

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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THE ROSE AND THE KEY.

CHAPTER XX. LADY VERNON'S EXCURSIONS.

WHEN he overtook that cheerful sentry, he said: "Can you tell me where I should be likely to find Miss Vernon? I have a word to say to her."

"Lady Vernon sent for her a few minutes ago, but she said she would not keep her long," said Miss Max; "I told her I should walk up and down here till she came."

Mr. Coke walked beside her without saying a word, till they had completed a walk to the end, and back again.

"Lady Vernon is as handsome as ever," he remarked, on a sudden. "Since I last saw her there is really no change that I can see."

"But that is scarcely a year ago," answered Miss Max.

"More than four," replied Mr. Coke, smiling.

"You mean to say you have not seen Barbara for four years!" exclaimed Miss Max, stopping short and turning towards him.

"I come whenever I'm sent for," said Mr. Coke, with a laugh. "But though I don't see her very often, I very often hear from her, and very clear and clever letters she writes upon business, I can tell you."

"But didn't you know she is in town for some time, every year of her life?"

"I had not an idea. We hear from her generally about once a fortnight. But I should very often have liked a few minutes' talk with her. Those little points of vivâ voce explanation are very useful in a long correspondence. And so she is every year at Grosvenor-square?"

"I think you had better not say a word about it to Lady Vernon," said Miss Max.

"Oh! of course not. I leave that to her. But I think it is a mistake, not giving us half an hour when she comes." Thus Mr. Coke, swinging his stick a little, and looking over the top of the terrace balustrades, across the court, and ponds, and peacocks, and swans, and the close-shorn sward stained with the solemn shadows of the trees, down the perspective of foliage, to the mighty piers and great carved urns of the iron gates, and the gables and twisted chimneys of the gate-house.

"Yes, that would be only natural, and her not doing so puzzles me more and more," replied Maximilla Medwyn; "you are such an old friend, and know everything about the affairs of this family so intimately, that I'll tell you; but you are not to let it go further, for it is plain she does not want it talked about; and it is simply that which makes me very curious."

"I've learned by this time to hold my tongue and to keep secrets, and I venture to say, this is a very harmless one," laughed Mr. Coke.

"Well, now, listen—what a time Maud is! Once a year—I think about July or August—my handsome cousin, Lady Vernon, is taken with what my maid terms a fit of the fidgets. She takes her maid, but never Maud with her, mind—never. Maud has never come out. I don't think she has been six times in London in her life. That is not right, you know; but that is a different matter. Lady Vernon and her maid go up to Grosvenor-square, where the house is all locked up and uncarpeted, all except a room or two, and where there is no one to receive them but an old housekeeper and a housemaid. She tells old Mr. Foljambe, the vicar, that it is to consult a London physician. No great testimony, I think, to the surpassing skill of Doctor Malkin. But, I fancy, it

is not about any such thing she goes to town, for her stay in Grosvenor-square never outlasts a day or two. Her fidgets continue. She leaves her maid there, and goes alone, I believe, from one watering-place to another."

"Without her maid, you say?"

"Yes, without her maid."

"And how do they know she goes to watering-places?"

"They never know where she is going. The only clue is, that now and then she sends a note of directions to her maid, in London, or to the house-steward, or the housekeeper, down here; and these indicate her capricious and feverish changes of place, which you'll allow contrast oddly with the stillness and monotony of her life, when she is at home. Then, after six weeks or so spent in this mysterious way, she appears again, suddenly, at her town house, tells her maid that she is better, and so they return here. It is very whimsical, isn't it? Can you understand it?"

"Restlessness, and perhaps a longing for a little holiday," he answered. "She has, I may say, a very peculiar position in what they call the religious world; and the correspondence she directs, and even conducts with her own hand, is very large. Altogether, I think, she makes her life too laborious."

"Well, as you and she, and you and I, are all old friends, I don't mind telling you that I don't think that's it. I don't believe a word of it. There is more in it than that; but *what* I can't divine; and, indeed, it does not trouble me much; if Barbara would only do what she ought about Maud, I should be very well satisfied. But she has never been presented, nor been to town for a single season, and Lady Vernon has never taken her out, and I don't think has any idea of doing so. Of course, you'll say that, with all her advantages, it can't matter much. But there can be no advantage in people's saying that she has lived all her life like a recluse; and I think there is always a disadvantage in despising what is usual. And really, Mr. Coke, as a confidential friend, I think you might very well say a word about it."

He smiled, and shook his head.

"All that sort of thing is quite out of my line. But I think with you, it doesn't much matter; for she's the greatest heiress in England; and she is so beautiful, and—here's Miss Vernon at last."

As Maud came down the steps she looked to the right and left, and seeing Miss Max,

smiled and nodded, and quickened her approach.

Mr. Coke advanced a step or two to meet her, with his business looks on.

"I have been wishing to say a word if you will allow me. I think it would be advisable that you should be represented at the conference we are to hold to-day, to prevent any course being determined on that might embarrass your interests under the will; and if you authorise me to do so, I will watch them for you this afternoon; and, in any case, I'll mention that a solicitor should be retained for you, as the instrument is unusually complicated, and you will be of age in a very little time."

"I don't understand these things, Mr. Coke, but whatever mamma and you think right, I shall be very much obliged to you to do. What a charming day it is! I hope you are not to be shut up all day. When you were last here it was winter, and you will hardly know the place now; you ought to see Rymmel's Hoe to-day, it is looking quite beautiful," said Miss Maud Vernon.

"I'm off, I'm afraid, to town this evening," he answered; "a thousand thanks. I must now go in and see Lady Vernon, if she's at leisure."

So with a smile that quickly disappeared, he turned and walked up the steps.

CHAPTER XXI. THE CONFERENCE.

OF this muster of trustees, Miss Maud Vernon gave this account in one of her long letters to her friend, Miss Mary Mainard.

"On Tuesday we had a little parliament of trustees, opened with great solemnity by mamma. She was aided by an attorney, a Mr. Coke, who says that your humble servant ought also to have been furnished with an adviser of the same profession. Old Lord Verney came similarly attended; and Lord Barroden also brought his attorney; Mr. Hildering, a great man in 'the City,' I am told, dispensed with that assistance, and, I suppose, relied on his native roguery. Still there was an imposing court of attorneys, sitting as assessors with the more dignified members of the assembly. Sir Harry Strafford, who is also a trustee named in grandpapa's will, did not attend. As all these were men of importance twenty years ago, when they were named in his will, you may suppose what a juvenile air the assembly presented.

"Mamma did not choose that I should attend, telling me that I should be sent for,

if required; and I had begun to hope that my assistance had been unanimously dispensed with, when a servant came to tell me that mamma wished to see me in the library. Thither I repaired, and found her presiding at her cabinet.

"Lord Verney and Mr. Hildering were a little red, and I fancy had been snubbing one another, for Mr. Coke mentioned, afterwards, that they are members of the same boards in London, and fight like 'cat and dog' whenever they meet. Mamma looked, as usual, serene, and old Lord Barroden was, I am sure, asleep, for he was the only gentleman of the company who did not rise to receive me. There were printed copies of grandpapa's will, one of which was given to me; so I took a chair beside mamma, and listened while they talked in a language which I did not the least understand, about what they called real and personal reversions, contingent remainders, and vested remainders, and fees and tails, and more unintelligible names and things than I could remember or reckon up in an hour.

"They all seemed to treat mamma with great deference; not complimentary, but real; and I remarked that they said very little across the table to one another; but whenever they had anything to ask or to say, they looked to her, and she seemed to understand everything about it, better than any one else in the room, and Mr. Coke told me, afterwards, she is one of the best lawyers he ever met, and he explained a great deal that I did not then understand.

"The conference lasted nearly three hours! You can't imagine anything so dull; and I came away just as wise as I went there, except, perhaps, that I had learned a little patience.

"The Rose and the Key, which, as you know, figure on our shield, were talked of a good deal, and are mentioned very often in the will, as indicating the families which are named particularly. Old Lord Barroden woke up at this part of the conversation, and talked a great deal of heraldry, whether good or bad I can't say; and then, as they were still very garrulous upon crests, supporters, shields, chevrons, and all the rest, mamma led the way to the state dining-room. I don't know why, we never dine there now; I think it about the prettiest room in the house—I don't think you saw it, when you were with us. It has great stone shields let into the wall all round, and ours, over the mantelpiece. They are all carved in relief,

and painted and gilded, according to heraldry; and you can't think how stately and brilliant it looks. Old Mr. Puntles, who is our antiquary in this part of the world, says that it was an old English custom, when a house was being built, for the owner to place the arms of the principal families in the county, thus, round the state dining-room, by way of a compliment to them, and now I saw what I never observed before, that in every second one, or oftener, our device, the Rose and the Key, is quartered in the corner. The rose, red; and the key, gold; *gules* and *or*, they call them, on a field azure: you see how learned I have grown."

Then the writer ran away to subjects more likely to amuse her and her friend.

Mr. Coke did not stay to dinner. He took his leave nearly three hours before that solemn meal. As he came down-stairs from his room he encountered Miss Vernon, who was going to dress.

"You are going to hear the bishop's sermon, and see the statue unveiled?" he inquired, stopping before her in the gallery.

"Yes, Miss Medwyn and I; mamma has a headache, and says she can't come," she replied.

"I'm afraid our long consultation tired her; I'm sure it tired you, and I don't think you can have understood half we said. If you have five minutes, I'll describe to you now, just in outline, the leading provisions of your grandfather's will."

"I have more than five minutes, I'm sure," she answered; but not so much interested as Mr. Coke thought she might have been.

Young ladies are so much in the habit of being taken care of by others, that they can without much magnanimity dispense with the drudgery of taking care of themselves. They like whole bones as well as we do, but the vicious habit of being taken care of prevails, and what woman is quite capable of taking care of herself over a crossing?

"You must have for life, if you outlive your mother, Lady Vernon, at least ten thousand pounds a year, and you may have ultimately one hundred and fifty thousand pounds a year, in land, and a great deal of money beside—I don't think there is any lady of your age, in England, with such magnificent prospects. If Lady Vernon should marry, and have a son, the estates will go to him charged with ten thousand a year for you. If she should not marry, then, on her death, they go to you. If

you marry, then your mother's power over the whole property will be very limited indeed. If neither you nor she should marry, then on your death the estates will go to some one to be appointed among certain families who are connected with yours, and who have a right to quarter the family device of the Rose and the Key."

"I've heard that before. Mr. Tintern of the Grange, near this, represents one of those families, I've been told?"

"Yes, and in that event, you or Lady Vernon, whichever survives, would have the right to appoint."

"I'm afraid, Mr. Coke, I have not mamma's talent for business. I should very soon be lost in the labyrinth."

"But, so far, you do understand?"

"Yes, I think I do."

"Well, there are also specific provisions in the event of your marriage, Miss Vernon, and perhaps, until you are furnished with a legal adviser, the best thing I can do for you will be to send you as short and simple an abstract of the will and its codicils as I can make out. The plan of the will is, to keep the estates together, and to favour certain families, out of whom, in the event of your both dying unmarried, an heir is to be appointed. If your mother marries, which I rather conjecture is by no means unlikely——"

He looked very archly as he said this, and some complication of feeling made the young lady, though she smiled, turn pale.

"Do you really mean——?" began Miss Maud.

"I only say conjecture, mind, but I am generally a tolerably good conjuror, and we shall see. But, if Lady Vernon should marry," he continued, "her power over the estates is increased very considerably, but your reversion—I mean, your right of succession—cannot be affected by any event but the birth of a son. The provisions respecting the personal property—that is money, jewels, pictures, everything but the estates—are very stringent also, and follow very nearly the dispositions respecting the real estate. There is an unusual provision, also, with respect to all savings and accumulations, which may be made either by your mother, Lady Vernon, or by you, and they are to be carried to the account of the personal estate under the trusts; and very searching powers for the discovery of any such are vested in the trustees, and they are obliged from time to time to exercise them: and any such sum or sums, no matter how invested, are to be carried to

the credit of the trustees to the uses of the will. So you see, it is a very potent instrument."

"I'm sure it is," said the young lady, with a disappointing cheerfulness.

"Well, I'll do my best; I'll send you an abstract; and, is that the church-bell I hear?" he asked, glancing through the open window.

"Yes, we hear it very distinctly," said she.

"Oh, then you'll be going immediately." And again he took his leave.

CHAPTER XXII. IN ROYDON CHURCH.

THE bell from the church tower sounds sweetly over town and field: and the sober-minded folk, who people the quaint streets of Roydon, answer that solemn invitation very kindly.

In this evening sun, as the parishioners troop slowly towards the church-gate, near the village tree, sad Mrs. Foljambe, hard of hearing, the gay Captain Bamme, and the new curate, the Reverend Michael Doody, accidentally encounter.

Mrs. Foljambe stops to receive their greetings. The level sunbeam shows all the tiny perplexity of wrinkles on her narrow forehead with a clear illumination.

"I'm going to the church to witness the ceremonial," shouts the captain, with his best smile.

She turns with a little start.

"No wonder she's a bit hard of hearing, captain, if that's the way ye've been talking at her this ten years," suggests Mr. Doody, in a tone to her inaudible.

"We have been sending up some china and cut-glass to the vestry-room, for the bishop's toilet-table," says Mrs. Foljambe, and her head droops, and her sad eyes look dreamily on the road, as if she were thinking of passing the rest of the evening there.

"The bell has only ten minutes more to ring, ma'am," says the curate, who is growing uneasy.

"It is a nice evening," observes Mrs. Foljambe, drearily.

"Quite so," says the captain, waving his hand agreeably towards the firmament. "Although we have sun, it's cool."

"Your son's at school?" repeats good Mrs. Foljambe, to let him know that she had heard him distinctly.

"Oh, oh, oh, that's rich!" ejaculates the curate, exploding.

The captain smiles, and darts a malignant glance at the Reverend Michael

Doody, but does not choose to bawl a correction in the street.

So they resume their walk towards the church. The sun is drawing towards the horizon; it is six o'clock. The tombstones cast shadows eastward on the grass, and the people, as they troop upward toward the porch, throw their moving shadows likewise along the green mantle of the dead, and the grey churchyard wall catches them perpendicularly, by the heads and shoulders, and exhibits in that yellow light the silhouettes of worthy townsmen and their wives, and sharp outlines of hats and bonnets, gliding onward, to the music of the holy bell, to hear the good old bishop preach.

The good bishop is robing in the vestry-room. The vicar does the honours with profound suavity, and the curate assists with a military sense of subordination and immense gravity.

A note awaits the bishop, in charge of the clerk, from Lady Vernon, pleading her headache, and begging the good prelate to come to Roydon Hall, and if his arrangements about the Church Missions meeting will not permit that, at least that on his way back to the palace he will give her a day or two, or as much longer a time as he can. One of her grenadiers in blue and gold and cockades waits at the vestry-door for an answer, looking superciliously over the headstones. But the bishop cannot accept these hospitable proffers.

In due time the statue is unveiled. In white marble, the image of a slender man, of some forty years or upward, with a noble pensive face, and broad fine forehead, his head a little inclined, stands forth, one hand laid lightly on an open book, the other raised, in pleading or in blessing. It is what we don't often see, a graceful, striking, and pathetic monumental image.

Dead two-and-twenty years, there were many present who remembered that energetic, charitable, and eloquent vicar well. And all who knew him adjusted themselves to listen, with earnest ears, to the words which were to fall from the lips of the good old prelate, who preached, after so long an interval, as it were the funeral sermon of his gifted friend.

The Vernon family have a grand, old-fashioned, square pew in the aisle; Maud Vernon and Miss Max Medwyn sit there now, and the bishop's chaplain has been, by special invitation, elevated to its carpeted floor, and sits on its crimson cushion, and performs his religious exercises on a

level at least twelve inches higher than the rest of the congregation in the aisle.

Under the angle of the organ-loft, at each side, is a narrow entrance. And above that, at the right, is a straight stone arch, separating the loft from the side gallery, and looking diagonally across the aisle. Behind this, going back deep into the shade, is a narrow seat, with a door opened by a latch-key from the winding tower-stairs. Here you may sit between stone walls that are panelled with oak, hearing and seeing, and yourself unobserved. In old times, perhaps, it was the private observatory of some ecclesiastical dignitary or visitor, who looked in when he pleased, secretly, to see that mass was sung, and all things done decently and in order.

To those who look up, the arch seems empty, and nothing but darkness in the cavity behind it. But a human being in perturbation and bitterness of soul is there. It is hard for her to follow the benedictions of the psalm, to which the congregation read the responses that echo through the old church walls. In the corner of the deep and dark cell she occupies, there stands, as it were, an evil spirit, and there ripples in and fills her ears, with ebb and flow, the vengeful swell, but too familiar to her soul, of another psalm—a psalm of curses. Ever and anon, as if she would shake something from her ears, she shakes her head, saying:

"Is he not dead and gone? 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord.' Let him alone. Don't think of him."

But the gall returns to her heart, and fire and worm are working there, and the anathema goes on.

Why had she committed it, syllable by syllable, with a malignant meaning, to memory, and couched it over, with an evil delight?

Had she abused the word of God; and was the spirit she had evoked her master now?

Though her lips were closed, she seemed to herself to be always repeating, fiercely:

"Set thou a wicked man over him, and let Satan stand at his right hand."

"When he shall be judged, let him be condemned: and let his prayer become sin."

"Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with the Lord; and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out."

"Because he remembered not mercy, so let it be far from him."

"As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him."

She raises her head suddenly.

"I'm nervous," she thinks, with her hands clasped over her dark eyes. "God have mercy on me, and let me hear!"

The voice of the good bishop, clear and old, is heard uttering the brief prayer before his sermon.

She throws herself on her knees, listening with clasped hands, passionately. A dull life rolls away, and warm and vivid youth returns, and the fountain of her tears is opened, and the stream of remembrance, sweet and bitter, rushes in. The scene is unchanged, there is the same old church, there are the rude, familiar oak carvings, the self-same saints and martyrs in the vivid windows. The same organ-pipes breathe through the arches from time to time the same tones to which, in summer evenings just like this, long ago, she had listened, when a loved hand pressed the notes, and the melancholy sounds filled her ears as they do now. Oh! the pain, how nearly insupportable, of scenes recalled too vividly, wanting the love that has made them dear to memory for ever.

Over the heads of the earnest and the inattentive, of dull and worthy townfolk there assembled, the tremulous silvery tones of the white-haired bishop reach the solitary listener in this dark nook.

The old bishop tenderly enters on his labour of love. He eloquently celebrates his early friend. He tells them how gentle that friend was, how learned, how noble an enthusiast, modest and simple as a child, yet a man of the finest genius. Many of those who heard him now remembered Mr. Howard in the prime of manhood. Two-and-twenty years were numbered since his beloved friend died. They, too, were once young students together—it seemed but yesterday; and he, the survivor, was now an old man, and if the companion whom he had deplored, with foolish sorrow, were now living, he would be but the shadow of the man they remembered, with hair bleached, and furrowed brows, and strength changing fast to weakness. But time could not have changed the fine affections and noble nature that God had given him, and would have only improved the graces that grow with the life of the Spirit. Then follow traits of the character he described, and some passages, perhaps unconsciously pathetic, on the vanity of human sorrows, and the transitoriness of all that is splendid and beautiful in mortal man.

The feeble voice of the bishop is heard no more.

The organ peals, and voices skilled in the mystery of that sublime music rise in a funeral anthem: voices called together from distant places, chant the sublime texts.

Then in one long chord the voices faint and die, like a choir of angels receding from the earth. A silence follows, the organ peals once more, and the people begin slowly to disperse.

Old Mrs. Clink, who opens and locks the pews, is waiting at the foot of the tower-stairs to receive Lady Vernon, whose brougham is to come to the church-door, when the people are gone, and there will be few to canvass the great lady's secret visit to the church.

The funereal swell of the organ still rolls and trembles along the roof, and fills the building, now nearly empty. The sun has just gone down; some fading tints of rose are still on the western sky. She ventures now to the front of the arch, in the shadow of which she has hitherto been hidden. The early twilight, dimmed by the stained windows, fills the church with a misleading and melancholy light; white shafts of marble rise faintly through the obscurity, and she, from her lonely place, unseen, looks down, crying silently as if her heart would break.

POISONOUS FISHES.

AMONGST the various dangers to which the crews of exploring and surveying expeditions are exposed, there are few against which it is more difficult to guard than against the risks to which sailors, who are always morbidly desirous of a change of diet, are exposed, from eating fishes whose dietetic value is unknown. There is unfortunately no external characteristic by which an edible species can be distinguished from a poisonous one; and the difficulty of the subject is further increased by the fact that the same kind of fish often affords wholesome food at one period of the year, while at another season it is in the highest degree venomous.

The noxious properties of some fishes are supposed to be dependent on the nature of their food. Munier, in a letter to the well-known naturalist, Sonnerat, written nearly a century ago, states that in Bourbon, and in Mauritius, none of the genus *Scarus*, or parrot-fishes, which in those islands are called by the popular names of *vieille*, or old wife, *perroquet*, &c., are

eaten between December and the beginning of April, being regarded as unwholesome during that period, because they then eat large quantities of coral-polyps. This statement is in part confirmed by Commer-son, who, regarding the cataubleue (*Scarus capitaneus*), says that it gnaws the coral, and is consequently looked upon as a suspicious article of diet, both in the Ile-de-France and in Bourbon. The natives of Bombay are said to reject another species of *Scarus* (*S. harid*) for the same reason. Other forms of animal life, as the beautiful medusa or jelly-fish, known as the stephanomia, and the well-known Portuguese men-of-war, or physalia, when eaten by fishes, seem also to render the latter unfit for human food, probably on account of their acrid and irritating properties. Risso describes a Mediterranean fish, called Courpata by the Nice fishermen, which cannot safely be eaten at the periods during which it feeds on this medusa, and the sardine of the Antilles (*Harengula humoralis*) is so poisonous, after feeding on the physalia, as to occasion death in a few minutes. The common herring is sometimes very unwholesome, although perhaps scarcely poisonous, in consequence of its living on certain minute worms, which are occasionally so abundant in the North Sea as to give a red tint to the water. Notwithstanding the abominations greedily devoured by eels, these fishes may generally be eaten with impunity. There are, however, occasional instances in which they prove deleterious, and M. Virey, in describing a case in which a whole family were attacked with violent pains and diarrhoea, a few hours after eating eels taken from a stagnant castle-ditch, near Orleans, refers to several similar accidents.

In many cases the poisonous properties of fish may be due to the food of which they partake, but this cannot be the sole cause: for, while poisonous fishes are found in localities in which polyps, &c., do not abound, in certain islands surrounded by these zoophytes the fishes are safely edible. For the knowledge of a very important fact bearing on this subject we are indebted to Mr. Caird, a gentleman of high natural-history acquirements, long resident in Trinidad. In a private communication with which he has favoured us, he tells us that the barracouta is, as a general rule, eaten with perfect immunity in Trinidad, while in the neighbouring island of Grenada, and in most of the other parts of the West Indies, death, or

lingering sickness for many years, has frequently occurred after eating this fish in its fresh state. Mr. Caird agrees with Dr. Hill of Jamaica (who has published two essays, one on Poisonous Fishes, and one on Fish Poisons, in the Proceedings of the Scientific Association of Trinidad, for 1868), in the view that the barracouta is fit for food in Trinidad, in consequence of the absence of coral reefs in that island, while for the opposite reason it is poisonous in Grenada and elsewhere in the West Indies. Midway between Cuba, Hayti, and Jamaica, lie extensive reefs and shoals of the Formigas (or Ants' Nests). They are several miles in extent, and are so shallow that they can only be navigated by moderate-sized vessels, in a smooth sea. They closely resemble the fringing shore-reefs that have been so often described; presenting to the eye of the naturalist arborescent corals and huge brain-stones, amongst which are a profusion of sea-cucumbers, star-fish, sea-urchins, and sponges. "The Formigas constitute," says Dr. Hill, "a very warren or vivarium of all kinds of fishes." Those who have waded on these coral-reefs are well aware of the pungent scent given out by the polyps which build there, and often experience their stinging influence when they come in contact with the exposed skin. It has been invariably found that all the fishes taken on the Formigas, and the barracoutas especially, are always poisonous. "In this way," says Dr. Hill, "we may account for the general belief that the fishes are poisonous at one end of St. Christopher's, while they are harmless at the other."

In some countries it is a common habit to poison the water of a river with a stupefying drug, in order to catch the fish. Independently of the wasteful character of this procedure (for many more fish are destroyed than can be used for food), it becomes a question of much importance, to ascertain whether the poison may be transmitted to man. The evidence on this point is conflicting; the result probably varying according to the nature of the drug employed. There is, however, no doubt that fishes that have been thus taken become dangerous, if not cooked and eaten at once. As an example of the occasional innocuousness of fishes thus captured, it may be mentioned that in M. de Castelman's "Voyage dans les parties centrales de l'Amér. du Sud," it is recorded that "a plentiful supply of fishes having been obtained on the great lake near the Rio

Sarayacu in the missions of the Ucayale, by means of the poison residing in the stems of the Barbasco or Necklace-wood, these, after rapidly undergoing the destructive influences of the plant, were eaten without ill effect, and the natives even drank the waters of the lake with impunity."

The age and consequently the size of the fish are supposed in some species to influence their unwholesomeness, certain kinds of fishes being regarded as edible in their youth and poisonous in advanced life. In Havannah there is a fish known to naturalists as the Carana fallax (or the bastard carangue), which is not allowed to be exposed for sale if it weighs more than a kilogram (which is equal to about two pounds three ounces). In the Island of Trinidad it is believed that the becuna* (*Sphyræna becuna*) may be eaten with safety when small, but becomes poisonous when it attains its full size; and Dr. Court, who practised medicine there for some time, states that the same rule applies to all the fishes said to be poisonous. The natives of Hayti hold a similar opinion regarding a species of *Serranus*, commonly called the grande gueule, and known by English sailors as the rock-fish. It may attain a length of nearly a yard, but when it approximates to this size it often proves poisonous.

The season of the year is supposed by some writers to have an effect in rendering certain fishes dangerous as food. In the Loyalty Islands, M. Jouan, the captain of a French frigate, has found that many species are dangerous, and even deadly, at some periods of the year, while at others they may be eaten with impunity. It is possible that "the season of the year" may only be another expression for "the food of fishes at certain times." In the Antilles many fishes, including the little nigger (*Serranus nigriculus*), are avoided during certain months of the year. While the process of spawning is going on it has been observed that certain fishes (probably including those just mentioned) become dangerous articles of food, the eggs and milt being especially virulent. The conger-eel, common on our shores, is said to occasion dysentery if it be eaten at this period. The

spawn of the barbel, and to a less degree that of the pike and burbot, will occasionally, if eaten, induce great irritation; and if it be necessary to eat these fishes during the spawning period, the milt and roe should be carefully removed.

In those countries in which poisonous fishes abound, certain tests have long been in general use with the view of deciding whether any particular specimen may be safely brought to table. M. Poey, who is the author of a magnificent work on the Natural History of Cuba, states that "the means of recognising barracouta that are in a condition to produce mischief, is that the root of their teeth will be found of a blackened colour; and that, wanting this mark, the fish may be eaten without fear; or," he adds, "if a silver spoon or coin, placed in the vessel in which the cooking is going on, is not blackened, the fish is equally safe." Dr. Hill, to a certain degree, confirms the efficacy of the tooth test. Seeing a fine-looking barracouta (strictly speaking, it is the becuna that both M. Poey and Dr. Hill mean) nearly three feet long, and apparently in fine condition, he examined the teeth, and, finding them faintly purple at the root, he remarked that the fine look of the fish would doubtless lead to its sale, but that injurious consequences would most probably result to those who partook of it. His prediction proved correct; "and it happened next morning that complaint was common in Spanish Town, that many had suffered the well-known sickness from eating poisonous barracouta."

Similar tests are applied to the true or great barracouta, which is sometimes named *Esox barracuda*, on account of its likeness, both in form and flavour, to the pike, and is very often poisonous.

The becuna is clearly the fish to which Dr. Badham, in his *Prose Halieutics*, refers as the barracouda, and regarding which he tells the following anecdote: "A friend of our own, who lately nearly lost his life at a marriage party with several other guests, co-partakers of the fish, gave us the particulars of their common seizure, which occurred very shortly after the conclusion of the repast. After full vomiting they all recovered under the administration of enormous doses of laudanum. On mentioning this circumstance to a West Indian, he informed us that the accident must have proceeded from culpable negligence on the part of the host, who, before introducing such a fish to his guests, should, knowing how dangerous it was, have first given the

* Writers on the ichthyology of the Carribean Sea have made sad confusion between the barracouda and the becuna. Strictly speaking, the former is *Sphyræna barracouda*, and the latter *Sphyræna becuna*. In Trinidad the becuna, the smaller of the two species, is almost always called a barracouta. The true fish of this name reaches a length of from six to nine feet, while the becuna does not exceed three feet.

head to one of his negroes to dine upon, which, having taken effect on him, would have effectually prevented all that followed. He added that this was the common way of dealing with quaco and barracouda in some of the Leeward Islands." Dr. Hill, notwithstanding his successful prediction regarding the large becuna with the purple marks at the base of its teeth, observes that as no test has been discovered by which it may be decided whether any kind of fish is poisonous or harmless, "the only sure course to be pursued is that of giving the offal of the suspicious fish to some domestic animal, such as a duck, not likely to reject it, and judging by what ensues."

Dr. Guyon, formerly sanitary inspector of troops at Martinique, refers the poisonous properties of this and other suspected fishes to an incipient decay in the flesh, not amounting to actual putrefaction; and M. Duméril, who has written one of the most elaborate essays on this subject, agrees with him. They support their opinion by the following facts:

1. The mackerel taken at St. Helena is poisonous if kept for a single night; while if prepared on the same day on which it is caught, it is perfectly fit for food.

2. The inhabitants of the Antilles assert that the bonito should be dressed for the table as soon as it is taken from the water; and several cases are on record illustrating the danger of neglecting this precaution.

3. The Chinese will only eat the *Tetrodon ocellatus*, one of their best fishes, as soon as it is captured.

4. The instances of fish-poisoning occur almost solely where the temperature is high, and especially in the hottest period of the year, when decomposition is most rapid.

The blackening of a piece of silver placed in the vessel in which a poisonous fish is cooked, supports this view; the change of colour being due to the liberation of sulphuretted hydrogen which accompanies decay of tissue.

There seems no conclusive evidence to prove that copper-bottomed ships, or metals in any form, have any connexion with the dangerous properties of fishes, although molluscs (as oysters or mussels) may become poisonous in this way. Nor does there seem any better foundation for the belief that any fishes derive their baleful properties from feeding on the fruits of the manchineel, &c. Dr. Hill has, however, pointed out that fishes have sometimes become unwholesome from being covered

over, in the baskets in which they are carried, with the leaves of poisonous shrubs.

Various writers on natural history have given lists of such fishes as are known, or suspected, to be poisonous. Leunis, in his excellent *Synopsis der Naturgeschichte des Thierreichs*, p. 352, states that about seventy species of fishes are known to have occasioned severe illness and often death, and gives a list of twenty-three species which have a specially bad reputation. M. Duméril mentions eighteen fishes that are known to be poisonous, and observes that "others might certainly be added;" while Dr. Hill enumerates thirteen species, occurring in the Carribean Sea alone, which are either hurtful or dangerous. We shall confine our remarks on this head to a few of the most noxious species; and shall give precedence to the yellow-bill sprat (*Meletta thrissa*) of the Antilles, which invariably occasions prompt and certain death, with frightful convulsions, in the course of half an hour. Another species of the same genus, common in New Caledonia and other islands of the Indian Ocean, and often called a sardine, is almost equally dangerous.

Several species of sea-porcupines (*Tetrodon*) and of the allied genus *Diodon*, possess a very bad reputation. There is a Spotted *Tetrodon* at the Cape of Good Hope, which has been the cause of so many deaths, that ships anchoring in the bay are warned against it by the local authorities. There is a *Tetrodon* in New Caledonia whose effects are so terrible, that a fragment of the flesh weighing less than eighty grains, occasioned the death of a pig to which it was administered. Doctor Badham tells us that there is a species in the Nile (*Tetrodon lineatus*) which is held by the Egyptians to be very poisonous, and he mentions an allied species, the *furube* of Japan, which, although equally dangerous (causing death within two hours), is found to be too delicate to resist. An imperial decree expressly forbids the Japanese soldiers to eat the *furube*, and enforces this prohibition by making an express provision that no son may replace his father who has been slain by eating this fish. Notwithstanding this regulation, the *furube* is in such great repute amongst epicures that it sells at a higher price than any other fish. According to Forster, this fish is eaten by the Japanese when they wish to commit a quiet act of suicide, without going through the formalities of the "happy

despatch." An allied fish, of the genus *Diodon*, common at Martinique, produces death sometimes almost immediately, and sometimes after two months' suffering.

The Horned Trunk-fish (*Ostraceon cornutum*) and the Old Wife (*Balistes vetula*), common off Bourbon and Mauritius, are probably to be placed next in order if classified according to their poisonous properties; after which we must place the becuna, the barracouta, the false carangue, the cataubleue (a species of *Scarus*), found in Mauritius, and the dog-toothed hog-fish (*Lachnolaimus caninus*), common to the Carribean Sea.

It is to one or more of the five last-named fishes that the accident that befel an American whaler in March, 1854, must be attributed. The ship stopped at the Island of Juan Fernandez, to take in water, and some of the men began fishing, and caught more than four hundred pounds weight of fish, including carangues, capitaines, and old wives, which were cooked for supper. In a few hours forty-two of the fifty-seven men who formed the ship's company were seized with dizziness, abdominal pains, nausea, and repeated vomitings. Prostration and coma then came on, and in eleven hours from the beginning of the seizure, thirty-four of the sailors were dead. The remaining eight, after suffering extremely for from five to eight days, gradually recovered. The fifteen who were not put on the sick-list, did not altogether escape the bad effects of the meal; several of them suffered from colic and dysentery for two or three days.

A fish, known at St. Domingo as the Tassard guarapucu (*Cybium caballa*), is sometimes very poisonous. An English physician, Dr. Ferguson, records a case in which, at a dinner-party at the house of the quarter-master-general, every one present ate more or less of the fish, and all were variously affected, according to the quantity taken. The negro cook died, and the lady of the house, who dined almost exclusively off this dish, suffered severely for several months.

We shall conclude this baleful bill of fare with the anchovy of the Indian seas (*Engraulis boelama*), which is intensely poisonous, unless, in preparing it for the table, the head and intestines are carefully removed; and with a marine perch (*Arripis georgianus*) of Victoria and South Australia. This fish, which is called by the fishermen salmon, when old and of a uniform olive tint, and salmon trout in its younger spotless stage, deserves especial

notice, because, from its cheapness in the Melbourne and other markets, it is very extensively used as food by the poorer classes, while it has the reputation of frequently causing, even when perfectly fresh, the most violent symptoms of fish-poisoning, accompanied by great suffering, and sometimes ending fatally. Its action, according to Professor M'Coy, is so irregular that the same fish may poison half a family and leave the other half unaffected.

Several of the symptoms of fish-poisoning have been incidentally noticed in the preceding pages. Taking them collectively, they supervene, with varying intensity, in the following order. The patient complains of dizziness, dimness of sight, giddiness, palpitation of the heart, and a feeling of weight and heat in the stomach and abdomen. Obligated to assume the recumbent position, he notices an itching of the skin; the face, and other parts, presenting red or white blotches, surrounded by a crimson ring. In the palms of the hands and soles of the feet the itching amounts to a burning sensation, and if these parts are immersed in water there is a feeling of tingling, which is regarded as characteristic of the disease. Pains in the limbs and at the joints are also commonly present.

In cases likely to prove fatal there are intense abdominal pains, dysenteric symptoms, and often convulsions. When convalescence begins the scarf-skin peels off as after scarlatina, and the hair, and sometimes even the nails, drop off. The effects are often felt for years, and disappear only by degrees, and after removal to a cold climate.

As accidents of this nature may occur when there is no doctor at hand, it may not be out of place to add a word or two regarding treatment. We must, in the first place, attempt to get rid of the poisonous matter by clearing out the stomach with an emetic of a scruple of sulphate of zinc, or with a large teaspoonful of powdered mustard in a tumbler of tepid water. Diluent drinks, such as barley-water, or toast-and-water, should then be freely given, after which, if the patient is not too prostrated, a dose of castor-oil will serve to expel any noxious matter that may have got beyond the reach of the emetic. The poison having thus, as far as possible, been evacuated, its effects must be combated with stimulants, such as coffee, wine, and grog. If the vomiting and intestinal pains do not yield to this treatment, opium, especially in the form of Dover's powder in doses of five grains or more, three or

four times a day, is often of great service.* This brings to a close all that we have to tell regarding the essential subject of the present article; but while in the preceding cases man has been the primary aggressor, there are many instances in which fishes, provided with offensive, or it may be only defensive, weapons, attack and seriously injure fishermen and bathers.† Without noticing such fishes as the sharks, &c., for which man may be regarded as a normal article of diet, we may, in the first instance, refer to the remarkable discovery, made a few years ago (1866) by Dr. Günther, of a fish with a poison apparatus as complete in all its anatomical arrangements as that possessed by the viper or the rattlesnake. The fish in which this organ exists is nearly a foot in length, and is found in the Gulf of Panama; and not more than one or two specimens, preserved in spirits, have, in so far as we know, been received in England. The poison organ consists of an opercular, and of a dorsal part. The operculum or gill-cover is very narrow, and extremely mobile, and is armed behind with a spine eight lines (two-thirds of an inch) in length, and of the same form as the venom-fang of the snake. This spine has a longish slit at the outer side of its extremity, which leads into a canal that terminates in a sac of about double the size of an oat-grain. Although the specimen had been in spirits for more than nine months, it contained a whitish substance like thick cream, which, on the slightest pressure, could be made to flow freely from the opening at the end of the spine. Nothing exactly like a poison-gland could be found near the sac, but a minute tube floated in it, which Dr. Günther thinks was connected with the mucous canals which occur in this and many other fishes.

The dorsal part of the apparatus is composed of two dorsal spines, each ten lines in length, and having a separate sac, with the same arrangements as in the opercular spine. There are, thus, four poison spines, each of which is connected with a sac composed of fibrous walls, having a mucous lining, and containing a secretion which, from analogy, must be regarded as an animal poison.

* If Dover's powder, which contains one grain of opium in ten, is not at hand, fifteen or twenty drops of laudanum may be given in a little water, three or four times a day. It must be distinctly understood that the "five grains or more" in the text refer to Dover's powder and not to opium itself.

† We have intentionally omitted all notice of electric fishes, because they are fully considered in many popular works.

There is no evidence of this fish ever attacking man, and, as it lives on molluscs and crustaceans, the weapon in this case is probably only one of defence.

This anatomical investigation serves, however, to explain the terrible effects of the wounds inflicted by the dorsal spines of the weever (*Trachinus vipera*), a fish not very uncommon on our own shores, and other allied fishes found in tropical seas. It had been generally believed, before the publication of Dr. Günther's paper, that the severe and inflammatory effects resulting from these wounds were due to the jagged character of the lacerations that were inflicted; but now it is regarded as at all events a probable, if not an established fact, that the double-grooved spines of these fishes are the channels by which they inject an irritant poison. Dr. Francis Day, in his *Fishes of Malabar*, describes several sting-rays, siluroids, &c., which, by their pectoral or caudal saw-like spines, occasion fearful wounds, sometimes terminating fatally with lock-jaw.

The Scorpion-fish (*Sacchobranchus singio*) is perhaps the most terrible of these fishes. A wound from its serrated pectoral spine is so much dreaded by the fishermen, that they would rather cut the meshes of their nets and let all their spoils be lost than endeavour to take it out uninjured. The dreaded spine is always broken off with a piece of stick, and hence perfect specimens of the fish are rare. It is about a foot and a half in length, and inhabits various rivers in India and Cochin-China. The Crocodile-fish (*Platycephalus insidiator*) is so feared for the wounds which it inflicts with its spines, that it is always knocked on the head when caught. This fish, which is not more than eighteen inches long, is common in the Indian seas. The caudal spine of a large ray (*Trigon uarnak*) inhabiting the Indian seas, sometimes inflicts terrific wounds. Dr. Francis Day reports the case of an old man in the Cochin-China hospital who was suffering from mortification of the arm from a wound inflicted by one of these fishes, which he was endeavouring to drag out of the sea into his boat. It twisted its tail round his arm, and dragged its spine through the muscles nearly down to the bone. Its caudal fin is four times as long as its body, the serrated spine being situated about the end of the first eighth of the tail, which then tapers off to a very fine extremity.

These sting-rays are widely diffused over seas and rivers of the earth. Mr. Bates (in his *Naturalist on the Amazons*, second

edition, p. 242) describes a species capable of inflicting such severe wounds as to lame vigorous men for many months; and Don Ramon Paez (in his *Travels in South and Central America*, p. 62) speaks of the ray-fish being much dreaded by the Indians living on the banks of the Apure.

There are many comparatively small fish which, in consequence of some modification of the jaws or teeth, are very dangerous. Spix describes a fish, not larger than a human finger, which is very abundant at Para, on the mouth of the Amazon, and is in the habit of dining off any tender and inviting parts that may be exposed by bathers. They hold on with such bull-dog-like tenacity, that when plucked away from their victims, they carry away a mouthful of flesh with them. In consequence of these little pests, the natives are obliged to adopt a special bathing-dress. The Indian name for the fish is Candirou; scientifically it is known as *Ceteopsis chandiru*.

Many of the South American rivers contain a fish called the Payara, shaped somewhat like a sabre, and equally dangerous. Its lower jaw is furnished with a formidable pair of fangs, not unlike those of the rattlesnake, with which it inflicts as smooth a gash as if the cut were made by a razor.

In conclusion, let bathers in unexplored South American rivers beware of the Caribe, whose ravenous and bloodthirsty propensities have caused it to be likened to the cannibal tribe of Indians. Its sharp triangular teeth are so strong that, according to Don Ramon Paez, "neither copper, steel, nor twine can withstand them." The sight or possibly the smell of blood seems especially to excite these fish, and it is extremely dangerous for man or beast to enter the water with even a scratch upon their bodies, and the inhabitants, who are often compelled to cross streams infested by these bloodthirsty little demons (which are seldom larger than an average-sized perch) entertain far more fear of them than even of the crocodile.

GOOD-BYE.

For it is over, dear. Your careless touch
Can thrill or start no quiet pulse of mine;
The voice whose magic wooed and won so much,
Unheeded may its tenderest spell combine.
The strange dark eyes their wonted glances steal,
But not to melt or fire me any more,
And coldly turning from their mute appeal,
I answer that their pristine might is o'er.

A little sorry and a little vexed,
With just a touch of mirth, a touch of shame,
And at my old entrancement quite perplexed,
I think of how we played our idle game.

I, who to-night can neither laugh nor sigh,
Gave many an honest smile, an honest tear,
To our fair folly, born of vanity,
And dead of—well, we carve no tombstone, dear!

I said, just now, a certain phrase you used,
Trying to wake again the old sweet thrill,
That in the pretty words so much abused,
We vowed nor time could change, nor tide could chill.

I said it, all alone, with lips that fain
Had trembled in the loving wont of old;
I could not wake the perished spark again,
The fire is out—the very hearth is cold.

Come clasp my hand in frank free guise, my friend,
Let the dead past bury its foolish dead;
Let the dark curtain fall, the pageant end,

And we pass on with calm untroubled tread.
Forgive, forget, each what the other wrought,

See that the path is smooth, the sky is clear,
And so with quiet unregretful thought,
Own it is well, and all is over, dear!

Yet a strange bitterness is in the words,
A sullen sadness swells to eye and heart,
A moan swells sudden from the stricken chords,
Oh, the fair soulless dream is loth to part!

I would not let a weary anger creep
Round that sweet memory of our long ago,
Weak will! cold love! that clasp'd, yet could not keep.
But there, it all is over, better so!

IN THE FIELD WITH THE PRUSSIANS.

A DAY'S ROUTINE IN A FIELD HOSPITAL.

DIRECTLY Marshal Bazaine had retired once more on his stronghold, having killed and wounded as many as he thought fit, the ambulance waggons set out for the battle-field to repair as much of the mischief as was possible. The ambulance waggons are clumsy-looking vehicles, drawn by two horses. On each side of the driver hangs a white flag bearing the cross of the Geneva Convention. The waggons are of two kinds, and are painted grey. They also bear a goodly number of red crosses on their tops and sides. One sort of ambulance waggon is built on much the same plan as a hearse, with a rounded canvas roof; only that, instead of being black, as I said before, their colour is grey. The door of this hearse kind of waggon opens behind on hinges, and discloses four handles. These are the handles of two stretchers, which are laid side by side. Ventilation is provided by the canvas roof. Underneath this waggon are padlocked boxes containing the surgeon's instruments, and various medical and surgical appliances. The other waggons are externally exactly like their fellows, but in reality they are built on a different plan. They open at the top in the same way as a baker's cart might do, and when the top is raised it has to be held open by an iron bar. The uses of these carts, built on such very different principles, are easily to be ex-

plained. The hearse kind carries off from the field of battle only heavily wounded men, and then only two at a time. The baker's cart kind carries off ten or twelve slightly wounded men, who have to sit on the bottom of the waggon; and this is found to be the right proportion, for where you find two badly wounded men alive you may expect to see about ten or twelve slightly wounded.

On the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd of September, the ambulance waggons of nearly the whole Prussian army were busily at work, and this sortie from Metz vied with the battles of Beaumont and Sedan in giving work to the ambulance staff. I chose the village of Avancey, near St. Barbe, as a place where my services would, in all probability, be accepted.

Avancey, a little village about eight miles to the north-east of Metz, is situated at the foot of a steep hill, near whose summit lies St. Barbe, at that time the headquarters of General Manteuffel, the commander of the First Army Corps. Even from St. Barbe, Avancey looked as pretty a little village as one might wish to see. It lay embosomed in trees and fields, which formed a striking but charming contrast to the white walls and red roofs of its humble houses.

I entered Avancey at mid-day, the day after the battle, and the sight that met my view will not easily be eradicated from my memory. More than five hundred wounded men were to be found in this one village, containing only twenty houses and a couple of barns. There were about sixty French peasants who had remained in the place, and these had to be packed together in about four houses.

I never witnessed anything so barbarous as the way these poor soldiers, many of whom were at the point of death, had to rough it. It was very wet and cold, yet many of these unfortunate creatures were without great-coats, food, or shelter for several hours, and this, be it remembered, after some of them had been lying for thirty-six hours in the pouring rain. Men were hopping about with broken thigh-bones, or crouching on the ground, with shot-wounds in the body, or with mutilated heads and arms from ghastly shell-wounds. All bore a half-torpid look, and everywhere the loss of blood was shocking. It collected in the puddles; it ran down the gutters; all that one saw, touched, or smelt, was blood. At first there were no means of dressing the wounds, so the peasants had

to give up sheets and wearing apparel for bandages. When sufficient accommodation had been provided, the few men belonging to the Sanitäts Corps, who were appointed to help at the village, began bringing the wounded under shelter. Some whom they went to assist they found past earthly aid, already lying stark and stiff on the wet ground.

The proportion of surgeons for attendance on the wounded in this Feld Lazareth belonging to the First Army Corps was in one instance one surgeon to one hundred and eighty wounded. The Germans get rid of their slightly wounded with as much expedition as possible; and when I offered my services at Avancey to help the slightly wounded, they were gladly accepted by the head doctor, Dr. Pohl. After working incessantly day and night for three days, we had only about two hundred cases left, but they were certainly as badly a mangled set of men with breath remaining in their bodies, as I saw during the whole war. The head doctor had eternally to be writing reports, goodness knows what of, or to whom they were addressed. Besides this, he attended to a few wounded officers, who were lodged under the same roof with him, so that the bulk of the wounded fell to the share of three German surgeons and myself.

The houses which contained the wounded were very small, and the rooms were crowded to excess. Luckily no typhus or dysentery broke out, though why we were particularly favoured I know not, for the sanitary arrangements of the village were as bad as they could possibly be. My German colleagues and I took up our abode in a two-roomed hut, which had at least the advantage of plenty of fresh air, as the number of window-panes were sadly deficient. We slept on straw sacks, and, like good Christians, gave our feather-beds to our badly wounded patients. The men wounded were for the most part of Polish extraction, but the man to whom I gave my feather-bed looked more like an Italian than a specimen of the Slavonic race. I could not ask him where he came from, or any unnecessary question, as he was so terribly wounded that it was as much as he could do to breathe at all. When he got the feather-bed, instead of the hard straw sack on which he had been restlessly tossing, he squeezed my hand, and his big black eyes looked thanks. I took a most intense interest in the poor fellow, and did all I could to save his life; but from the first I

had but small hopes of his ultimate recovery. He gradually sank and died. I don't know his name, or place of birth, but I shall never forget his face, and the expressive thanks conveyed in his last moments through his soft, dark eyes.

The wounded had not only to combat against the terrible prostration which follows from shock to the nervous system, but had also to contend with a variety of disagreeables, such as straw sacks without proper mattresses; and as these lay on the hard boards, the torture endured by this alone greatly retarded their recovery. Besides this, the flies, which swarmed without cessation day and night through the windows, gave them no peace. Each man had a small branch to keep them off, but it was a regular duel à la mort between them and their myriads of buzzing enemies.

We used to go our rounds to visit the wounded at six in the morning. The supply of attendants was most miserable; for forty wounded I had but two, and as the wounded were distributed in three houses containing seven rooms, it may be imagined that during twenty-four hours they did not get too much attention. It took a very long time to wash and dress these wounds, and as some of the men were suffering from upwards of six distinct wounds, it was no slight physical as well as mental exertion to attend to all these poor fellows in the day.

At ten o'clock, having perhaps finished half my work, I used to leave house number two in order to join the German surgeons in our little sanctorium for breakfast. It could not be said that we had provided ourselves with many delicacies; raw ham and black bread were our invariable comestibles. Our wine was good. It did not strictly belong to us, being stolen, or, to use the German word, "requirirt," and as the château, which had been plundered as far as cellar contents went, was some way off, and unpleasantly near the French lines, it was rather an adventure to get a cart-load of bottles from it. At half-past ten we returned to our wounded, and more washing and dressing wounds went on. I used to get through my first round, having attended to everything myself, about one o'clock. Till half-past two I used to amuse and employ myself in a carpenter's shed, where I improvised some appliances for broken bones, as we were totally without the simplest contrivances. At half-past two the faculty met again at a meal dignified by the name of dinner. At this repast we generally

managed to get some potatoes, to eat with the raw ham and black bread. We managed to make ourselves very happy, notwithstanding our dreadful surroundings, and the little respite between our long hours of work being well earned, was always much enjoyed. Near the village were two or three bivouacs, and of these a Uhlan bivouac was my favourite. I formed the acquaintance of the officers, who were as jolly a set of fellows as I have ever met. I used to go for a little ride with one of them, when he could obtain leave, after my dinner. We generally took the road towards Metz, and visited one or other of the Prussian outposts. We used to call it reconnoitring; it was rather hazardous, but very pleasant work, and as it was the only out-door exercise I got during the day, I did enjoy it most thoroughly. On one of my afternoon rides which I took alone, I came to a little lonely cottage; the day was hot and I got off my horse's back to get a drink of water. When I tapped at the door a very old woman came and opened it. I asked for a glass of water. She went to procure it me, and while I was standing waiting, I was startled by hearing a noise resembling the lowing of a cow. I wondered that such a quadruped had remained so near the lines of the Philistines, and looked round the house to see if I could obtain a sight of such a rare animal. Nowhere was it to be seen. I was curious, and looked into the kitchen; no cow there.

"Madame," I said, as the old dame presented me with the glass of water, "may I ask whether there is a cow about the premises?"

"Ah! monsieur," said the little woman, trembling with apprehension, "don't take it away, don't take it away!"

I said, "My dear madame, I am an Englishman; you have nothing to fear from me."

"Vous êtes Anglais, monsieur?"

"Oui, madame," was my answer.

The little old woman dragged me into the kitchen, and opened a door leading down into the cellar.

"Viola, monsieur," she said.

It was pitch dark, but I could hear an animal chewing. How the old dame got the animal down there, or on what she fed it, I know not. When I was leaving she implored me not to tell the Prussians about the cow. I reassured her, and promised her the cow should not be taken away from her. When I was about to leave she nearly jumped into my arms for

joy, so I hastily beat a retreat, and when I had got a couple of hundred yards from the house, I turned round and saw the old lady, nearly frantic with joy, dancing a kind of war-dance, and swinging her crutch round her head in a most demonstrative way.

On returning to Avancey, I thought it would be a very good plan to get this old woman to supply the wounded with milk, so I went to the head doctor, and informed him of my discovery, asking him at the same time to give me a paper to keep the poor old lady's cow safe from Prussian requisition, on the plea that its produce was wanted for the wounded. It was instantly given, and the next day the old woman danced another war-dance over a real signed order, with a big blue eagle seal, which, although of course she could not read a word of it, she knew was meant to save her cow. Every day the milk was sent for, obtained, and greatly appreciated by the wounded. At four o'clock, I began going round to visit the wounded a second time; one of the two sick attendants used to dress the slight wounds, while I looked after the severer ones. In almost every afternoon round I had some fresh surgical appliance ready (the fruit of my workshop labours from one till half-past two). Of course they were very rough, but they answered infinitely better than allowing a broken thigh-bone to be put upon a square block of wood covered by a pillow, which was the usual treatment such unfortunate cases received. This round was usually ended about seven o'clock in the evening, when we came from our various "stations," as we called them, and met at Abendessen, or supper. At this meal, raw ham and black bread were again the most conspicuous articles of consumption; but we usually obtained some plums from a large garden, which, although it was robbed by nearly every soldier who went through the village—and as the whole of the cavalry bivouacked in the neighbourhood passed through, night and morning, to water their chargers, there were a good many robbers—seemed almost inexhaustible. Once, but only once, I procured a dish of French beans. After the repast, we generally compared notes as to how our several patients were getting on. On the whole, taking the frightful wounds, and in many cases the number of them, into consideration, there were remarkably few deaths; but some who did pass away, died in the most awful agonies. I shall not be likely to forget the first death that

occurred in one of my houses; it was a lingering death of continued suffering, lasting four days, and the poor fellows lying on their mattresses all round were nearly frightened out of their wits by watching the dying man's sufferings. When the body was taken out to be buried, I found tears rolling down many of the men's cheeks; the poor fellow had been the wit of the regiment, and a great favourite. It was very difficult to converse with some of these men; in fact, many of them could only understand so much German as was necessary to enable them to obey military words of command when given. Most of them were much more like Poles than Germans. Almost all the wounded belonged to the German army. I think out of the two hundred wounded there were but four Frenchmen. The French had removed their own wounded from the battle-field, taking them back into Metz when they retired. At nine o'clock we went our last rounds, which took us till eleven at night. As most of the wounded were in too much pain to sleep, their skin had to be injected with morphia, and it was necessary to repeat the operation if the first injection did not take effect. These operations took some time, but it was perfectly necessary, for the poor fellows could get little or no attendance between twelve and six the next morning. We then met again at the little house; we either talked over the war, and how and when it would end, or sang *Die Wacht am Rhein*, or some such song; and then rolling ourselves in our rugs we slept on our straw sacks, more soundly than many a rich man on his bed of down. So day after day passed quickly along. Sometimes some of the wounded, having got over their wound-fever, were taken by waggons to the nearest railway station, which was something like twenty miles off. One day I remember the waggons were sent to convey a number of men who had just recovered from wound-fever; they had been ordered at a certain hour the day before. The next day at seven A.M. the carts appeared; it so happened that the day was as wet as it could possibly be; the rain was coming down in sheets. The waggons drew up at the doors of the various houses at which the wounded were lodged, and at once into each cart a couple of bundles of straw were pitched and strewn over the bottom of the cart. Now the wounded had to be newly dressed and bandaged, and it was eight o'clock before they were all ready. The rain, instead of

abating, was coming down worse than ever, and when the order to mount was given, about forty badly wounded men, some with bandaged heads and arms in slings, hobbled to the carts. After mounting, in some instances with great difficulty, and seating themselves on the wet straw, each man was given one blanket and two cigars. The blankets were about the size of door-mats when doubled in half; the cigars must have got soaked in a couple of minutes when once lit. However, there was nothing for it, the train was to start at twelve, and the orders were peremptory; so the wounded, some of whom were in a most critical state, were taken out of their warm beds and sent a journey of over twenty miles in such weather and in open carts, simply because some one had been stupid enough to say that, wet or fine, they must go. We all thought it sheer murder, but such is the way in war time.

MARRIAGES OF ENGLISH PRINCESSES.

It may be useful to disabuse the public mind of the erroneous impression now prevalent, that English princesses have seldom married commoners of their own country; few practices have been more common. With the proof of this fact we have ventured to interweave a few picturesque incidents attending the ceremonials, chiefly those of the earlier epochs, when life had more romance, and costume more colour and splendour, than they now boast.

Cæcilia, the eldest daughter of William the Conqueror, took the veil; Adeliza, the second, betrothed to Harold, died young; Matilda, the third, after being betrothed to Earl Edwin, entered a convent after her lover's murder; Constance, the fourth, married Earl Alan, Duke of Bretagne, and, like her sisters, died at an early age. To Adela, the youngest, it was alone permitted to marry and to live long and happily. This lady, who seems to have been a poetess, and, indeed, altogether a strong-minded woman, married Stephen, the son of the Earl of Blois. The marriage was twice celebrated, first at Breteuil, and then at Chartres. Splendid entertainments and universal joy attended the ceremony in both places.

A higher fate was destined for Matilda, the only daughter of Henry the First. She had scarcely attained her seventh year, when an embassy of wise and learned German barons, sent by Henry, the Emperor

of Germany, arrived in England to demand her in marriage. The king instantly levied a tax of three shillings on every hide of land in England, and the next year sent the little lady over with ten thousand marks of silver in her pocket for a dowry, intrusting her to the care of Roger Fitz-Richard, a trustworthy person, and a train of gallant English knights. Her future lord met her at Utrecht, and the following Easter the betrothal took place. At her coronation, at Mayence, the bride was held in the arms of the Archbishop of Treves, while the Archbishop of Cologne placed over her baby brow the cumbersome diadem. The young lady was then relegated to school to learn German, and four years afterwards the real marriage was celebrated at Mayence. She grew up a good and gentle woman; but the German husband proved grasping, stern, cruel, morose, and passionate, and Matilda must often have wished herself back in England. She afterwards married the proud Geoffrey of Anjou, with whom she quarrelled ceaselessly. Her subsequent wars with her rival, the ambitious Stephen, are too well known to need recital here.

Matilda, Stephen's eldest daughter, died young; and Mary, his second, scandalised the whole Catholic world by first becoming Abbess of Rumsey and then marrying an Earl of Flanders; it must be admitted, however, much against her wish. Matilda (this was a favourite English name in those days), the eldest daughter of Henry the Second, again honoured Germany by looking there for a husband. Henry the Lion, the powerful Duke of Saxony and Bavaria, sought her hand. The bill for her trousseau still exists in the Pipe Roll. She took with her twenty-eight "pairs of chests," probably silver, and seven scarlet saddles with gilded reins. Her bridegroom met her at Minden, and there the marriage took place. The nuptial feasts at Brunswick, Henry's capital, lasted several weeks. Eleanor, Matilda's next sister, married Alphonso the Third, King of Castile. At the betrothal, which took place at Saragossa, Alphonso settled the revenues of three towns on his bride for her toilet expenses alone. The marriage was celebrated at Burgos. Joanna, the youngest daughter of Henry the Second, married William, Prince of Sicily. The marriage took place at Palermo, which city the bride entered riding on a white palfrey. Joanna, the eldest daughter of King John, married Alexander of Scotland. After her marriage at York, her English attendants

were afraid at first to venture into Scotland, and her husband was so poor, that his royal brother-in-law had to pay his travelling expenses to York. Alexander settled upon his wife one thousand pounds a year, and levied a tax of ten thousand pounds scot to pay the marriage portions of his two sisters, whom he at once married to rich English nobles. Isabella, John's second daughter, who married Frederick, Emperor of Germany, went over to Germany with great store of plate and jewels, fourteen dresses, twenty-four zones, a box of chessmen, two beds, two blankets, and eighteen towels. At her marriage, at Worms, four kings, eleven dukes, and thirty earls and marquises, graced the nuptials. Eleonora, Isabella's sister, married the Earl of Pembroke, almost the first precedent of the union of a subject with an English princess. Margaret, the eldest daughter of Henry the Third, married a prince of Scotland. Ten pieces of cloth-of-gold were given her for dresses, robes of green were provided for her waiting-women, and one of scarlet, trimmed with miniver, was bestowed on her governess, Matilda de Cawthorpe. The marriage took place at York, and the wedding feast cost the Archbishop of York forty thousand pounds of our money. The town of York contributed five hundred deer and one hundred wild boars; and, for a parting present, Henry gave his son-in-law one hundred and nine pounds towards his travelling expenses. Beatrice, another daughter of Henry the Third, married John of Bretagne, and afterwards accompanied her husband to the Crusades.

Eleonora, the eldest daughter of Edward the First, after being betrothed to Alphonso of Aragon, married Henry, Duke of Bar (le Duc). At her marriage the Duke of Brabant, the victor in seven tournaments, was killed in a joust. Joanna, the third daughter of Edward the First, married Gilbert de Clare, Earl of Gloucester. The marriage was at Westminster, and she afterwards went to reside in her husband's romantic house at the village of Clerkenwell. Her father gave her, on this occasion, one hundred silver dishes, sixty silver spoons, six gold cups, twenty golden clasps, and twenty zones of silk to give away to whom she pleased. On becoming a widow, this self-willed princess, to her father's indignation, married a knight of humble birth. This lady's sister, Margaret, fourth daughter of Edward the First, gave her hand to a Duke of Brabant. The marriage took place at Westminster. Four

hundred and twenty-six minstrels were present at the banquet, and among them about three thousand pounds of our present money was distributed. As for the illuminations at the palace, they were so tremendous that the chronicler mentions that four boys had been occupied for fourteen days in collecting the necessary candles. On the dress of the sister of the bride were sewn fifty-three dozen silver buttons.

But we must pass on now to the family of Edward the Second. Isabella, the eldest daughter, slighted by the Earl of Flanders, who disliked a marriage forced upon him, fell in love with Bernard d'Albret, a Gascon nobleman. This match, however, was also broken off, and eventually the fickle lady married a French hostage, the young Lord de Courcy, famed for his skill and grace in all knightly and courtly accomplishments. The princess was thirty-three, the husband scarcely twenty-seven. The marriage took place at Windsor, and King Edward disbursed one hundred pounds among the local minstrels on the occasion. The bridegroom became Earl of Bedford, and during the great war between France and England, to avoid breaking faith with either France or England, went to Italy to fight for the pope against the Visconti.

The marriage of Blanche, the eldest daughter of Henry the Fourth, with Louis of Bavaria, was attended with great ceremonials. It is particularly mentioned that the Richard Whittington, who plays so important a part in London civic traditions, supplied from his great warehouse cloths-of-gold for the fair princess's outfit. The marriage was celebrated at Cologne, and soon after the young husband wrote from Heidelberg to his father-in-law an enthusiastic letter extolling the beauty of his wife. "When," says the royal writer, "that countenance, lovely beyond the daughters of men, presented itself before me, then indeed my very heart exulted with joy, for not merely is her form English, but it shines with such angelic loveliness that all the nobles of the people would worship it." The angelic bride was only thirteen. The next year Henry failed to pay the sixteen thousand nobles, the second instalment of Blanche's dower, and Duke Louis, hard beset by the rebellious Bohemians, had to dun his wife's father in pretty set terms.

The marriage of Margaret, eldest daughter of Henry the Seventh, with James of Scotland, is picturesquely told by the chroniclers. James was so anxious to see his future wife when she arrived at Dalkeith,

that he rode there under pretence of a hunting party, and called at the castle where she was. At one of these visits he found her and her ladies playing at cards; then he played to her on the lute and clavicord, and one of her English lords-in-waiting sang the king a ballad. The marriage took place at Holyrood, and for the occasion the rooms were strewn with fresh grass. The bride wore a gown of white damask, lined and bordered with crimson velvet, her long fair hair floated loosely over her shoulders, and at the altar the king refused to kneel till Margaret had first done so. A day or two after, Margaret made a present to the heralds of her wedding robe. Margaret was scarcely fourteen years old; her husband was more than thirty.

Mary, Henry the Seventh's third daughter, after being wooed by the Prince of Castile, was married from motives of mere state policy to Louis the Twelfth. When the Earl of Worcester went over to Paris to arrange the marriage, he wrote to Wolsey a letter describing how the French king had shown him a chest containing fifty-six pieces of rubies and diamonds, and another goodly coffer full of collars, bracelets, and beads. "All these are for my wife," Louis said, "but she shall not have them all at once, as I would have many kisses and thanks for them." The marriage took place at Abbeville, but was, shortly afterwards, dissolved by the death of the bridegroom, and the young widow soon married the Duke of Suffolk, Francis the First encouraging the match. Letters still exist showing the rage of Wolsey at this stolen marriage, and, indeed, the death of Brandon was at first contemplated by some of the council. Mary's second marriage took place in the little oratory chapel of the Hôtel de Clugny.

Elizabeth, the eldest daughter of James the First, after being threatened with French and Spanish husbands, married Frederic, Prince Palatine, afterwards the unfortunate King of Bohemia. At the first interview the prince humbly kissed the hem of the princess's gown, she gracefully curtsying lower than accustomed, and "with her hand staying him from that humblest reverence, gave him at his rising a fair advantage (which he took) of kissing her." He then whispered in her ear a few words of lover's flattery. King James, highly pleased with the young German prince, took him aside into his bedroom, and presented him with a ring

valued at eighteen hundred pounds. During this visit Prince Frederic resided at Essex House in the Strand. The princess's apartments at Whitehall had been remodelled for this occasion, fresh carpets laid down, and new tapestries of the History of Abel hung up. The marriage took place in the chapel of Whitehall. The pair had previously, rather to the horror of the proud German nobles, been three times publicly asked in church. The bride shone in a robe of Florence cloth of silver, and her train was borne by sixteen young ladies clad in white satin. The ceremony over, a great golden bowl full of wine passed round, and every one present drank to the health of the newly married pair. The palsgrave, on his return from the chapel, was preceded by six German trumpeters, who sounded on six silver trumpets, all the court shouting, "God give them joy, God give them joy!" The banquet was followed by a masque. The City of London, a day or two after, presented to the bride a splendid chain of Oriental pearls, valued at two thousand pounds, and an absurd report being spread that a popish vessel full of pocket-pistols had secretly arrived from Spain, a band of zealous citizens, headed by a substantial alderman, was added to the guard at the palace. The writ to raise the money requisite for this marriage produced only twenty thousand five hundred pounds, it not being stringently enforced, and left the king a loser, for he had spent fifty-three thousand two hundred and ninety-four pounds in connexion with the marriage, exclusive of the bride's portion of forty thousand pounds. Lord Harrington, Elizabeth's guardian, lost three thousand five hundred pounds by the match, and the king, unable to repay him, granted him in recompense a patent for the privilege of coining brass farthings. The court, in a fit of economy, at last dismissed the household provided for Prince Frederic. One of the prince's wedding presents to his wife was a gilt coach from Paris.

Mary, the eldest daughter of Charles the First, was married, when only a child of ten, to the Prince of Orange, then only fifteen. The prince came over with a fleet commanded by the celebrated Van Tromp. He was lodged in Arundel House, in the Strand, and had a private garden key to Somerset House given him, so that he might visit his little lady when he liked. The prince was appointed ambassador to the States of Holland to heighten his rank,

and many grumblers complained of this as a proof of the prince's unworthiness to mate with an English princess. The dean of the Chapel Royal taught the prince all the proper responses, both in English and French. The marriage took place in Whitehall Chapel. The bridegroom was attired in a dress of rich crimson velvet, with a vandyke collar of deep point-lace. The princess wore a robe of silver tissue, and her hair was knotted up with silver ribbons. Wren, Bishop of Ely, used no titles in the service, but merely said, "This man and this woman," and "I, William, take thee, Mary," for so the king had directed. After supper the little princess was placed on a state bed of blue velvet, in the presence of the Dutch ambassadors and all the ladies of the court, and the boy-prince of Orange, in a robe of blue and green satin, lay beside her for a few minutes. On leaving, King Charles gave the prince a diamond-hilted sword, while the little princess took off a jewel and presented it to him, and this love-token he fastened on his breast. She also gave the ponderous Dutch ambassadors roses of silver ribbon, with which they looped up their broad-brimmed hats. In Charles the Second's scandalous court it was always supposed that Mary eventually secretly married Harry Jermyn, but there is no proof that this is more than a rumour.

Henrietta Anne, the fifth daughter of Charles the First, married the Duke of Orleans, a brother of Louis the Fourteenth. Her first voyage to France was unfortunate, for the vessel was all but lost, and the princess, falling ill of a fever, had to return to England till she recovered. The marriage eventually took place in the English chapel at the Palais Royal, and a petit souper afterwards was all the rejoicing. This amiable princess was generally supposed to have been murdered by poison poured into a jug of chicory-water. Pepys, who always found royal personages beautiful and wise, thought the Princess Henrietta very pretty, but still, he allows, below his expectation, not to mention that her style of wearing her hair frizzed up short to her ears was unbecoming; and, he adds, uxoriously, "My wife, standing near her, with two or three black patches on her, did seem to me much handsomer than she." That was as it should be.

In the marriages of subsequent princesses there is little to record. As manners grew simpler, and dress less gorgeous, the entertainments that preceded and followed

such marriages became more and more commonplace. The marriage of the Princess Charlotte with Prince Leopold perhaps produced more enthusiasm than ever hailed such an event in England, but the details of the ceremony itself are uninteresting.

Our readers will, at least, see by the few facts we have collected, trivial though they may be, how very much more frequent the marriages of princesses with mere subjects have been than is generally supposed.

DEAR DAVIE.

I KNOW it is the fashion to call servants selfish and mercenary, and to make out that they have all the faults common to humanity in excess of every one else; but we had an old servant whom I do not think any one could have disliked; at least I used to think so, until we had bitter proof of the contrary. He was the last of quite a long race of retainers in our family, for the Moffats had been servants at the Hall for three generations; and old David, or "dear Davie," as we used to call him, was as much a part of our family as one of ourselves. He had come in when a mere boy as a kind of general helper, rising by the orthodox stages till he had grown to be head man of everything; nominally butler, but in substance intendant, maître d'hotel, man-housekeeper, "acting lieutenant under a very easy-going captain," as poor papa used to say.

He was an old man now, past seventy; and I dare say he did cling to his place and privileges with perhaps at times uncomfortable tenacity. But who would have had the heart to take them from him? Our father, a kind-hearted, good-natured man, let him have his own way; and what he thought right to do, of course we thought it right to imitate. He and Davie had been boys together, or rather Davie had been a young man when he was a boy, and had taught him all that boys like to learn of rural life and sports; so that he always remembered this, and never quite got over the feeling of Davie's superior age and wisdom on certain points. My two brothers also were very fond of him, so were we girls, and he of us. And then he was the best creature in the world.

Dear Davie! I think I see him now, with his tall, thin, square-cut figure just beginning to be a little bowed at the shoulders; those flat angular shoulders

from which his clothes hung as if from two pegs; his fine white head, and mild blue eyes, and that nice manner of his, which was such a pleasant mixture of familiarity, affection, and respect. All our troubles were Davie's, as were all our pleasures. When Norah married so well, Davie was quite as miserable and proud and happy as any of us; and when Charlie went to India, nine years ago, the dear old man cried as openly as both Lucy and I did; and he was almost as glad as we ourselves when we used to get his letters. Indeed, Charlie, the youngest of us all, had perhaps been his favourite between the two brothers; if he could be said to have liked one best when he loved both so well. And when that terrible sorrow came upon us, and we lost first papa and then Reginald, both in the same year, I am sure Davie was like another father to Lucy and me, he was so kind and tender and faithful.

Since Charlie had been in India he had married. Of course we had not seen his wife yet; but now that our darling Reginald had gone, our eldest, our pride and stay, Charlie was the heir, and had to come home with his wife and children—there were two, both boys—to take possession of the Hall. You must not think that Lucy and I thought only of ourselves in all this sorrow if I tell you that, beside being so unutterably miserable, we were also uneasy and uncomfortable. The family tradition of us Lombes had always been one of close union. We had been a notoriously united set of people for generations; perhaps too much so; and there had never been a question of right or sufferance to the old home among the unmarried women. Papa's two sisters had lived with us till they died; and here were Lucy and I, in the same condition with respect to Charlie. But somehow we doubted Kate, Charlie's wife; and we had an idea that she would not like the arrangement so much as dear mamma had done. All her letters to us had been strangely cold. I cannot tell you how it was they struck us so unfavourably, but they did; more I imagine by what they did not say than by what they actually expressed. She never signed herself our sister; never called Charlie anything but "my husband," or "your brother;" always wrote of poor papa as "Mr. Lombe;" of Regy as "Mr. Reginald," or "your elder brother;" and, after papa's death, she called him "Mr. Lombe" in the only letter she had written to us; and in fact the whole tone was stiff, reserved, and unfriendly. However, she was now to be mistress of the old house—dear, hand-

some, generous Reginald, ah! what a loss that was!—and Charlie and she were coming over by the next mail.

As for Charlie, of course we had no doubt of him. He was a Lombe, a true Lombe; but all the same his wife might make it a little unpleasant for us if she chose, especially as we had been mistresses of the place so long: at least Lucy had. For even I was beyond thirty, and our mother had died when Charlie was born, so that for more than twenty years Lucy had had the command, and we could scarcely understand anything else. We had lived, too, in the real old-fashioned English way, seldom leaving home, and taking a personal interest in all that went on in the village and estate. So that we had plenty of occupation, and a not very narrow sphere of action and influence. But Kate, Charlie's wife, was to be mistress now. Lucy and I often wondered how we should get on with her, and what she would leave in our hands.

Ah! can I ever forget that day! Lucy and I were sitting in the drawing-room after dinner, very sad, very broken, speculating on the time when we might expect to see Charlie and his wife, and trying to drown our vague fears of her in our joy at having our brother with us again. We made out that they would be at Marseilles about now; and that it would not be long, say a week, before they would be at home. While we were sitting there talking, we saw a horseman come at full speed up the avenue, a noisy ring tore at the hall-bell, and soon after Davie came hurrying into the room with a telegram. Telegrams were not so common then as they are now, and they had never been usual at the Hall, where indeed they were specially dreaded. Davie looked frightened, we girls both trembled, and then Lucy opening the cover read just these words from Kate: "Your brother died at sea a fortnight ago. Prepare for my arrival at the Hall in a few days."

Telegrams cannot be sympathetic, I know, but this read to us so cruel, so heartless, and unfeeling! It came so abruptly. The news was so crushing, so awful. I cannot express what it was to us. Charlie dead! the last of our house. Father and two brothers all gone in less than a year. We had scarcely recovered from the shock of poor papa's death, when Reginald was taken from us; and now Charlie, the last of the generation; and poor Lucy and I left alone. Alone, with a stranger to come and take possession of the old house, and

to bring up in ways different from ours the future master of the Hall, the future representative of the Lombes. Cannot you understand all the different waves of sorrow that overwhelmed us? Grief at the loss of our only brother, family pride, and old-time conservatism, our utter loneliness, and the vague antagonism existing between us and Kate—all these smaller feelings helped to swell the current; though the fact that Charlie was dead, and that we should never see him again, was the most terrible sorrow of all.

Well, we did not go mad, nor break down into illness; we lived through the next few days in a kind of crushed despair; feeling something, I fancy, as criminals must feel before their trial, not knowing what was to be our fate. And in a few days Kate arrived. She sent no further intimation. We did not know where to write to her, and all we had to do was, as she said, to prepare for her coming.

It was just a week after that dreadful telegram, and it was early in the day, I remember the very hour—exactly twenty minutes past one; a fine, bright summer day—when three hack flies drove through the gates and up the avenue. They were loaded with trunks and packages of all kinds; on the outside of the first was a native servant in his Eastern dress, on the last an English servant in livery; but a different livery from ours. The servants flocked into the hall, and we went to the door to meet our sister. Naturally, at least it seemed natural to us, dear Davie stood out on the step with us. He was so like one of our family, that neither Lucy nor I thought for a moment whether it would look odd or not to a stranger that he should be standing on a level with ourselves, and occasionally turning round to speak to us with the affectionate familiarity of a poor kind of uncle.

In the first fly was Kate alone. She was very pretty, and her jaunty, fresh, coquettish weeds set her off immensely. She was a small, round kind of woman, with large light eyes that looked as if there had never been a tear in them—those dry, glittering eyes, like polished stones or metal, with narrow upper lids, and a trick of staring steadily, as if nothing could lower or abash them; the mouth was thin but prettily curved, and the nose was small but prominent. It was a face that ended in the tip of the nose—don't you know what I mean?—with the forehead and chin sloping backwards; but though it was decidedly a pretty, it was not a pleasant

face. It was fair, and the colours were pure and the outlines rounded, but it was a face that had neither tenderness nor sympathy in it; it was as hard in its expression as if cut out of wood.

She got out of the fly deliberately, and shook hands with us in a quiet matter-of-fact way, drawing back as Lucy bent to kiss her: I took the hint, and did not offer: and, looking at us full in our faces, she said, in a slow, monotonous voice, "You are Miss Lombe, I presume?" to Lucy; to me, "And you are Miss Mary?"

She stared with cold surprise at Davie, who had come forward in his kind old-fashioned way, half offering his hand; and that was her sole acknowledgment of him; and then she turned round and spoke to her servant sharply in Hindostanee, while he stood bowing and salaaming in a way that seemed quite shocking to Lucy and me, accustomed to treat English servants with respect, and to be treated by them with independence.

In a few moments, however, the second fly drove up, in which were a black nurse and two children. The dear children! You can fancy how Lucy and I yearned towards them! Poor Charlie's boys! and the last of the Lombes! The black man, a little rudely I thought, thrust himself before old Davie and opened the door of the fly, and we ran up and held out our arms to them; but the younger began to scream, and hid his face in the ayah's neck, and the other made naughty faces, and called out to us in Hindostanee to go away, and that we were pigs, and ugly old women. So we learnt afterwards. Kate laughed, and said, "Cheep, cheep;" the ayah smiled and looked on helplessly; and—oh, dear! it was a dreadful meeting! Kate so cold and indifferent, the strange servants, the reluctant children, and poor Charlie only so lately dead!

Lucy and I, with tears in our eyes, and that dreadful spasm at our hearts, led the way into the house, when Kate, stopping in the hall, asked abruptly, looking at the servants generally but not acknowledging their curtsies, "Which of you women is the cook?" just as if she had been speaking to people at an inn. Jane Clewer came forward and curtsied. She had lived with us fifteen years, and was a great favourite with us all.

"Can you cook well?" asked Kate.

Jane smiled nervously, coloured, and curtsied again. "I believe I know my business, ma'am," she answered.

"So you all say," said Kate, in such an

odd bloodless kind of way! "However, I shall soon be able to judge if you will suit me or not. Prepare tiffin—luncheon, I mean—at once if you please, and take care the rice is properly boiled. Saïd will show you how to boil it, as you will not know. English servants never do."

Then she spoke to the servant in Hindostanee, while poor Jane got scarlet and looked at us, scarcely knowing whether to blaze out on the spot, or take her humiliation quietly. But I felt for the poor thing, with all her English ways and prejudices, having a black man—a heathen—set over her in her own kitchen, to teach her such an elementary thing as how to boil rice! However, there was no help for it, so they all filed out of the hall again, and Saïd, salaaming, followed them; while little Regy, the eldest boy, pulled the tail of our Persian cat till she cried; and the younger one ran screaming after the peacock we had just begun to tame, and frightened it away over the lawn into the shrubbery.

"Now you must show me the house," said Kate, turning to Lucy. "We shall have time before tiffin is ready, and then I shall know where I am, and what to arrange."

So we understood it all now. Of course we expected her to be mistress; but we thought she would have allowed us to resign our authority, instead of which she took it out of our hands. Don't you know the difference? Well! I need not go into this. I give you just that little opening sketch as an indication of all that followed. Before Kate had been an hour in the house she was fully installed; and had even asked for the keys, saying in her quiet manner, "I must ask you to label these for me, Miss Lombe, till I have learnt which is which," and making Lucy and me feel only guests in our old home. She took the head of the table, and asked Lucy "to be kind enough to take the foot;" she assigned the children their places, and made her two men, Saïd and Ross, of more importance than Davie, whom indeed she ordered about and spoke to as he had never been spoken to in his life. She said very little to us, but talked to the little boys and her Indian servants, always in Hindostanee; and altogether she made herself as utterly unpleasant as it was possible for her to do. And yet we could say nothing. You cannot very well complain of people for that intangible kind of rudeness which only wounds you but does not strike you openly.

We found out afterwards that she had

made up her mind to this course of action from the first. She thought we might be difficult to move by gentler means, that we were old maids who had grown into the soil as it were, so she determined on uprooting us at once. According to her view of things it was the most merciful way. I do not mean to deny that we should have liked a little fuss over our abdication; we should; we should have liked to give up our authority generously, with a little scene, a little effusion; we should have liked the importance of teaching her our ways, and of training her to follow in the Lombe footsteps. That was very natural, for we were old maids; thin, home staying, fixed in thought and habit; but we were not, I think, unjust or bad-hearted, and we wished to do what was right by Charlie's wife and children. Still we were Lombes. The house had been ours for all our lives, and the family traditions were strong, as I told you. Perhaps it was all equally natural; Kate's unconditional assumption of authority, without any reference to us, and our desire to make ourselves of just so much importance, by giving up gracefully as of our own free-will, what she took as her right.

Of course the servants were the chief trouble. Kate did not get on with any of ours, and Ross, her footman, was given all the functions of the butler if Davie retained the name. Lucy and I had an utter horror of this man Ross. He was a bold, showy, impudent fellow who treated us all, even Lucy and me, in the most free-and-easy manner possible, and with such covert disrespect as if we knew nothing beyond crows' nests and buttermilk. Davie frankly hated the man; but Kate of course upheld him, and between him and Saïd our poor old friend's life was by no means a pleasant one at this moment. Nothing but his affection for us kept him to his post; but, as he used to say, his eyes filling with tears, "I mistrust them, young ladies, and I will not leave you, dear children, in their power." Dear Davie! we were always "young ladies" and "dear children" to him. And indeed both Lucy and I had a vague mistrust of the new men; but perhaps that was because we were such thorough old maids, and so disinclined to anything new.

Kate had been at the Hall about a fortnight, when all the servants were called up one day, and, without any previous warning, received notice to leave that day month.

"I have no fault to find with you," she

said, in her quiet monotonous way; "and you will all have excellent characters; but you have been too long in the place, you are too familiar with your former mistresses, and there is too much gossip and secret caballing going on. As I dismiss you all, I single out none, but I must be mistress in my own house, and do what I like without all the remarks that are made now. So, for all our sakes you must, every one of you, find another situation."

You may imagine how this took us all by surprise. Some of the maids fell to crying, Jane Clewer was one; and Davie, dear Davie! I thought the old man would have fainted. He staggered back as if he had been struck, and I ran up to him and put a chair for him.

"Not David, Kate," cried Lucy, and put her hand on his shoulder; "Davie is one of our own family, poor papa's friend, and Charlie's. Davie must not go; Charlie would never have let him go."

"And old Moffat with the rest," said Kate coldly. She never got excited. "He is past his work and very troublesome; and I should think, with his long service and absurdly extravagant wages, he must have saved a fortune by now; certainly quite enough to live on. Besides I wish a younger man at the head of the establishment." She meant Ross.

"Then if Davie goes, Mary and I will go too," said Lucy, excitedly.

Kate bowed. "That is quite for yourselves to decide," she said. "If you choose to stay here I will not turn you out; if you wish to go I will do nothing to keep you against your will. You must act just as you think best."

"We will leave," said Lucy again.

"Mary, don't you say so too?"

"Leave, yes! without a moment's hesitation," I answered. "If we do not go of our free-will we shall be forced to go before long. This is meant for us."

"You are wrong there," said Kate, "I would not have forced you. If you like to leave because I wish to change the servants" — she lifted her shoulders and spread out her hands — "you are your own mistresses," she added, with a smile full of meaning. "But do you think it well to discuss these delicate matters before the domestics?"

"They are our friends!" I cried warmly. "The only friends we have in the house."

"I do not envy your choice," returned Kate; and, with a mocking bow, "I beg to leave you to your select associates." And she swept out of the room.

Of course all this was very dreadful. That we should have to leave our dear old home was bad enough; but that we, the Lombes, should have to confess to family jars, to be the cause of public talk and public scandal, was worse than all. But it must be done. We knew that this dismissal of our old servants, specially of Davie, the change of living, the change of style altogether, were so many blows aimed at us, and for self-respect we felt that we must withdraw from further suffering.

There was a small house about two miles away, that we had always liked. It was just on the borders of Calne Wood, in a lovely situation, and the very thing for Lucy and me. For we were not rich. Our portions were small, in consideration of our being at home; but we were proud enough to resolve that what we had should be sufficient. We were to take Jane Clewer and Davie with us. But the dear old man would not hear of such a thing as "wages." He said that Mrs. Charles was right there; he had saved enough to keep himself all his life, and he would not take a penny from us.

"I know what you have, young ladies," he said; "five hundred a year between you; and you'll find that a tight fit after the Hall. Jane there can take her wages, she is young yet (she was nearly fifty), and must think of her old age; and you'll have to have a man for the garden, and the boots and shoes, and all that, but I'll be your man without wage, so no more need be said about it."

Was not that being good? No wonder we called him dear Davie! And really, servant though he was, we felt no degradation in the arrangement. We would not have taken a shilling from Kate; but dear Davie was our own, and she was a stranger!

I cannot understand what I am going to tell you now. How it all came about, what it all meant, I do not know, and can only conjecture; but the story is a true one, if confused and unintelligible.

It was the night before Lucy and I were to leave the Hall. There had been a rather warm dispute with Kate about some old silver that had belonged to our mother, and which Lucy and I thought we ought to have had; a silver tea-service, candelabra, side-dishes, &c.; and as the Lombe family silver was rich and abundant, this, which was never used, and which we had always looked on as belonging to us by right, would not have been missed. But Kate, in her character of trustee for her

children, as she used to say, would not part with a single piece. Everything in the Hall had devolved on them, she said, with her immovable air; and she had not the power, if the inclination, to give us anything whatsoever. There had been sharp words about this silver, and Davie had upheld us, and Ross had heard the dispute; and then Kate ordered that special chest to be placed in her own room, as if we were thieves!

In the middle of the night we were all aroused by a hideous noise. Breaking up our sleep we could not tell what it was; but it was a dreadful mixture of groans and screams coming from Kate's room. Lucy and I, who slept in adjoining rooms, threw on our dressing-gowns and ran across the corridor to where Kate slept. Many of the servants were up and clustered on the landing; the younger women shrieking vaguely, and the ayah making a shrill unearthly noise like nothing I had ever heard before; and with all this, groans and half-stifled screams from Kate's room, and the dogs barking furiously.

We rushed into the room; and I can scarcely tell you what we saw. Everything was in a dreadful state; the silver, about which there had been so much dispute, was strewed about the floor; there had evidently been a tremendous struggle, for chairs and tables were knocked down, and the bed-curtains were torn; on the bed lay Kate, with a handkerchief round her neck and mouth, nearly strangled; on the floor was Davie, pale and covered with blood—he had been stabbed. But he was not dead, only insensible, and dying. The bedroom window was wide open, and Ross was nowhere to be seen. All the other servants were there; our own, and Saïd, and the ayah; but the new man was not to be found. Davie could tell us nothing, neither what he was doing there in Kate's room, nor what was the meaning of the struggle, nor yet who had stabbed him. Kate would not speak; all she would say was, "It was not Moffat who came to rob me."

But the next day, when the local inspector came to the house to inquire into matters, and when, immediately after him, a detective arrived from London with a warrant for the apprehension of John Hard, alias Ross, for robbery and all sorts of

crimes, it seemed to make itself clear to these men at all events. It was evidently a robbery, they said, planned before his flight. He had probably received a hint that he had been tracked—and the servants said they noticed how long he was talking to a beggar woman in the garden, late in the evening—and thought he "would make a good thing of it, and bolt."

As for the old man—and here they looked as if they could see further into dear Davie's character than we could, who had known him all our lives—if indeed he was quite incapable of having a hand in the robbery, he had probably heard something which had roused his suspicions, and had gone to see what it meant.

To which Kate said, for her quite earnestly, "I should think that must have been the case. I do not for a moment believe that Moffat had any hand in the intended robbery."

"If you had said that he had, Kate, you would have deserved to have been strangled outright, instead of being saved by him at the sacrifice of his own life!" said I, bursting into a passion of tears like nothing I have ever known before or since.

From this time Kate entirely changed. The dreadful scene she had gone through, and the danger she had run, seemed to have shaken her nerves so that she could not steady herself. She was continually in hysterics, and would not be left alone for a moment. She clung to us as if we had been her real sisters, and became as nice and good as she had been unfriendly before. But we had lost our Davie, our friend, our protector, in her service! We had bought her at a heavy cost, dear Charlie's wife though she was. So the quarrel was made up over our faithful servant's grave, and we remained at the old Hall as the Lombes should. And the boys are growing up dear loves and great beauties, and do not now call us pigs, or ugly old women. Dear Davie! dear old man! It was through him, after all, that we got back our home. Heaven rest his soul!

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