hope to be blessed by Marie Morel's love, not all the Church could offer him should tempt him to accept her benefits accompanied by her chains.

On the first day on which it was possible to him to do so, he returned to the canon's house, determined to ascertain whether any hope of such a blessing might be his. The common emotion which they had shared together at their first meeting after so many years of absence, and after the death of her who had been scarcely more a mother to one than to the other of them, was well calculated to deceive him upon this point. All thought of love—of such love as Delaroche was dreaming of—had been far enough from Marie's mind, occupied as it was by another, while they had sat together hand in hand, and mingling their tears. But it is intelligible enough, and excusable enough, that the poor seminarist should have dreamed a different dream.

The waking came very soon, however. Poor Jean! And it was a merciless waking, too, as merciless as sudden and complete. For Marie was harder than she might have been to him. Who is to fathom all the intricate recesses, jealously concealed as they are from prying eyes, of the youthful female heart? Why was she, generally all gentleness and loving sweetness, hard to the poor fellow, her old close friend and playmate, whose only fault towards her was that he loved her too truly and too well? Why? Perhaps from the very circumstance of their old relationship. Perhaps the having so long regarded Delaroche in a totally different light, made it seem to her absurd to be asked suddenly to change her feeling towards him so entirely, and made him seem absurd and offensive for asking it. Perhaps it was, because he forced on her heart the recognition of how impossible it was that she should ever think of any man with thoughts of love, save of him who had so lately made himself master of her heart. Perhaps she was angry with him for mistaking the nature of the feeling she had so frankly manifested at their last meeting.

At all events, it was not difficult to let him know and understand that there was no hope for him. Marie could not tell him that she loved another, especially when that other had never in formal terms asked her for her love. And poor Delaroche had too much modesty of feeling to make it possible for him to ask her whether the reason why he could not have that which he coveted, was because it was already given to another.

But none the less did the poor seminarist perceive from the artless transparency of Marie's words, and looks, and manner that such must be the case. And was it a matter of surprise that such a prize should not have been reserved for him; for him, the poor nameless pensioner, first on her father's and then on her uncle's bounty; for him, too, who was—if not vowed—all but vowed to the Church? As he stole out of the canon's house, and slunk home to his seminary by back streets, feeling as if he were afraid to be seen, he marvelled, with genuine wonder, at the madness which could have urged him to nourish such a

hope, and prefer such a suit! Bitter shame at his folly mingled with the bitterness of his rejection and of hopeless love. A sudden heat came over him, and he blushed in the solitude of his cell, even as he knelt to pray that he might be forgiven for his backturning, and strengthened to fight down this madness, when his imagination presented to him the picture of himself clad in his seminarist's semi-priestly robe, offering love to that beautiful girl! It did add to the incongruity that ungainly robe of serge, encasing his tall, slight figure from the neck to the ankles! And it might well have been, that part of Marie's harshness in rejecting him, had been due to this outward and visible sign of the abyss, that should have been impassable between Delaroche and every thought of human passion.

Poor Delaroche prayed, and fasted, and did penance, and mortified the body, and prayed again. We all have known what it is to struggle in such a fight, whether we call it a fight against our own passions, or a fight with the foul fiend. One man may best fight his fight by such means as the seminarist's education had taught him to use, and another may find other means of warfare more adapted to him. But Delaroche fought truly, and bravely, and long. And he who does so will not fail to win the victory.

Jean Delaroche did win the victory. Not that he came out from the fight unscathed. He had received wounds which it would take many a long year to heal entirely. And grave and almost melancholy as had been the natural disposition of his boyhood, he came out from the ordeal he had passed a yet graver man. Nevertheless, he no longer went forward on his destined path with a half heart. He knew that the only way of making his lot in life endurable was, on the contrary, to put all his heart into it; and when, shortly after the time at which this, the poor boy's first and last dream had been dreamed, he received the first orders of the Church, the diocese of Rouen did not contain a man more zealously eager to begin the warfare to which his life had been consecrated, and to give himself and all his best energies to the work.

The superiors of Rome's hierarchy generally know the men they have under them well; and it was not likely that such a man as Delaroche should long wait for employment. At the very earliest possible age he was sent to take charge of the parish of Tregastel, on the northern coast of the department of the Côtes du Nord.

Nor did he see Marie Morel again before departing to begin his new duties. It cost him one more struggle—what was that in addition to all the struggling past?—to do so; but he knew that it was so best and wisest.

Marie's other lover exercised no such self-restraint. There was a last meeting between her and Alain de Kergonnec, in which all was avowed on both sides—one of those meetings, that leave more terrible and enduring scars on the heart, than the parting they precede. Alain avowed his love for her, and for her only, in all the world, while confessing the impossibility of acting in such a matter in opposition to the will of his father. Could he only follow the dictates of his own heart, not all the dowers of all the heiresses in France should weigh a featherweight in the scale.

He was not a man of the same calibre as Jean Delaroche. But it was doubtless true that he did love Marie, and would not have renounced her love for any richer marriage that could be offered to him, if he had been free to act according to the dictates of his own heart.

But it might be doubted whether there were more of kindness than of cruelty in telling the girl from whom he was about to part that there was yet to be a respite of two years, and perhaps three, before the marriage with Mademoiselle de Tressinien could take place. That young lady was not quite fifteen years old at that time; and though the betrothal was to take place at once, the marriage was to be deferred till the lady should be eighteen; and who knew what might take place in the interval!

One word of palliation, feeble enough, may be said for Alain de Kergonnec. Those readers who have not forgotten the picture that was presented to them of Gregoire de Kergonnec in his youth, may conceive that such a man in his middle age would be a father whom it would not be easy for a son, and especially a French son, to oppose in the matter of his marriage.

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