THE DUKE'S DAUGHTER

AND

THE FUGITIVES

"Lady, you come hither to be married to this count?"
"I do."

—*Much Ado about Nothing.*

THE DUKE'S DAUGHTER

AND

THE FUGITIVES

BY

MRS OLIPHANT

IN THREE VOLUMES

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CONTENTS OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

THE DUKE'S DAUGHTER

(*CONTINUED*)

A Mrs

THE DUKE'S DAUGHTER.

CHAPTER XI.

A NEW AGENT.

THE reader accustomed to the amenities of the highest social circles, such as those which we are now compelled temporarily to leave, will no doubt sensibly feel the shock of the descent from the mansion of the Duke, and his sublime society, to a sphere and condition of life far removed from these summits of existence. It is seldom that life can be carried on solely upon those high levels; the necessities of

every day call for the aid of the more humbly born and placed, so that not even dukes can suffice to themselves. We must then, without further apology, proceed at once to a room as different as it is possible to conceive from the halls of Billings — a small sitting-room in a small rectory-house in the heart of London, belonging to one of the old parish churches which have been abandoned there by the tide of habitation and life. The church was close by, a fine one in its way, one of Wren's churches, adapted for a large Protestant congregation more solicitous about the sermon than is usual nowadays — but left now without any congregation at all. The rectory, a house of very moderate dimensions, jammed in among warehouses and offices, had little air and less light in the gloomy November days. The Rector and his wife had

just returned from their yearly holiday, and it was not a cheerful thing to come back to the fog, and the damp, and the gas-lamps, and all the din of the great carts that lumbered round the corner continually, and loaded and unloaded themselves within two steps of the clergyman's door. How was he to write his sermons or meditate over his work in the midst of these noises? his wife often asked indignantly. But, to be sure, the fifty people or so who quite crowded St Alban's when they all turned out, were not very critical. Down in these regions there is not a Little Bethel always handy, and the inhabitants must take what they can get and be thankful: which it would be a good thing, Mrs Marston thought, if they could be oftener obliged in other places to do.

Mr Marston was in his study. It was a small room on one side of the door,

chosen for its handiness that the parish people might be introduced without trouble, to the Rector: but there were but few that ever troubled him. At the present moment his verger had just brought him the parish news, with an intimation of the fact that a marriage was to take place to-morrow at eleven o'clock, at which Mr Sayers, who had taken the duty in his absence, hoped the Rector himself would officiate. The one parish duty that was occasionally necessary in St Alban's was to perform marriages, and accordingly the Rector was not surprised. He had the gas lighted, though it was still early in the afternoon, that he might look at the book in which the notice of the banns was kept, in order to make sure that all had been done in order. The gas was lighted, but the blind was not drawn down, and the upper part of the window was full of a grey

and dingy London sky, without colour in it at all, a sort of paleness merely, against which the leafless branches of the poor little tree which flourished in the little grass-plot stood out with a desolate distinction. Inside the room was unpleasantly warm. The Rector sat with his back to the fire; he read the entry of the banns in the book, and saw that all was right. Then after he had closed the book and put it away, a sudden thought struck him, and he opened it again. Where had he seen that name before? It was a strange name, a name not at all like the parish of St Alban's, E.C. What could she want here, a person with a name like that? He put down the book the second time, but again turned back and opened it once more. Pendragon Plantagenet Fitz-Merlin Altamont! One does not often hear such names strung one after another. Was it perhaps some

player-lady keeping the fine names of her *rôles* in the theatre? Or was it—could it be?—— Mr Marston could not shake off the impression thus made upon him. He had two churchings to-morrow which ought to have occupied him still more, for new members of the congregation were the most interesting things in the world to the Rector. But he was haunted by the other intimation, and the churchings sank into insignificance. He pondered for a long time, disturbed by the questions which arose in his mind, and at length, not feeling capable of containing them longer, he took the book in his hand and went across the hall, which was still in the afternoon gloom, to his wife, whose little drawing-room on the other side was lighted by the flickering firelight, and not much more. She was very glad to see him come in. "Did you think it was tea-

time?" she said. "I am sure I don't wonder, but it's only three o'clock. Dear, dear, to think of the fine sunset we were looking at an hour later than this yesterday. But London is getting worse and worse."

"Why don't you have the gas lighted?" the Rector asked in a querulous tone. "I have brought something to show you, but there is no light to see it by."

"You shall have the light in a moment," cried Mrs Marston; "that is the one good thing of gas. It spoils your picture-frames and kills your flowers; but you can have it instantly, and always clean and no trouble. There!"

The gas leaping up dazzled them for a moment, and then Mr Marston opened his book and pointed his finger to the entry. "Look here, Mary—look at that; did you ever see a name like that before? What do you suppose it can mean?"

Mrs Marston had to put on her spectacles first, and they had always to be looked for before they could be put on. She had just adopted spectacles, and did not like them, nor to have to make, even to herself, the confession that she wanted them: and they were always out of the way. The Rector was short-sighted, and had the exemption which such persons enjoy. He looked upon the magnifying spectacles of his wife with contempt, and it was always irritating to him to see her hunting about, saying, "Where have I put my glasses?" as was her wont. "Can't you tie them round your neck," he said, "or keep them in your pocket —or something?" When, however, they were found at last, he spread the book out upon the table and, with his finger on the place, waited while she read. Their two heads stooping over the book under the gas, with the pale sky looking

in at the window, made a curious picture, he eager, she still fumbling a little to get on her spectacles without further comment. 'Reginald Winton,' she read hesitating, 'bachelor, of this parish.' I never certainly heard of any one of that name in this parish: stay, it might be the new care-taker perhaps at Mullins and Makings—or——"

"That's not the name," cried the Rector. He would have liked to pinch her, but refrained. "This is no care-taker, you may be sure; but it is the other name—look at the other name. Where have you seen it before? and what is the meaning of it?" Mr Marston cried with excitement. He had worked himself up to this pitch, and he forgot that she was quite unprepared. She read, stumbling a little, for the handwriting was crabbed, "'Jane Angela Pendragon Plantagenet Fitz-Merlin Altamont, spinster, of the parish of Billings.'

Dear, dear," was good Mrs Marston's first comment—"I hope she has names enough and syllables enough for one person."

"And is that all that strikes you?" her husband said.

"Well—it is an odd name—is that what you mean, William? Very silly, I think, to give a girl all that to sign. I suppose if she uses it all, it will be only in initials. She will sign, you know, Jane Angela, or very likely only Angela, which is much prettier than Jane; Angela P. P. F.—or F. M.—Altamont, that is how it will be. Angela Altamont; it is like a name in a novel."

"Ah, now we are coming to it at last!" cried the Rector; "names in novels, when they are founded on anything, generally follow the names of the aristocracy. Now here's the question: Is this a secret marriage, and the bride some poor young lady who doesn't know what she is doing,

some girl running away with her brother's tutor or some fiddler or other, to her own ruin, poor thing, without knowing what she is about?"

"Dear me, William! what an imagination you have got!" said Mrs Marston, and she sat down in her surprise and drew the book towards her; but then she added, "Why should they come to St Alban's in that case? There are no musicans living in this parish. And poor people do give their children such grand names nowadays. That poor shirtmaker in Cotton Lane, don't you remember? her baby is Ethel Sybil Celestine Constantia—you recollect how we laughed?"

"Family Herald," said the Rector with a careless wave of his hand, "and all Christian names, which makes a great difference. It was her last batch of heroines, poor soul; but do you think a poor needlewoman would think of Pen-

dragon and Plantagenet? No; mark my words, Mary, this is some great person; this is some poor deceived girl, throwing away everything for what she thinks love. Poor thing, poor thing! and all the formalities complied with, so that I have no right to stop it. Sayers is an idiot!" cried Mr Marston. "I should have inquired into it at once had I been at home, with a name before my eyes like that."

"Dear me!" said Mrs Marston; there is not much in it, but she repeated the exclamation several times. "After all," she said, "it must be true love, or she would not go that length; and who knows, William, whether that is not better than all their grandeur? Dear, dear me! I wish we knew a little about the circumstances. If the gentleman is of this parish couldn't you send for him and inquire into it?" The Rector was pacing up and down the room in very unusual agitation.

It was such a crisis as in his peaceful clerical life had never happened to him before.

"You know very well he is not of this parish," Mr Marston said. "I suppose he must have slept here the requisite number of nights; and besides, he knows I have no right to interfere. The banns are all in order. I can't refuse to marry them, and what right have I to send for the man or to question him? No doubt he would have some plausible story. It is not to be expected, especially if it is the sort of thing I think it is, that he should tell me."

"Dear, dear!" repeated Mrs Marston. "A clergyman should have more power; what is the good of being a clergyman if you cannot stop a marriage in your own church? I call that tyranny. Do you mean to tell me you will be compelled to marry them, whether you approve of it or not?"

"Well, Mary, it is not usual to ask the clergyman's consent, is it?" he said with a laugh, momentarily tickled by the suggestion. But this did not throw any light upon what was to be done, or upon the question whether anything was to be done; and with a mind quite unsatisfied he retired again to the study, seeing that it was out of all reason to ring the bell at half-past three for tea. He drew down his blind with a sigh as he went back to his room, shutting out the colourless paleness which did duty for sky, and resigning himself to the close little room though it was too warm. Mr Marston tried his best to compose himself, to take up his work, such as it was, to put away from his mind the remembrance of a world which was not wrapt in fog, and where wholesome breezes were blowing. St Alban's was a good living; it had endowments enough to furnish two or three

churches, and to get it had been a wonderful thing for him; but sometimes he asked himself whether two hundred a-year and a country parish with cottages in it instead of warehouses would not have been better. However, all that was folly, and here was something exciting to amuse his mind with, which was always an advantage. He had laid down his book (for he thought it right to keep up his reading) for the fourth or fifth time, to ask himself whether sending for the bridegroom, as his wife suggested, or going out in search of him, might not be worth his while, when Mrs Marston came suddenly bursting into the study with, in her turn, a big volume in her arms. The Rector looked up in surprise and put away his theology. She came in, he said to himself, like a whirlwind; which was not, however, a metaphor at all adapted to describe the move-

ments of a stout and comfortable person of fifty, with a great respect for her furniture. But she did enter with an assured, not to say triumphant air, carrying her book, which she plumped down before him on the table, sweeping away some of his papers. "There!" she cried, breathless and excited. The page was blazoned with a big coat of arms. It was in irregular lines like poetry, and ah, how much dearer than poetry to many a British soul! It was, need we say, a Peerage, an old Peerage, without any of the recent information, but still not too old for the purpose. "There!" said Mrs Marston, again flourishing her forefinger. The Rector, bewildered, looked and read. He read and he grew pale with awe and alarm. He looked up in his wife's face with a gasp of excitement. He was too much impressed even to say, "I told you so,"

for, to be sure, a duke's daughter was a splendour he had not conceived. But his wife was more demonstrative in the delight of her discovery. "There!" she cried, for the third time. "I felt sure, of course, it must be in the Peerage, if it was what you thought; and there it is at full length, 'Lady Jane Angela Pendragon Plantagenet Fitz-Merlin Altamont.' It fairly took away my breath. To think you should have made such a good guess! and me talking about Mrs Singer's baby! Why, I suppose it is one of the greatest families in the country," Mrs Marston said.

"There is no doubt about that," said the Rector. "I have heard the present Duke was not rich, but that would make it all the worse. Poor young lady! poor misguided—for of course she can know nothing about life nor what she is doing. And I wonder who the man is. He must be a scoundrel," said Mr Marston,

hotly, "to take advantage of the ignorance of a girl."

"My dear," said Mrs Marston, "all that may be quite true that you say, but if you reckon up you will see that she must be twenty-eight. Twenty-eight is not such a girl. And Reginald Winton is quite a nice name."

"Just the sort of name for a tutor, or a music-master, or something of that sort," said the Rector, contemptuously. He had been a tutor himself in his day, but that did not occur to him at the moment. He got up from his chair and would have paced about the room as he did in his wife's quarters had the study been big enough; but failing in this, he planted himself before the fire, to the great danger of his coat-tails and increase of his temperature, but in his excitement he paid no attention to that. "And now the question is, what is to be done?" he said.

"I thought you told me there was nothing to be done. I shall come to church myself to-morrow, William, and if you think I could speak to the poor young lady——: perhaps if she had a woman to talk to—most likely she has no mother. That's such an old book, one can't tell; but I don't think a girl would do this who had a mother. Poor thing! Do you think if I were there a little before the hour and were to talk to her, and try to get into her confidence, and say how wrong it was——"

"Talk to a bride at the altar!" said the Rector; the indecorum of the idea shocked him beyond description. "No, no, something must be done at once—there is no time to be lost. I must write to the Duke."

"To the Duke!" This suggestion took away Mrs Marston's breath.

"I hope," said her husband, raising his

head, "that we both know a duke is but a man: and I am a clergyman, and I want nothing from him, but to do him a service. It would be wicked to hesitate. The question is, where is he to be found, and how can we reach him in time? He is not likely to be in town at this time of the year; nobody is in town I suppose except you and me, and a few millions more, Mary; but that doesn't help us—the question is, where is he likely to be? Thank heaven there is still time for the post!" Mr Marston cried, and threw himself upon his chair, and pulled his best note-paper out of his drawer.

But, alas! the question of where the Duke was puzzled them both. Grosvenor Square; Billings Castle, ——shire; Hungerford Place, in the West Riding; Cooling, N.B.; Caerpylcher, North Wales. As his wife read them out one after another, with a little hesitation about the pro-

nunciation, the Rector wrung his hands. The consultation which the anxious pair held on the subject ran on to the very limits of the post-hour, and would take too long to record. Now that it had come to this, Mrs Marston was inclined to hold her husband back. "After all, if it was a real attachment," she said, between the moments of discussing whether it was in his seat in Scotland, or in Wales, or at his chief and most ducal of residences that a duke in November was likely to be. "After all, it might be really for her happiness — and what a dreadful shock for them, poor things, if they came to be married, thinking they had settled everything so nicely, and walked into the arms of her father!" Her heart melted more and more as she thought of it. No doubt, poor girl, she had been deprived early of a mother's care; and, on the other hand, at twenty-

eight a girl ought to know her own mind. She could not be expected to give in to her father for ever. And if it should be that this was a real attachment, and the poor young lady's happiness was concerned——

The Rector made short work of these arguments. He pooh-poohed the real attachment in a way which made Mrs Marston angry. What could she know of poverty? he asked; and how was a duke's daughter to scramble for herself in the world? As for love, it was great nonsense in most cases. The French system was just as good as the English. People got to like each other by living together, and by having the same tastes and habits. How could a fiddler or a tutor have the same habits as Lady Jane, "or Lady Angela, if you like it better?" He went on, as Mrs Marston said, like this, till she could have boxed his ears

for him. And the fact was that he had to pay an extra penny on each of his letters to get them off by the post; for he wrote several letters — to Billings, to Hungerford, and to Grosvenor Square. Scotland and Wales were hopeless; there was no chance whatever that from either of these places his Grace could arrive in time. Indeed, it would be something very like a miracle if he arrived now. But the Rector felt that he had done his duty, which is always a consolation. He retired to rest late and full of excitement, feeling that no one could tell what the morrow might bring forth — a sentiment, no doubt, which is always true, but which commends itself more to the mind in a season when out-of-the-way events are likely. Mrs Marston had been a little cool towards him all the evening, resenting much that he had said. But it was not till all modes of communi-

cating with the outer world were hopeless that she took her revenge and planted a thorn in his pillow. "If you had not been so disagreeable," she said, "I would have advised you not to trust to the post, but to telegraph. I dare say the Duke would have paid you back the few shillings; then he would have been sure to get the news in time. At present I think it very unlikely. And I am sure, for the young people's sake, I should be sorry. But I should have telegraphed," Mrs Marston said. And the Rector, strange to say, had never thought of that.

CHAPTER XII.

HALF-MARRIED.

NEXT morning everything was in movement early in St Alban's, E.C. Orders had been sent to the verger to have special sweepings-out and settings in order, a thing which took that functionary much by surprise. For the marriage: but then marriages were not so uncommon at St Alban's—less uncommon than anything else. Churchings were more rare events, and demanded more consideration: for probably the married pair once united would never trouble St Alban's more; whereas there was always a chance

that babies born in the neighbourhood might grow up in it, and promote the good works of the parish, or be candidates for its charities, which was also very desirable — for the charities were large and the qualified applicants few. But it was for the marriage that all this fuss was to be made. "It must be a swell wedding," the verger said to his wife. "You had better put on your Sunday bonnet and hang about. Sometimes they want a witness to sign the book, and there's half-crowns going." Accordingly all was expectation in the neighbourhood of the church. The best altar-cloth was displayed, and the pinafores taken off the cushions in the pulpit and reading-desk, and the warming apparatus lighted, though this was an expense. Mr Marston felt justly that when there was a possibility of a duke and a certainty of a duke's daughter, extra

preparations were called for. He came over himself early to see that all was ready. There was no concealing his excitement. "Has any one been here?" he asked, almost before he was within hearing of the verger. Simms answered "No"—but added, "Them churchings, Rector. You'll take 'em after the wedding, sir? "Oh, the churchings," said the Rector: are the women here?—oh, after the wedding, of course." But then a sudden thought struck him. "Now I think of it, Simms," he said, "perhaps we'd better have them first—at least, keep them handy, ready to begin, if necessary—for there is some one coming to the marriage who—may be perhaps a little late——" "Oh, if you knows the parties, sir," said the verger. And just at that moment Mrs Marston came in, in her best bonnet and a white shawl. She came in by the vestry door, which

she had a way of doing, though it was uncanonical, and she darted a look at her husband as she passed through and went into her own pew, which was quite in the front, near to the reading-desk. The white shawl convinced Simms without further words. Unless she knew the parties Mrs Marston never would have appeared like this. Respectability was thus given to the whole business, which beforehand had looked, Simms thought, of a doubtful description; for certainly there was nobody in the parish of the name of Winton, even if the bridegroom had not looked "too swell" to suit the locality. But if they were the Rector's friends!

They arrived a few moments after eleven o'clock, in two very private, quiet-looking carriages, of which nobody could be quite sure whether they were humble broughams, of the kind which can be

hired, or private property. The bridegroom was first, with one man accompanying him, who looked even more "swell" than himself. The bride came a little after in the charge of a respectable elderly woman-servant, and one other lady whose dress and looks were such as had never been seen before in St Alban's. Mrs Simms was not learned in dress, but she knew enough to know that the simplicity of this lady's costume was a kind of simplicity more costly and grand than the greatest finery that had ever been seen within the parish of St Alban's. The bride herself was wrapped in a large all-enveloping grey cloak. The maid who was with her even looked like a duchess, and was far above any gossip with Mrs Simms. Altogether it was a mysterious party. There was a little room adjoining the vestry to which the ladies were taken to wait till all was ready, while the gentlemen

stood in the church, somewhat impatient, the bridegroom looking anxiously from time to time at his watch. But now came the strangest thing of all. The Rector, who had ordered the church to be warmed and the cushions to be uncovered on purpose for them—he who had known enough about their arrangements to calculate that some one might arrive late—the Rector, now that they were here, took no notice. Simms hurried in to inform him that they had come, but he took no notice; then hurried back a second time to announce that "the gentlemen says as they're all here and quite ready;" but still Mr Marston never moved. He had his watch on the table, and cast a glance upon it from time to time, and he was pale and nervous sitting there in his surplice. The clergyman all ready and the bridal party all ready, and a quarter after eleven chiming!

"We'll take the churchings, Simms," said the Rector, in a voice that was scarcely audible.

"The churchings, sir!" cried the verger, not believing his ears. Of all the things to keep a wedding-party waiting for! But what could Simms do? To obey the Rector was his first duty. He went with his mind in a state of consternation to fetch the two poor women from the pews where they sat waiting, wrapping themselves in their shawls, rather pleased with the idea of seeing a wedding before their own little service. But they, too, were thunderstruck when they heard they were to go up first. "Are you sure you ain't making a mistake?" one of them said; and as he walked up the aisle, followed by these two humble figures, the elder gentleman, who wore an eye-glass in his eye, almost assaulted Simms. He said, "Holloa! hi! what are you after

there?" as if he had been in the street and not in a church.

Simms paused, and came closer than Lord Germaine, who was Winton's attendant, thought agreeable. He curved his hand round one side of his mouth, and under its shelter whispered, "Two ladies, sir, to be churched——"

"Churched! what's that?" cried Lord Germaine, with a sort of fright—and then he recollected himself, and laughed. "But, my good fellow," he said, "not before the marriage. Take my compliments to the clergyman—Lord Ger—— I mean just my compliments, you know," he added hurriedly, "and tell him that we are all waiting, really all here and waiting. He can't keep a bride and bridegroom waiting for—two ladies"—and then he glanced through his eyeglass at the two poor women, who dropped a humble curtsey without meaning it—"who can

be churched, you know quite well, my good fellow, after twelve o'clock."

"I'll tell the Rector, sir," said Simms—but he took his charges to the altar-steps all the same, for the Rector was a man who liked to be obeyed. Then he went in and delivered his message.

The Rector was sitting gazing at his watch with a very anxious and troubled face. "Has any one come?" he said.

"Please, sir, they be all here," said Simms. "You'll not keep the bride and bridegroom waiting, surely, the gentleman says."

"I hope I am a better judge as to my duty than the gentleman," said the Rector, tartly; and without another word he marched into the chancel, and advancing to the altar-rails, signed to the two women to take their places. During the interval the bride had been brought from the waiting-room and divested of her cloak.

She was dressed simply in white, with a large veil over her little bonnet. Lord Germaine had given her his arm and was leading her to her place, when the voice of the Rector announced that the other service had begun. The bridal party looked at each other in consternation, but what could they do? Lord Germaine, though he was one of the careless, had not courage enough to interrupt a service in church. They stood waiting, the strangest group. Lady Jane, when she divined what it was, did her best to pay a little attention, to follow the prayers and lessons, which were so curiously out of keeping with the circumstances. Winton, standing by her, crimson with anger and impatience, could scarcely keep still. He held his watch in his hand with feverish anxiety. Lord Germaine, adjusting his glass more firmly in his eye, regarded the Rector as if he was a curious animal. Lady

Germaine, after carefully examining the whole group for a moment, fell, as it was evident to see, into convulsions of secret laughter. If it had not been so serious, it would have been highly comic. And as for the poor women kneeling at the altar, the service so far did them very little good. They were shocked to the very soul to think of standing in the way of a bride; they could not resist giving little glances from the corners of their eyes to see her, or at least the white train of her dress falling upon the carpet on the altar-steps, which was all that was within their range of vision as they knelt with their hands over their faces. They were very well meaning, both of them, and had really intended to do their religious duty—but there are some things which are too great a trial for even flesh and blood.

All this time was Mrs Marston's oppor-

tunity if she could have availed herself of it. She sat in her place in her front pew, in a tremble, meaning every moment to put force upon herself to do her duty. All the time she was reminding herself that she was a clergyman's wife; that she ought not to be timid; that it was her duty to speak. But how much easier it had been last night in intention than it was to-day in reality! For one thing, she had not foreseen the presence of Lady Germaine. She had thought only of the poor girl, who probably had no mother, to whom it would make all the difference in the world to have a woman to speak to. But the presence of the other lady confounded the Rector's wife. She sat and looked on in a tremor of anxiety and timidity, unable to move, yet with her heart pricking and urging her. And so pretty and modest as the bride looked, poor thing; and surely he was fond of her.

He would not look at her like that if it was an interested marriage. But when she saw the laughter which "the other lady" could not suppress, horror overcame all other sentiments in Mrs Marston's mind. To laugh in church; to laugh at one of the church services! She had gone down on her knees, but neither did she, it is to be feared, give very much attention to the prayers. And even the Rector's mind was disturbed. He stumbled twice in what he was saying; his eyes were not upon the book, but upon the door, watching for some one to come; and, good heavens! how slowly the time went! After all, it was not much more than the half-hour when the two poor women, scarcely knowing what had passed, got up from their knees. He had read more quickly instead of more slowly in the confusion of his mind. Twenty minutes yet! and the two poor mothers going down the

altar-steps, stealing into the first vacant seat to sate their eyes with the ceremony to follow, and the other little group ranged before him, Simms putting them in their places very officiously, and no help for it, and no sign of any one coming. Well, a man can do no more than his duty! The Rector came forward with the sentiments of a martyr, and opened his book and cleared his voice. He was so much excited and nervous that he could hardly keep his articulation clear. He had to clear his voice a great many times in the first address; the figures before him swam in his eyes. He had an impression of a sweet but pale face, very solemn and tremulous, yet calm, and of a man who did not look like an adventurer. It occurred to him, even as he read, that if he had not known anything about them, he would have been interested in this young pair. Was no one coming, then?

He hardly knew how he began. Three-quarters chiming, and nothing more that he could do to gain time! He went on, stumbling, partly from agitation, partly for delay, lifting his eyes between every two words, committing more indecorum in the course of five minutes than he had done before in all his clerical life. When he came to the words "if any man can show any just cause," it came into his head what a mockery it was. He made almost a dead stop, and looked round in a sort of anguish—"any man!"—why, there was not a creature—there was nobody but Simms, waiting behind obsequious, thoughtful of the half-crowns, and Mrs Simms staring, and the two poor women who had been churched. Who of all these was likely to make any objection? And everything perfectly quiet; not a sound outside except the ordinary din. Then he put on his most solemn aspect

and looked fully, severely, in the face of the bridal pair. "I require—and charge you both—as ye will answer—at the dreadful day of judgment." Tremendous words; and he gave them forth one by one, pausing at every breathing-place. Surely there never was such an officiating clergyman. Lord Germaine kept that eyeglass full upon him, gravely studying the unknown phenomena of a new species. Lady Germaine, entirely overmastered by the *fou rire* which had seized her during the churching, and fully believing that it was all eccentricity of the most novel kind, crushed her handkerchief into her mouth, and stood behind Winton that her half-hysterical seizure of mirth might not be perceived. And now even that adjuration was over. Slow as you can say the words, there are still but a few of them to say. The Rector was in despair. A little more, and they would be bound beyond any

man's power to unloose them. He had to begin, "Wilt thou have this woman——" At this point he stopped short altogether; his eager ears became conscious of something strange among the outside noises with which he was so familiar. He made a sign to Simms, an angry, anxious gesture, pointing to the door. Lady Germaine was almost beside herself; the little handkerchief now was not enough; a moment more, she felt, and her laugh must peal through the church.

But it did not—another moment something else pealed through the church, a loud voice calling "Stop!" and Lady Germaine's disposition to laugh was over in an instant. She gave a little cry instead, and came close to Lady Jane to support her. Lord Germaine dropped his eyeglass from his eye. He said, "Go on, sir; go on, sir; do your duty," imperatively. As for Winton, he turned

half round with a start, then, bewildered, pronounced his assent to the question which had been but half asked him. "I will," he said, "I will!" "Go on, sir," cried Lord Germaine: "go on, sir." In the meantime some one was hurrying up the aisle, pale, breathless, in a whirl of passion. Even in the excitement and horror of the moment Mrs Marston could not help giving a second look to see what like a duke was in the flesh. The newcomer was white with fatigue and fury. He came up to the very altar-steps where those two poor women had been kneeling, and thrust Mrs Simms and the alarmed verger almost violently out of the way. "Stop!" he cried, "stop! I forbid it—stop —Jane!" and clutched his daughter by the arm. Lady Germaine in her excitement gave a loud shriek and grasped the bride tighter, holding her round the waist, while Winton, in a kind of frenzy, seized

her ungloved hand, which was ready to be put into his. Lady Jane thus seized on every side awoke only then out of the abstraction of that solemn and prayerful seriousness in which she had been about to perform the greatest act of her life. She had not noted the breaks and pauses in the service, she had not thought of anything extraneous, noises or voices. All that had occupied her was the solemnity of the moment, the great thing she was doing, the oath she was about to take. Even now, when so rudely awakened, she was not sure that the hand of the bridegroom seeking hers was not in the course of the service. She gave it to him, notwithstanding the grasp upon her arm. "Go on, sir!" shouted Lord Germaine; "do your duty." But the Rector could not help for the moment a little sense of triumph. He made a step backwards and closed his book. And at this moment

there was the little rustle in the throat of the church tower, and one, two, three,—noon struck, filling the church with successive waves of sound.

The Duke had begun, "Jane!" and Winton had cried out, echoing his friend, to the Rector to "go on, go on," when this sound suddenly fell upon them all, ringing slowly, steadily, like a doom bell. Something in the sound stilled every one, even the angry and unhappy young man, who saw his marriage broken and his hopes made an end of in a moment. Lady Germaine took her hand away from Jane's waist and sank down upon the vacant bench and burst out into sobbing,—she who felt that she must laugh five minutes before; and Mrs Marston cried in her pew, and the two poor women looked on with so much sympathy. The Duke's hand dropped from his daughter's arm. The only thing that

did not alter was the attitude of the two chief figures. They stood with clasped hands before the altar-rails. Even now Lady Jane only half understood what had happened. It began to dawn upon her as she saw the closed book, and felt the silence and the sound of the clock. She turned round to Winton with a questioning look, then smiled and gave a little, the slightest, pressure of the hand she held. In this way they stood while the clock struck, no one saying a word. Then there arose several voices together.

"I thank heaven I arrived in time!" the Duke exclaimed. "Jane, let there be no further scene, but leave off this silly pantomime, and come home at once with me."

"Your bishop shall hear of this, sir!" said Lord Germaine, shaking his fist, in spite of himself, at the Rector.

Winton, on his side, was too sick at

heart to find any words. He said, "It is over," with a voice of anguish; then added, "but we are pledged to each other —pledged all the same."

"Let go my daughter, sir!" cried the Duke.

"We are pledged to each other," Winton repeated. He took the ring out of his pocket, where it lay ready, and put it on her finger, trembling. "She is my wife," he said, half turning round, appealing to the group.

Lady Jane withdrew her right hand, putting it within his arm. She held up that which had the ring upon it, and put her lips to it. "I don't know what this means," she said, tremulous and yet clear, "but I am his wife."

"Let go my daughter, sir!" cried the Duke. They were all speaking together. The pair who were not wedded turned round arm in arm as they might have

done had the ceremony been completed. Once more the Duke caught hold of his daughter roughly. "Jane, leave this man! I command you to leave him! Come home at once!" he cried. "Mr Winton, if you have any sense of honour, you will give her up at once. My God! will you compromise my daughter and pretend to love her? Jane, will you make your family a laughing-stock? Come, come! You will cover us with shame. You will kill your mother." He condescended to plead with her, so intense was his feeling. "Jane, for the love of heaven——"

Lady Germaine rose up from the bench on which she had flung herself. "Oh, Duke!" she cried, "don't you see things have gone too far? Leave her with me. She will not be compromised with me. Have pity upon your own child! Don't you see, don't you see that it is too late to stop it now?"

"Lady Germaine!" cried the Duke, "I hope you can forgive yourself for your share in this, but I cannot forgive you. Certainly my daughter shall not go with you. There is but one house to which she can go—her father's." He tightened his hold on her arm as he spoke. "Jane! —this scene is disgraceful to all of us. Put a stop to it at once. Come home; it is the only place for you now."

Then there was a pause, and they all looked at each other with a mute consultation. The little ring of spectators stood and listened. Mrs Marston, with the tears scarcely dried from her eyes, watched them with fluttered eagerness, expecting the moment when the Duke should come and thank her for the warning he had received. She was compunctious for the sake of the young people; but yet to have the thanks of the Duke—— The Rector had made haste to get out of his surplice, and now

came out with a little importance and the same idea in his mind.

Lady Jane was the first to speak. She said, "It is cruel for us all; but perhaps my father is right, things being as they are. I cannot go with you, Reginald, to our own house."

Winton's voice came with a burst, half-groan, half-sob, uncontrollable. "God help us! I don't suppose you can, my darling —till to-morrow."

"Till to-morrow! Then I will go home to my father's now. Oh no," she said, shrinking back a little, "not with you. Reginald will take me home."

"Let go my daughter, sir!" the Duke said. "He shall not touch you. He shall not come near you. What! do you persist? Give her up, Winton; do you hear me? She says she will come home."

"Father," said Lady Jane very low, "it is you who are forgetting our dignity. I

will go home, if Reginald takes me; but not with you. I suppose no one doubts our honour. It is not the time for delay now, after you have done all this. Reginald will take me home."

What the Duke said further it is scarcely necessary to record. He had to stand by at last, half stupefied, and watch them walk down the aisle arm in arm, bride and bridegroom, to the evidence of everybody's senses. He followed himself as in a dream, and got in, cowed, but vowing vengeance, into the cab, which was all his Grace could find to reach St Alban's in from the railway,—and in that followed the brougham which conveyed his daughter and her — not husband, and yet not lover—to Grosvenor Square. But when he had once got her there!

The Rector and his wife stood open-mouthed to see the pageant thus melt away. The Duke, to whom they had done

so great a favour, took no more notice of them than of the two poor women, who vaguely felt themselves in fault somehow, and still kept crying, looking after the bride. Not a word to the poor clergyman, who had almost done wrong for his sake—not a look even, not the faintest acknowledgment, any more than if he had nothing to do with it! Simms and his wife stood gaping, too, at the church door, looking after the party which had been far too much preoccupied to think of half-crowns. "This is how people are treated after they have done their best. I always told you not to meddle," Mrs Marston said, which was very ungenerous, as well as untrue. But the Rector said nothing. He was mortified to the bottom of his heart. But when the excitement had a little died away, he said to himself with vindictive pleasure that he hoped they were having a pleasant day, those fine people in Grosvenor Square.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE WEDDING-DAY.

It was not a pleasant day in Grosvenor Square. When the Duke arrived in his cab the door was opened to him by the humble person who had care of the house while the family were out of town,—an old servant, to whom this charge was a sort of pensioning off. She was very much fluttered, and informed him in an undertone that Lady Jane had arrived a few minutes before "with a gentleman." "Her ladyship is in the library, your Grace, and the gentleman with her," the old woman said, curtseying and trembling — for though

Lady Jane's garb was very simple for a bride, still it was a white dress, and in the middle of winter it is well known that ladies do not go about their ordinary business in such garments. The Duke considered a moment and then decided that he would not see his daughter till her companion was gone. He was tremulous with rage and discomfiture, yet with the sense that vengeance was in his hands. This feeling made him conclude that it was more wise not to see Winton, not to run the risk of losing his temper or betraying his intentions, but to remain on the watch till he withdrew, and in the meantime to arrange his own plans. He told the old housekeeper to let him know when the gentleman was gone, and in the meantime hurried up-stairs to his daughter's room, and examined it carefully. Lady Jane had two rooms appropriated to her use, with a third communi-

cating with them in which her maid slept. This was a large area to put under lock and key, which was her father's determination: but in the ferment of his excited mind and temper he felt no derogation in the half-stealthy examination he made of the shut-up rooms, their windows and means of communication, the locks on the door, and all the arrangements that would be necessary to shut them off entirely from the rest of the house. With his own hands he removed the keys, locking all the doors but one, and leaving the key on the outside of that to shut off all entrance to the prison.

While he was thus occupied the pair so strangely severed stood together in the library waiting for his appearance, and getting a certain bitter sweetness out of the last hour they were to spend together. They were not aware that it was, in any serious sense of the words, their last hour.

"Till to-morrow" was the limit they gave themselves. To-morrow no further interruption would be possible, the incomplete service would be resumed, and all would be well. Even the Duke, unreasonable as he might be, would not think it practicable, when in his sober senses, to endeavour to sunder those who had been almost put together in the presence of God. They believed, notwithstanding the tantalising misery of this interruption, that it could not be but for a few hours; and though Winton's impatience and indignation were at first almost frenzy, Lady Jane recovered her courage before they reached the house, and did her best to soothe him. She drew good even out of the evil. To-morrow all would be completed in her father's presence. When once convinced that matters had gone too far to be arrested, how could he refuse to lend his sanction to what must be, whether

with his sanction or not? She pleased herself with this solution of all their difficulties. "My mother will come, I am sure," she said, "as soon as the train can bring her. I shall have her with me, which will be far, far better than Lady Germaine, and there will be no further need of concealment, which is odious, is it not, Reginald? There is a soul of goodness in things evil," she said. As for Winton, he was past speaking: the disappointment, and those passions that rage in the male bosom, were too much for him—fury and indignation, and pride in arms, and the sense of defeat, which was intolerable. But he permitted himself to be subdued, to yield to her who had put so much force upon herself, and conquered so many natural repugnances and womanly traditions for him. Lady Jane would not even let it appear that she felt the shame of being thus dragged

back to her father's house. "To-morrow," she said, "to-morrow," with a thousand tender smiles. When it became apparent that the Duke did not mean to make an appearance, she turned that to their advantage with soothing sophistry. "He has nothing to say now," she cried, "don't you see, Reginald? You cannot expect him to come and offer us his consent; if he withdraws his opposition, that is all we can desire. Had he meant to persevere, he would have come to us at once, and ordered you away, and made another struggle. That is what I have been fearing. And now in return for his forbearance you must go. Oh, do you think I wish you to go? but it is best, it will be most honourable. What could be done in the circumstances but that you should bring me home? Yes, till your house is mine this is still home—till to-morrow," she cried, smiling upon

him. Winton paced up and down the gloomy closed-up room in an agony of uncertainty, bewilderment, and dismay.

"My home *is* yours!" he cried; "and what sort of place is this to bring you to, my darling, without a soul to take care of you or look after your comfort, without a fire even, or a servant:—on this day! It is intolerable! And how, how can I go and leave you, on our wedding-day? It is more than flesh and blood can bear. Jane, I have a foreboding; I can't be hopeful like you. If you submitted to the force of circumstances in that wretched church, there is no force of any kind here. Don't send me away; come with me, my love, my dearest. The way is clear, there is nothing but that old woman——"

"There is our honour," said Lady Jane. "I pledged it to my father. And if I went with you, it would only

be to separate again. Surely I am better at home than at Lady Germaine's: — till to-morrow — till to-morrow," she repeated softly. The library was next the door, it was close to the open street, the free air out-of-doors. The temptation, though she rejected it, was great upon Lady Jane too. There was a moment in which, though she did not allow it, she wavered. The next moment, with more fortitude than ever, she recovered the mastery of herself. It was she at last who, tenderly persuading and beseeching, induced him to go away. She went to the door with him and almost put him out with loving force. "You will come back for me to-morrow — to-morrow! it is not long till to-morrow," she said, waving her hand to her distracted bridegroom as he hurried away. It was well that there was nobody in town — nobody in

Grosvenor Square — except a passing milk-boy, to see the Duke's daughter standing in the doorway like the simplest maiden, in her white dress, a wonderful vision for a murky London day, taking farewell of her love. She closed the door after him with her own hand, while poor old Mrs Brown, in such a flutter as she had never before experienced in her life, came bobbing out from the corner in which she had been keeping watch. "Oh, my lady! my lady!" the old woman said. She had scarcely been high enough up in the hierarchy of service below-stairs to have come to speech of Lady Jane at all, and now to think that she was all the attendance possible for that princess royal! Lady Jane, it may be supposed, was in no light-hearted mood, but she stopped with a smile to reassure the old servant.

"Nurse Mordaunt is with me," she said; "she will, no doubt, be here directly, Mrs Brown. You must not vex yourself about me. It will only be till to-morrow. If you will have a fire lighted in my room, I will go there.

"Yes, my lady; oh, my lady! but I'm afraid there's some sad trouble," said the old housekeeper.

Lady Jane was far too high-bred to reject this sympathy, but it was almost more than in her valour she could bear. Her eyes filled in spite of herself. "It is only an extraordinary accident," she said. "But Mordaunt will tell you when she comes." She was glad to escape into the library that she might not break down. Turning round to re-enter alone that huge, cold, uninhabited place, her mind was seized with a spasm of terror. The blinds were drawn down, the fire-place was cold, it was like a room out

of which the dead had been newly carried, not a place to receive a woman in the most living moment of life—on her wedding-day! She had borne herself very bravely as long as her lover was there—almost too bravely, trying to make him believe that it was nothing, that she had scarcely any feeling on the subject. But when she saw him go, the clouds and darkness closed in upon Lady Jane, her lips quivered sadly as she spoke to Mrs Brown. When she was alone, her swelling heart and throbbing forehead were relieved by a sudden passion of tears. Would it be nothing as she had made believe? or was it a parting, an ending, a severance from Reginald and hope? A black moment passed over her—blacker than anything that Winton felt, as, distracted and furious, burning with intentions of vengeance, and a sense of injury in which there was

some relief from the misery of the situation, he hurried along towards the Germaines' house. There, at least, he could plan and arrange, and talk out his fury and wretchedness. But Lady Jane had no such solace. When she had yielded to that bitter *accès* of tears, and felt herself pass under the cloud, she had to gather herself together again all unaided, and recover her composure as best she could. That sensation of overwhelming cold which so often accompanies a mental crisis made her shiver. She drew her cloak closely round her, and went slowly up-stairs through the hollow silence of the great house, pausing now and then to take breath in her nervous exhaustion, and looking anxiously for the appearance of her father. Did he not mean to come to her at all? Lady Jane had no idea that she was going with all those hesitations and pauses

straight into a prison. Such a thought had never occurred to her. She believed still in reason and loving-kindness and truth. Her father, when he saw it impossible, would after all yield, she thought. Her mother would come to succour her in this extraordinary emergency. "There is a soul of goodness in things evil," she murmured again to herself, but not so bravely as she had said it to her lover. The house was so cold, such an echoing solitude, no living thing visible, and she alone in it, left to wear through the weary hours as she could—on her wedding-day!

Thus with tired and lingering steps, and despondency taking possession of her soul, Lady Jane went softly up-stairs, longing to divest herself of her wedding-gown and hide her humiliation, looking vainly for her father, whose appearance in this wilderness, even if it were only

to upbraid and denounce her, would still have had a certain consolation in it. The Duke, unseen, watched her progress with a vindictive pleasure in the downcast air and slow, languid step. He watched her to her very door with an eagerness not to be described. At the last moment she might turn round, she might still leave the house, she might escape. In no case could he have used violence to his daughter. To level thunderbolts of speech was one thing, to use force was quite another. To lift his hand was impossible. If she turned round and fled down the stairs and out at the door, she must do so: there was no way in which he could stop her: if any third person were present, even Mrs Brown, he would be obliged to keep a watch upon himself, to demand no more obedience than she would give, to treat her as a reasonable being. All

this the Duke felt, spying upon her steps as she went slowly up, following her, his footsteps falling noiselessly on the thick carpets. He heard her sigh, but this made no difference. To any one else this sigh of the widowed bride, alone in this dismal empty house on the day that was to have been, that almost was, her wedding-day, would have contained something touching. But it did not touch the Duke. He followed at a distance, keeping out of sight, determined to give her no opportunity to appeal to him. When he heard her door close, a certain glow of satisfaction came over his face. He went forward quickly, and turned the key in the lock and put it in his pocket. He heard her moving about in the room, and he could hear that she stopped short at the noise and stood listening to know what it was. But all was quiet again, and Lady Jane suspected

nothing. She had begun to look in her wardrobe for something to put on instead of her white dress. She thought it was some jar of one of the doors as she opened them. And he stole down-stairs again, unnoticed and unobserved. Who was there to notice him? no one in the house, except his daughter locked into the room, and Mrs Brown with her little niece down-stairs. The Duke withdrew into the library, where he had sat and pondered for many a day, but never as now. The old housekeeper had bestirred herself and had lighted a fire and set out a table with two places for luncheon. She at least could do her duty if no one else did. Mrs Brown, indeed, felt as a neglected general has often done when the moment arrived in which he could distinguish himself. She had never had this opportunity. Now, at last, in the end of her life it had come

to her. His Grace, who was so particular, should for once in his life know what it was to eat a chop, an English chop, in its perfection. She had sent out her handmaiden to fetch them, and lit the fire herself in her devotion. This is an extent of enthusiasm to which few people would go. And Lady Jane, sweet creature, who was evidently in trouble somehow with her papa, who had sent that nice young gentleman off as fast as ever she could, that the Duke and he might not meet, poor thing! what would be so good for her as a chop? The old housekeeper betook herself to her work with the warmest sense at once of benevolence and of power—power to ameliorate and soften the hardness of destiny, and to win fame and honour to herself. What enterprise could have a finer motive? Of the three people in the house, she was the happy one, as

happens not unfrequently among all the twists and entanglements of fate.

Before, however, Mrs Brown had begun to cook her chops, Nurse Mordaunt, Lady Jane's devoted attendant since her childhood, arrived in much anxiety and distress. Nurse had been detained by various matters, by Lady Germaine, and by the delay in getting her ladyship's things, which had been left that morning at Lady Germaine's house. With a heavy heart nurse had effaced the direction of Lady Jane Winton from the box. She had never herself approved of such a marriage any more than the Duke did. It injured her pride sadly to think of 'My Lady" marrying a commoner at all, and marrying him secretly at a poky little church in the city! But that she should be married and not married, half a wife, "dragged from the altar," was something which no one could contemplate with calm-

ness. Nurse was more shamed, distracted, broken-hearted than any of the party. "Oh, don't ask me," she answered, shaking her head, when Mrs Brown humbly, with every respect, begged to know what had happened. It is as bad as a revolution—it's worse than the Chartists; even Radicals respect the marriage vow," nurse cried in her dismay. "I don't approve of it, and never did, and never will. Up to the church door I'd have done anything to stop it. But bless us! if you don't keep the altar sacred, what have you got to trust to?" She caused the boxes to be brought into the hall with their erased addresses. There was nobody to carry them anywhere,—none of the attendance about to which Mrs Mordaunt was accustomed. "Fetch one of the men," she had said at first, but then she remembered there was no man in Grosvenor Square at this time of the year.

"Drat it! as if things were not bad enough already; no servants, no comfort, nobody but Mrs Brown to look to everything!" Mrs Mordaunt was too much broken down to go to her young lady at once. She condescended to go into the kitchen, where it was at least warm, to eat one of the chops and to rest a little before she went up-stairs. And her arrival was scarcely over before it was followed by another more urgent and important. The old housekeeper almost fainted when, opening the door in answer to the impatient summons of another arrival, she saw the Duchess herself get out of a hackney-cab. "Bless us!" the old woman cried; if the Queen had come next she could not have been more surprised.

The Duchess, it need not be said, was in the secret of all those arrangements which were to make Lady Jane into

Reginald Winton's wife. She had a cold that day, partly real, partly no doubt emotional, but enough to make her keep her room in the morning, leaving her guests to the care of her sister, who was at Billings on a visit. She got up, as may be supposed, with a great deal of agitation from her broken rest, thinking of her Jane, how she would be preparing for her marriage, with nobody but Lady Germaine to comfort and support her. Lady Germaine was very kind: she had taken charge of the whole business; she and her husband had gone to town on purpose to facilitate everything; but still it was dreadful to the Duchess to think that her child should have no one but Lady Germaine to lean upon at such a moment of her life. In her own room, in the stillness of the morning, the thoughts of the mother were bent upon this subject, which she went over and over, thinking of everything.

She figured to herself how her child would wake, and realise what a fateful morning it was, and wish for her mother. How she would say her prayers with all the fervour of such a crisis, and linger upon the contemplation of the past, and the sweet but awful thought of the future. Though her husband and his reign were so near, Jane would think of her home, of the parents who loved her, and shed some tears to think that the most momentous act of her life was taking place away from them, in opposition to one of them. The Duchess, who was very much overcome, at once by what she knew and what she did not know, by imagination and by fact, shed more tears herself at this point, and she had to dry them hastily to look up with an unconcerned face when her maid came into the room bringing a piece of news which in a moment startled her into activity and alarm. The Duke had gone

suddenly off to town by the early train. After he had read his letters he had seemed agitated, but said nothing to Bowles (who was his Grace's valet) except that business called him to town. And he had been gone an hour when the news was brought to his wife. The reader may suppose how short a time elapsed before the anxious mother followed him. She went out quietly in a close carriage, nobody knowing, and got the next train, arriving in London two hours later than that by which her husband had travelled. He was sitting down with a little shrug of his shoulders, but not without appetite, to Mrs Brown's chops, when she drove up to the door, and suddenly came in upon him, pale and full of anguish. Her eye ran round the room questioning before she said a word :—then she loosened her cloak and sat down upon the nearest seat with a sigh of relief.

"What have you done with Jane?" she was about to say: but then it appeared to her that Jane must have escaped, that everything was accomplished. She could have wept or laughed in the extreme blessedness of this relief, but she dared not do either. She looked at him instead, as he sat looking suspiciously at her. "It made me very anxious to hear of your going," she said. "I feared something might be wrong. I am going back directly, and nobody knows I am out of my room: but I felt that I must hear——"

"What?" he asked with watchful suspicion; it was a terrible ordeal to go through. The Duchess did all a woman could to take the meaning out of her own face and put upon it an aspect of affectionate concern alone. "I did not know what to think," she said; "I was very anxious: but it cannot be anything very bad, I

hope, since I find you——" How hard it is to say what is not the truth! While she uttered these commonplace words her eyes were watching him, keenly questioning everything about him. At last her heart seemed to stand still. She perceived the two covers laid on the table. "You have some one with you," she said, with a catching of her breath.

He looked at her still more keenly. "I have Jane with me," he said.

"Jane!" It was all her mother could do not to break down altogether, and show her anguish and disappointment in passionate tears; but her heart was leaping in her throat, and she could not speak.

"That is to say," he added slowly, with unspeakable enjoyment in the sense of having got the better of the women altogether, and holding them in his hand, "she is in the house. I arrived in time

to save her from becoming the victim—of a villain. I shall keep her safe now I have got her," the Duke said, with an ineffable flourish of his hand.

"The victim—of a villain? What do you mean by such words? They sound as if you had got them out of a novel," the Duchess said; but her heart was beating so that she could scarcely hear herself speak.

"Then you knew nothing about it?" said her husband calmly.

The Duchess got up from her seat. She was too much agitated to be able to keep still. "I knew, if that is what you mean, that she was to marry — the man she loved — to-day. What have you done? Have you parted your own child from her happiness and her life?"

He rose too. He had kept up his calm demeanour as long as he could. Now his rage got the better of him.

"So you were in the plot!" he cried, "you! I felt it, and yet I could not believe it. You who ought to have been the first to carry out my will and respect my decision."

"Augustus," said his wife, very pale, standing up before him, her hand upon the back of a tall chair, her head erect, "this must not go too far. Jane has not one but two parents, and she has always had her mother's sanction. You are aware of that."

"Her mother's sanction!" cried the Duke, with a tremendous laugh of passion. "That is a mighty advantage, truly. Her mother! what has her mother to do with it? Nothing! These are pretty heroics, and do very nicely to say to the ignorant; but you know very well that, save as my agent, you have no more to do with Jane or her marriage—no more——"

"It may be so in law," said the Duchess, recovering her composure, "but it is certainly not so in nature; nor have I ever considered myself your agent, in respect to my child. I have yielded to you in a hundred ways—and so much the worse for you that I have done so; but, as regards Jane, I have never thought it my duty to yield—and never will; such a suggestion is intolerable," she said, with a touch of feminine passion. "My right and my authority are the same as yours—neither of them absolute—for she is old enough to judge for herself."

"Ah, poor girl!" he said, with a knowledge that it was the most irritating thing he could say, and at the same time a coarse sort of pleasure in insulting the women, though they were so near to him; "that is at the bottom of everything. You made her believe it was her last

chance. She was determined anyhow to have a husband."

The Duchess grew scarlet, but she was sufficiently enlightened by experience to restrain the angry reply that almost forced its way from her lips. She looked at him with a silent indignation not unmingled with pity, then turned her head away. Poor Mrs Brown! Her chops, that had been so good, so hot, stood neglected on the table. Her opportunity was over. It was no fault of hers that she had not distinguished herself. So many another disappointed genius has done its best, and some accident has stepped in and balked its highest effort. Had the Duchess delayed but half an hour, his Grace, after so much French cookery, would have experienced the wholesome pleasure of at least one British chop, and probably in consequence would have promoted Mrs Brown to a post near his person. But

it was not to be. There was no luncheon eaten that day in Grosvenor Square. The discussion was prolonged for some time, and then the Duchess was heard to go hastily up-stairs. She went to her daughter's room with tears of hot passion in her eyes and an intolerable pang in her heart, and knocking softly, called to Jane with a voice which she could scarcely keep from breaking. "My darling!" she cried, "my sweet, my own girl!" with something heartrending in her accents. All had been still before; but now there was a stir in reply.

"Oh, mother dear, come in, come in! How I have longed for you!" Lady Jane cried; and then there was a little pause of expectation, breathless with a strange suspicion on one side, and such miserable humiliation and anguish on the other, as can scarcely be put into words.

"I cannot come in, my dear love. Oh,

my darling, you must be patient. I must go back directly to all those people in the house. You know it would never do——" Here the Duchess, unable to keep up the farce, began all at once to cry and sob piteously outside the door.

Lady Jane, fully roused, hurried to it and turned the handle vainly, and shook the heavy door. "I cannot open it," she cried wildly. "Mother, mother! what does this mean? Cannot you come in? What can take you away from me when I want you — the people in the house? Oh, mother, I want you, I want you!" she cried as she had never done in her life before. And then there was such a scene as might be put into a comedy and made very ridiculous, and which yet was very heartrending as it happened, and overpowered these two women with a consternation, a sense of helplessness, a bitter perception of the small account

they were of, which paralysed their very souls — not only that he had the power to do it, but also the heart: he with whom they had lived in the closest ties, whom they had loved and served, for whom they had been ready to do all that he pleased, one for the greater part of her life, the other since ever she had been born. What did it matter, any one would have said, the power such a man had over his wife and his daughter? He would never use it to make them unhappy. But there are capabilities of human misery in families which no one can fathom, which may seem to make it doubtful by moments how far the family relation is so blessed as it is thought to be. The Duke felt that now, for the first time, he had these women under his thumb, so to speak. He had them so bound that they could not resist, could not move, could not even call for

help from any one without betraying the secrets of the family. He kept possession of his library, and, with the key in his pocket, had a moment of triumph. They had united against him; but now they should feel his power.

CHAPTER XIV.

IN PRISON.

THE scenes that followed were at times not only so exciting, but so tranquil, that we shrink from attempting to depict them. If there had been anything wanted to confirm the determination of the Duke to hold to the position he had taken up, it would have been the arrival of the Duchess, and the prodigious step he took in refusing her admittance to her daughter. After that there was nothing too much for him. He had burnt his ships. When Lord and Lady Germaine arrived next morning to bring away the bride, with

some trembling on the part of the lady, but a contemptuous certainty on that of the gentleman, that "the old duffer," though he had let his temper out, was not such a fool as all that — they were refused admittance peremptorily. After they had parleyed for some time with the man at the door,—a personage whom the Duke, roused into energy by the position in which he found himself, had engaged on the previous day, and who was invulnerable to all assaults and persuasions,—the Duchess herself came to them, extremely pale, and with difficulty preserving her composure. She had remained all night notwithstanding the misery of the circumstances altogether, and though she did not admit it in words, her quick-witted visitors easily perceived that she herself had not been permitted to see her daughter. "You will think it is medieval," she said with a faint

smile. "The Duke is very determined when he thinks it worth while."

"I suppose," said Lady Germaine, touched by the aspect of the suffering woman, "that one does not have the blood of Merlin in one's veins for nothing."

"Merlin," said Lord Germaine, who was very slangy, "was the old swell who was seducted by Miss Vivien. I don't think it would have been hard work to get over him."

The Duchess stood in the doorway pale, supporting with difficulty any levity on the subject, yet ready to put as brave a face upon it as possible. "Give Reginald my love, and tell him it is impossible this can last for ever," she said. "I am sorry for him to the bottom of my heart, and sorry for my child, but at present I cannot help even her."

Lady Germaine stepped within the

guarded door to take the Duchess's hand and kiss her. "And we are so sorry for you, so indignant——"

"Hush!" the Duchess said. "It is my fault; I should have had the courage of my convictions. I should have gone with my child myself; the error was mine."

Lady Germaine was half disposed to reply, "Oh, if you think we neglected any precaution——" But she had not the heart to be offended.

The pair drove away after a while considerably discomfited. "I did not think the old duffer had so much spirit," Lord Germaine said with secret admiration. "I say, Nell, if you tried to marry Dolly against my will, I wonder if I should be up to that?"

"If there was any chance of it I should lock you up first," said his dutiful wife.

"And on the edge of a smash, the greatest smash that has been since——

Billings will have to be sold up, and all that is in it," Lord Germaine said thoughtfully.

Lady Germaine showed neither surprise nor pain at this piece of news. "What a chance for Reginald!" she said. "He can buy in all their best things and do up Jane's rooms at Winton like her old ones at home." And then she laughed and added, "He wouldn't have those old things in his house. Taste had not been invented when their Graces were married."

It was in this mood of partial hilarity that they reached their own door, where poor Winton was waiting. However sympathetic friends may be, the way in which they take our troubles is very different from the way in which we ourselves take them. The Germaines, though they threw themselves so warmly into his affairs, and had given themselves so much trouble, had to change their aspect sud-

denly, to put up shutters and draw down blinds metaphorically, as they approached the actual sufferer. But into his misery and rage it is unnecessary to enter. He said, as was natural, a great many things that it would have been better not to say, and for some time after he besieged the house. He went in person, he wrote, he communicated by means of his solicitors with the solicitors of the Duke, whose mouths watered over the settlements he had made, which the authorities on his own side thought ridiculous, and professed their eagerness to do their best, but would not flatter him with any hopes of success. "No man in his senses would reject a son-in-law like you, Mr Winton, especially in the circumstances," the senior partner said; "but the Duke is the Duke, and there is nothing more to be said. We have found him very impracticable, extremely impracticable in his own affairs;

things are looking bad for the family altogether. There is Lord Hungerford now has some sense. He made a capital marriage himself — you should get him on your side."

Winton found no great difficulty in getting Hungerford on his side. That young nobleman was so much excited on the subject, that he even took it upon him to speak to his father and show him how ridiculous it was.

"You can't make a house in Grosvenor Square like a castle in the Apennines," Hungerford cried; "for heaven's sake, sir, don't make us ridiculous!" Lady Hungerford on her side enjoyed the whole affair immensely. "I never realised before that I had really married into a great house," she said. "It's like the 'Family Herald.' It's like the sort of nobility we understand among the lower classes, don't you know? not your easy-

going, like-other-people kind." And she offered to take lessons of a locksmith so that she might be able to break open Jane's prison.

To tell the truth, even suggestions of this kind, which were partially comic and wholly theatrical, came to be entertained by Winton before his trial was over. One of his friends seriously advised him to get an Italian servant, used to conspiracies, smuggled into the house, in order to deliver the captive. Another thought that rope-ladders and a midnight descent from the window might be practicable; but a rope-ladder from a second-floor window in Grosvenor Square would not be easy to manage, and a wag intervened and suggested a fire-escape, which turned the whole into ridicule. This was one of the aspects of the case, indeed, which aggravated everything else. The whole situation,

being so serious and painful to two or three people, was, to the rest of the world, irresistible from the comic side. People drove through Grosvenor Square on purpose to look up at the second-floor windows: and as the instruments began to tune up, and the feast to be set in order for the first arrivals of society, the importance of the strange event grew greater and greater. A new Home Secretary, and all the consequent changes in the Cabinet, faded into nothing in comparison. "Have you heard that Jane Altamont was half-married to Regy Winton some time in the winter, and that odious old Duke dragged her from the very altar, and has kept her ever since under lock and key?" Very likely it was Lady Germaine who first put the story about, but it was taken up by everybody with all the interest and excitement which such a tale warranted. Further

details were given that were almost incredible; to wit, that the Duchess herself, though living in the same house, was not allowed to see her daughter, and that Lady Jane for two months had only breathed the fresh air through her window, and had never left the suite of rooms in which she was confined; worse than if she had been in jail, everybody said. But not even this was the point which most roused the popular indignation (if we may call the indignation of the drawing-rooms popular). Half-married! that was the terrible thought.

The Duke paid one or two visits before the opening of Parliament. It may be supposed that to none but very great houses indeed would his Grace pay such an honour: and though he was not very quick to observe in general matters, yet his sense of his own importance was so keen that it answered for intelligence, so

far as he himself was concerned. He saw that the ladies regarded him with a sort of alarm, that even the gentlemen after dinner showed a curiosity which was not certainly the awed and respectful interest which he thought it natural he should excite. And it was not long before his hostess, who was, he could not deny, his equal, of his own rank, and of unexceptionable antecedents, made the matter clear to him. "Duke," she said, "of course you know I wouldn't for the world meddle in any one's private affairs. But there is such a strange story going about—— Dear Jane! We had hoped to see her with you as well as Margaret" (Margaret was the Duchess, and a very intimate friend of this other great, great lady); "and now neither of them has come. But it is not possible—don't think for a moment that I believe it!—that this story can be true."

"If your Grace will kindly explain what the story is?" Our Duke, liking due respect himself, always gave their titles to other people, according to the golden rule.

"I don't like even to put it into words; that you stopped her marriage—at the altar itself; that the dear girl is neither married nor single; that—— But I give you pain."

"The statement is calculated to give me pain; but the facts, as of course your Grace knows very well, are true. I arrived in time to prevent my daughter from making a marriage which I disapproved."

"Oh, we are all liable to that," said the great lady, letting her eyes dwell regretfully, yet with maternal pride, upon a daughter who had been so abandoned as to marry a clergyman, but who had produced a baby, for whose sake the

parents had forgiven its father. "Who can guard against such a misfortune? But Beatrice, poor thing, is very happy," she added with a sigh.

The Duke made her a little bow. It said a great deal. It said, if you are so lost to every sense of what is becoming as to take it in that way—but I should never have allowed it! He to utter sentences of this kind, who had made himself the talk of society! "But, Duke," she said with spirit, taking up Nurse Mordaunt's argument, "if the altar is not held sacred, what will become of us? They say you stopped her when she was saying the very words——"

"The subject is not a very agreeable one," said the Duke; "I cannot take it upon me to recollect at what point they were in the service—— but at all events, your Grace may be assured it was not too late."

"Oh, but it must have been too late," cried the indignant matron. "I heard he had said 'I will.' I heard he had put the ring on her finger. I could not have believed it was true had not you said so. But you cannot let it rest like that. Half-married! it's wicked, you know," her Grace cried.

And the other Duke, the gracious host, permitted himself, in a moment of expansion, to say something of the same sort. "I wouldn't interfere with your affairs for the world," he said; "but I hope, Billingsgate, you don't mean to let that sweet girl of yours lie under such a stigma——"

"A stigma! My daughter! There is no stigma," cried the head of the Altamonts, growing scarlet.

"Well, I don't want to be a meddler: but the women say so. They are all in a fuss about it; one hears of nothing else

wherever one goes. You will have to give in sooner or later," said the other Duke.

"Never!" said his Grace of Billingsgate, and he hastened his departure from his friend's abode. But the next house he went to the same result was produced. There was a putting together of feminine heads, a whispering, a direction of glances towards him, from eyes which once had looked upon him only with awe; and after a little hesitation and beating about the bush, the same outburst of remark. Half-married! The most important lady in the company took him to task very seriously. "What is to become of her? you should think of that. At present she has you to protect her reputation. But suppose anything were to happen to you? We are all mortal; and think of dear Jane with such a scandal against her. People will say it is the man who

has drawn back: they will say all sorts of things; for it is inconceivable that a girl's father, her own father, should play with her reputation like that."

"Her reputation!" the Duke cried, almost with a shriek of indignation. "My child's reputation! Who would dare——"

"Oh, nobody would dare," said his assailant—"but everybody would understand. People would make sure that there were reasons. Half-married! There is not one of us that doesn't feel it. Such a thing was never heard of. Oh, you must not think you will escape it by going away. Wherever you go you will hear the same thing. The news has gone everywhere. Didn't you see it in the 'Universe' at full length? Of course nobody could mistake the Duke of B—— G——. Oh, I hope you will think it over seriously, before it is too late."

The Duke, more angry than ever, went back to Grosvenor Square. He was determined to face it out. Country houses are proverbially glad of a piece of gossip to give their dull life an interest. He began to go out into society, as much as there was at that early season, and present a bold front to the world. His home was dull enough, with Lady Jane locked into her room and watched, lest by craft or force she should make her escape; her mother obstinately refusing to go out, or accompany him anywhere; his very servants looking at him reproachfully. The butler, who had been with him for about thirty years, and whose knowledge of wine and of the cellars at Billings was inexhaustible, threw up his situation; and so did the housekeeper, who was Jarvis's wife. "I don't hold with no such goings-on," Mrs Jarvis said. And when he dined with the leader of his party (which

was in opposition) Mrs Coningsby did not wait till the conclusion of the dinner, but cried, "Duke, it cannot be true about Lady Jane!" before he had eaten his soup. This lady treated the subject lightly, which was more odious to him than the other way. "Oh no, it can't be true," she said; "we all know that They say you dragged her from church by the hair of her head, and snatched her hand away when the bridegroom was putting on the ring. Mr Coningsby was in a dreadful way about it. He said it would be such a cry at the elections; but I told him, Nonsense! the Duke is far too fine a gentleman, I said." This was more difficult to answer than the other mode of assault. The Duke became all manner of colours as he listened. "And the elections are so near," the lady said. "Of course the Government will not care how false it is; they

will placard it on all the walls, with a picture as large as life. They will turn all the clergy against us. Of course, dear Duke, of course, to people who know you so well as I do — you need not tell *me* that it is not true." The Duke sat grim, and heard all this, and did not say a word. There was a flutter in the drawing-room as he came in: everybody looked at him as if he had been a wild beast. "Dragged her out by the hair of her head!" he heard whispered on every side of him, and though Mrs Coningsby still affected not to believe, the bishop's wife contemplated him with terrible gravity. "Oh, I hope you will talk it over with the bishop," she said. "He is so anxious about it. Lady Jane was always such a favourite. I do hope you will take the bishop's advice. After a certain part of the service, I have always under-

stood it was a sin to interfere." Later in the evening he was mobbed by half-a-dozen ladies—there is no other word for it—mobbed and overwhelmed with one universal cry. Half-married! Poor Lady Jane! Dear Lady Jane!" They pressed round him, each with her protestation, a soft, yet urgent babel of voices. The poor Duke escaped at last, not knowing how he got away. It seemed to his Grace that he had escaped out of a mob, and that his coat must be torn and his linen frayed with the conflict. He was astonished beyond all description; but he was likewise appalled by the discovery that even he was not above the reach of public opinion. It affected him against his will. He felt ashamed, uneasy, confused even on the points where he was most sure.

And when he came home, he went to

his wife's boudoir, where she sat alone, to bid her good-night, which was a form he always observed, though this event had separated them entirely. She was permitted now to see Jane once a-day; but as she would give no promise that she would not help her daughter to leave the house, this was the utmost that he had granted her. She was seated alone, reading, pale and weary. She scarcely raised her eyes when he came in, though she put down her book. The fire was low, and there was no light in the room except the reading-lamp. The Duke could not help feeling the difference from former times. A temptation came upon him to throw himself upon her sympathy, and tell her how he had been persecuted. He would have done so had it been on any other subject, but he remembered in time that on this he had no sympathy to expect from

his wife. So he stood for a minute or two before the fire, feeling chilled, silenced, an injured man. "No, I have not had a pleasant evening," he said shortly; "how should my evening be pleasant when every one remarks your absence? I am asked if you are ill; I am asked——"

"Other questions, I imagine, that are still more difficult to answer."

"And whose fault is it?" he cried, with vehemence. "If you had taken the steps you ought to have taken, and supported my authority, as was your duty, there would have been no such questions to ask."

The Duchess turned away with some impatience: she made no reply: the question had been often enough discussed in all its bearings. If she had now thrown herself at his feet and begged his pardon and forbearance, what

a relief it would have been to him! He would have yielded and saved his position, and recovered the pose of a magnanimous superior. But the Duchess had no intention of the kind. After a while, during which they did not look at each other, she seated gazing into the fire, he standing staring into the vacant air, he took up his candlestick with an air of impatience. "Good night, then," he said, with in his turn an air of impatience.

"Good night," she said.

CHAPTER XV.

DELIVERANCE.

LADY JANE had been for two months the solitary inhabitant of those two rooms on the second floor. Yet not altogether solitary—Nurse Mordaunt had been allowed to join her, and had been the faithful companion of her captivity. She was a better companion than a younger maid would have been, for she had been a kind of second mother to Lady Jane, and knew all her life and everything that concerned her, besides being a person of great and varied experience, who had anecdotes and tales to illustrate every

vicissitude of life. Nurse Mordaunt was acquainted even with parallel instances to place beside Lady Jane's own position. She knew every kind of thing that had ever happened "in families," by which familiar expression she meant great families like those to which she had been accustomed all her life. Little families without histories she knew nothing of. The profound astonishment which overwhelmed Lady Jane when she found herself a prisoner it would be impossible to describe. She felt once more as she had felt when her father insulted her womanly delicacy and sent the blood of shame tingling to her cheeks, shame not so much for herself as for him. Was it possible that her father, the head of so great a house, the descendant of so many noble ancestors, and again her father, the man to whom she had looked up with undoubting confidence and admiration all

her life—that at the end he was no true gentleman at all, but only a sham gentleman, the shadow without any substance, the symbol, with all meaning gone out of it? Do not suppose that Lady Jane put this deliberately into words. Ah, no! the thoughts we put into words do not sting us like those that glance into our souls like an arrow, darting, wounding before we have time to put up any shield or defence to keep them out. Deeper even than her separation at such a moment from her lover, more bitter than her thoughts of his disappointment, of his rage and misery, was this empoisoned thought: her father, a great peer, a noble gentleman — yet thus suddenly showing himself not noble at all, not true, a tyrant, without any understanding even of the creatures whom he could oppress. Lady Jane was sad enough on her own account and on Winton's, it may well be believed:

but of this last wound she felt that she never could be healed. Imagine those traditions of her rank in which she had been brought up, her proud yet so earnest and humble sense of its obligations, the martyrdom which in her youth she had been so ready to accept — all come down to this, that she was a prisoner in her father's house, locked up like a naughty child,—she who had been trained to be the princess royal, the representative of an ideal race! Ah, if it had but been a revolution, a rebellion, democracy rampant, such an imprisonment as she had once been taught to think likely! but to sink down from the grandeur of that conception to the pettiness and bathos of this! She tried to smile to herself sometimes, in the long days which passed so slowly, at her own ludicrous anticipations, and at the entire futility, after all, of this suffering to which she was being exposed.

But she had not a lively sense of humour, and could not laugh at those young dreams, which, after all, were the highest of her life. And somehow the sense that the present troubles could produce no possible result of the kind intended, made her almost more impatient of them than if they had been more dangerous. That her father could think to subdue her by such means, that he could expect to convince her by so miserable an argument, that he could suppose it possible that she would change for this, abandon what she had resolved upon at the expense of all her prejudices and so many of her better feelings, because of being shut up in two rooms for two months, or two years, or any time he might choose to keep her there! If she had not thought her filial duty a sufficient reason, would she be convinced by a lock and key? Lady Jane smiled with high and silent

disdain at so extraordinary a mistake. But it was unworthy, it was lowering to her moral dignity to be exposed to so vexatious and petty an ordeal. At a State prison, with the block at the end, she had been prepared to smile serenely, carrying her high faith and constancy through even the death ordeal. But confinement in her own room was laughable, not heroic; it made her blush that she should be exercised in so miserable a way — in a way so impossible to bring about any result.

Nurse Mordaunt was an excellent companion, but after a while she began to droop and pine. She wanted the fresh air; she wanted to see her grandchildren; she wanted, oh, imperiously beyond description! a talk, a gossip, a little human intercourse with some one of her own kind. Lady Jane was a darling — the sweetest of ladies; but it was a different

thing talking to that angel and chatting familiarly over things in general with Mrs Jarvis. Nurse no more than other mortals could be kept continuously on the higher level. She longed to unbend, to be at her ease, to feel herself, as the French say, *chez elle*, in which expression there is almost a more intimate wellbeing than in that of being at home, which we English think so much superior. Her health suffered, which Lady Jane would not allow that hers did; and at last, Nurse Mordaunt made such strenuous representations on the subject to the new servant, whose business it was to watch over the prisoners, that she was allowed to go out. She was allowed to go out and the Duchess to come in, two proceedings altogether contradictory of the spirit of the confinement, and which were, indeed, a confession of failure, though the Duke himself was unaware of it. This

made a great change to the prisoner, whose cheeks, though still pale, got a little tinge of colour and hope in consequence. It did more for her than merely to bring her her mother's society, though that was much. It brought her also other news of the outer world — news of Winton more definite than the distant sight of him riding or walking through the Square, which he did constantly. Now, at last, she received the budget of letters, of which her mother's hands were full. Lady Jane smiled and cried a little at the entreaties her lover addressed to her to be steadfast—not to give him up. "I wonder what they all think," she said; "is this an argument likely to convince one's reason, mother, or to persuade one for love's sake?" She looked round upon her prison—her pretty chamber furnished with every luxury — and laughed a little. "Is it

my head or my heart that is appealed to?" she said. This, perhaps, was too clear-sighted for the angelic point of view from which the world in general expected Lady Jane to view most matters. But, in fact, though she had more poetry in her than her mother, Lady Jane had come into possession of part of her mother's fortune, so to speak, her sense; and that is a quality which will assert itself. Now the Duchess, in the excitement of standing by helpless while her daughter suffered, had come to regard the matter more melodramatically than Lady Jane did, to suffer her feelings to get the mastery, and to imagine a hundred sinkings of the heart and depressions of the spirit to which the captive must be liable. She recognised the change instinctively, for it was one which had taken place long ago in herself. She, too, had been brought to see the pal-

triness of many things that looked imposing, the futility of *les grands moyens*. Lady Jane's development had been slow. At twenty-eight she had been less experienced than many a girl of eighteen. But now her eyes were opened. Even her lover, who thought it possible that she might yield under such persuasion, was subject to almost a passing shade of that high but gentle disdain with which she contemplated the vulgar force to which she was subjected; for it was vulgar, alas! though a duke was the originator: and unspeakably weak though it was — what the French call *brutal*—everything, in short, that a mode of action destined to affect a sensitive, proud, and clear-seeing soul ought not to be.

The new *régime* had continued but a short time when Nurse Mordaunt returned one day from her walk with heightened colour and great suppressed excitement.

Something, it was evident, was in her mind quite beyond the circle of her usual thoughts; but she talked less, not more, than usual, and left her lady free to read over and over the last letters, and to refresh her heart with all the raptures of her lover's delight in having again found the means of communicating with her after the misery of six weeks of silence and complete separation. Something he said of a speedy end of all difficulties, which Lady Jane took but little thought of, being far more interested in the reunion with himself, which his letters brought about. A speedy end: no doubt an end would come some time; but at present the prisoner was not so sanguine as those outside. She did not know the gallant stand which the ladies were making, or the social state of siege which had been instituted in respect to the Duke; and she sighed, but smiled, at

Winton's hope. All went on as usual during the long, long evening. It was long, though it was provided with everything calculated to make it bearable—books and the means of writing, writing to *him*—which was far more amusing and absorbing than any other kind of composition. Her fire was bright, her room full of luxurious comfort—a piano in it, and materials for a dozen of those amateur works with which time can be cheated out of its length. But she sighed and wearied, as was natural, notwithstanding the happiness of having her lover's letters, and of having talked with her mother, and of knowing as she did that some time or other this must come to an end. "After all, nurse," she said with a little laugh, as she prepared for bed, "to be in prison is not desirable. I should like to have a run in the woods at Billings, or even a walk in Rotten Row."

"Yes, dear," said nurse, leaning over her, "your ladyship shall do better than that. Oh yes, my sweet, better days are coming. Don't you let down your dear heart."

"No; that would not do much good," Lady Jane said with a sigh: but she did not remark, which was strange, that nurse was full of a secret, and that a delightful secret, exultingly dwelt upon, and ready to burst out at the least encouragement. Or perhaps she did perceive it, but was too tired to draw it forth. And she gave no encouragement to further disclosure, but went to her rest sighing, with a longing to be free, such as since the first days of her imprisonment she had not felt before. And she could not sleep that night. Lady Jane was not of a restless nature. She did not toss about upon her pillows and make it audible that she was sleepless: and she had much to occupy her thoughts, so many things that were

pleasant, as well as much that it hurt her to contemplate. She put the hurtful things away and thought of the sweet, and lay there in the darkness of the winter's night, lighted and calmed by sweet thought. When it was nearly morning, at the darkest and chilliest moment of all, there came a rustling and soft movement, which, however, did not alarm her, since it came from Nurse Mordaunt's room. Then she perceived dimly, in the faint light from an uncurtained window, a muffled figure, with which indeed she was very familiar, being no other than that of nurse herself in a dressing-gown and nightcap, with a shawl huddled about her throat and shoulders, stealing round the room. What was nurse doing at this mysterious hour? But Lady Jane was not afraid. She was rather glad of the incident in the long monotony of the night. She turned her head noiselessly

upon her pillow to watch. But the surprise of Lady Jane was great at the further operations of her attendant. Nurse arranged carefully and noiselessly a small screen between the door and the bed, then with great precaution struck a light and began with much fumbling and awkwardness to operate upon the door. What was she doing? The light, throwing a glimmer upward from behind the screen, revealed her face full of anxiety, bent forward towards the lock of the door, upon which many scratches and ineffectual jars as of tools badly managed soon became audible. The candle threw a portentous waving shadow, over the further wall and roof, of the old woman's muffled figure, and betrayed a succession of dabs and misses at the door which Lady Jane for a long time could not understand. What did it mean? The noise increased as nurse grew nervous

over her failure. She hurt her fingers, she pursed her mouth, she contracted her brows; it was work that demanded knowledge and delicate handling, but she had neither. When Lady Jane raised herself noiselessly on her arm, and said in her soft voice, "What are you doing, nurse?" the poor woman dropped the tools with a dull thump on the floor, and almost went down after them in her vexation. "Oh, my lady, I can't! I can't do it, I'm that stupid!" She wept so that Lady Jane could scarcely console her, or understand her explanation. At last it came out by degrees that the tools had been given her, with many injunctions and instructions, to break open the lock of the door. "By whom?" Lady Jane demanded, with a deep blush and sparkling eyes. Why she should have felt so keen a flash of indignation at her lover for thinking of such an expedient is inscrutable, but at

the moment it seemed to her that she could never forgive Winton for such an expedient. But it was Lady Germaine who was the offender, and Lady Jane was pacified. She bound up nurse's finger, and sent her off summarily to bed. Then, it must be allowed, she herself looked upon the tools long and anxiously with shining eyes. It seemed to her that it would be fighting her father with his own weapons. It would be as unworthy of her to get her freedom that way, as it was of him to make a prisoner of her. Would it be so? Lady Jane's heart began to beat, and her brow to throb. Would it be so? The mere idea that she held her freedom in her hand filled her whole being with excitement. She locked them away into a little cabinet which stood near her bed. She was too tremulous, too much excited by the mere possibility, to be able to think at all.

That night had been a very exciting one for the Duke. Again he had been the centre of a demonstration. It did not seem to him that he could turn anywhere without hearing these words, "Half-married," murmuring about. This time it was at the house of the Lord Chancellor that the *émeute* occurred. A very distinguished lady was the chief guest: not indeed the most distinguished personage in the realm, but yet so near as to draw inspiration from that fountain-head. She said, "We could not believe it," as Mrs Coningsby had said; but naturally with far more force. "I am afraid you are not of your age, Duke."

"There is little that is desirable in the age, madam, that any one should be of it," his Grace replied with dignity. Here he felt himself on safe ground.

"Ah, but we cannot help belonging to it: and it is for persons of rank to show

that they can lead it, not to be driven back into antiquity. All that is over," said the gracious lady. The Duke bowed to the ground as may be supposed. "Lady Jane I hope will appear at the Drawing-Room *on her marriage*," his distinguished monitress said as she passed on. The emphasis was unmistakable. And how that silken company enjoyed it! They had all gathered as close as possible, and lent their keenest ear. And there was a whisper ran round that this was indeed the way in which royalty should take its place in society. As for the Duke, he stumbled out of these gilded halls, more confused and discomfited than ever duke was. He did not sleep much more than Lady Jane did all that long and dark night. What was he to do? Must he *Give In?* These words seemed to be written upon the book of fate. Relinquish his prejudices, his principles, all

the traditions of his race — retrace his steps, own himself in error, undo what he had done? No! no! no! a thousand times no! But then there seemed to come round him again that rush of velvet feet, that sheen of jewelled brows, the look with which the central figure waved her lily hand—— The Duke felt his forehead bedewed with drops of anguish. How could he stand out against that? he, the most loyal of subjects, and one whose example went so far? If he set himself in opposition, who could be expected to obey? He thought of nothing else all night, and it was the first thing which occurred to him when he woke in the morning. What to do? He was tired of it all, all, and tired of other things too, if he could have been brought to confess it. His heart was sore, and his soul fatigued beyond measure. He had not even his wife to lean the weight of

his cares upon, and everything was going wrong. He could now at last feel the sweep of the current moving towards Niagara. It bore him along, it carried him off his feet. Ruin at hand: he would not allow himself even now to believe in it—but in his heart was aware that it was ruin. And this other matter in the foreground, occupying the thoughts which had so many other claims upon them! The reader will feel with us that the subject is too sacred, otherwise there is enough to fill a volume of the Duke's self-communings, and perplexed, distressful thoughts. He got up in the morning, still half-dazed, not knowing what to do. But in his heart the Duke was aware he was beaten. There was no more fight in him. He swallowed his breakfast dolefully, and sat down in his vast, cheerless library by himself to settle what he was to do, when—— But for this we

must go back a little in the record of the family affairs.

Lady Jane had begun the day with a sense of underlying excitement, which she covered with her usual calm, but which was not her usual calm. She had the means of escape in her power. She said nothing to nurse, who, subdued by her failure, and crushed by her lady's first flash of indignation, effaced herself as much as possible, and left Lady Jane in the room which looked out upon the Square, which was her dressing-room (nominally) and sitting-room, undisturbed. Lady Jane could not forget that the tools were in that little carved cabinet, which, never in the course of its existence, had held anything of such serious meaning before. She could not keep them out of her mind. To use them might be unworthy of her, a condescension, putting herself on the same level as her tyrant;

but after all, to think that the means were in her power! Lady Jane was very well aware that, once outside that door, her captivity was over. It was a thing that could not be repeated. Once upon the staircase, in the passage, and all the world was free to her. When you think of that after two months' imprisonment, it is hard to keep the excitement out of your pulses. At last it overcame her so much that she got up, half-stealthily, timidly, and went to the door to examine the lock, and see whether, by the light of nature, she could make out what was to be done. It had been closed not long before to permit of the exit of the maid who carried their meals to the prisoners. The tools were in the cabinet, and in all likelihood Lady Jane would be as maladroit with those poor small white hands of hers as nurse had been. She went to the door and examined the lock closely. All at

once something occurred to her which made her heart jump. She took hold of the handle, it turned in her hand. Another moment and she flung it open with a little cry of terror and triumph. Open! and she free, out of her prison. It was but one step, but that step was enough. Her amazement was so great that it turned to something like consternation. She stepped out on to the landing, which was somewhat dark on this February morning: and there she paused. She was a woman born to be a heroine, one of the Quixotic race. She paused a moment, holding her head high, and reflected. This must have been an accident: for once the jailer had made a mistake, had slept upon his post, had turned the key amiss. Was it good enough to take advantage of a mistake, to save herself by the slip of a servant? She hesitated, this spiritual descendant

of the great Spanish cavalier, that noblest knight. But then Lady Jane's sense came in. She was aware that now, at this moment, she was delivered,—that no force in the world could put her again within that door. She gathered the long skirt of her black gown in her hand, and slowly, stately, not like a fugitive, like the princess she was, went down-stairs.

The Duke was in his library thinking what to do, and the Duchess — in her morning-room, with her heart greatly fluttered by that little royal speech, which had been reported to her already—sat with, strange to say, only half a thought of Jane, looking in the face that other dark and gloomy thing,—the ruin that was approaching. She had palpable evidence of it before her, and knew that it was now a matter of weeks, perhaps of days, so that though her heart, like an agitated sea after the storm, was still

heaving with the other emotion, her thoughts for the moment had abandoned Jane. But the Duke's mind was full of his daughter. He would have to *Give In!* Look at it how he would, he saw no escape for that. "The women," as Lord Germaine in his slangy way prophesied, "had made it too hot for him," and royalty itself—clearly he could not put his head out of his door, or appear in the society of his peers again, till this was done. But how was it to be done? To make his recantation in the eye of day, in the sight even of his household, was more than he could calmly contemplate. It was no longer, What was he to do? but, How was he to do it? that was in his mind. He had got up, unable to keep still, and feeling that some step must be taken at once. When——

We had already got this length on a

previous page. At this memorable crisis, when all the world seemed to his consciouness to be standing still to see what he would do, the door of the library was pushed slowly open from without. The doors in Grosvenor Square did not squeak and mutter like the wizards in the Old Testament, as our doors so often do, but rolled slowly open, majestically, without sound. This was what happened while the Duke stood still, something within him seeming to give way, his heart fluttering as if what he expected was a visitor from the unseen. He stood with his eyes opening wide, his lips apart. Was it a deputation from Mayfair? was it the royal lady herself? was it—— It was something more overwhelming, more miraculous than any of these. It was Lady Jane. The reader is already aware who was coming, but the Duke was not aware. He gasped at her with speechless astonish-

ment, as if she had been indeed a visitor from the unseen.

She was very pale after her long incarceration, and the hollow, alas! very visible on her delicate cheek. She was dressed in a long, soft cashmere gown, black, with an air of having fitted her admirably once, but which now was too loose for her, as could be seen. But though she was thin and pale, she held her head high, and there was a sort of smile in the look with which she regarded her father. Hers was indeed the triumph. She was too high-minded, too proud to fly. She came into the room, and closed the door with a sort of indignant stateliness. "I have come to tell you," she said, "that by some accident or misadventure my door was found unlocked this morning, and I have left my prison." She held her head high, and he bowed and crouched before her. But yet, had she but known, her own relief

and ecstasy of freedom was nothing to her father's. It was as if the load of a whole universe had been taken off his shoulders.

"This is Martin's fault," he said; "the fellow shall be dismissed at once. Jane, you will believe me or not as you please, but I had meant to come myself and open the door to you to-day."

He dropped down into a chair all weak and worn, and held his head in his hands: his nerves now more shattered than her own. It was all he could do to keep himself from bursting like a woman into tears.

"You surely do not imagine that I could doubt what you say? I am glad, very glad, that it was so——" she said, her voice melting. He was her father still, and she was not guiltless towards him. "I wish that I had waited till you came," she said.

"Yes;" he seized eagerly upon this

little advantage. "I wish that you had waited till I came: but it was not to be expected. I do not say that it was to be expected." Then he hoisted himself by his hands pressing upon the table, and looked at her. "Bless me," he said, "how thin you are, and how pale!—is this—is this my doing? Gracious! shut up so long, poor girl!—I suppose you must hate me, Jane?"

Lady Jane went up to him holding out her hands. Father, I have sinned against you too. Forgive me!" she cried, too generous not to take upon herself the blame; and so the father and daughter kissed each other, he crying like a child, she like a mother supporting him. Such a moment had never been in the Duke's long life before.

And we are bound to allow that neither the Duchess, who was his faithful wife, nor Winton, always ready to appreciate

the noble sentiments of Lady Jane, could ever understand the fulness of this reconciliation. It is to be hoped that the reader will comprehend better. They were too resentful and indignant to resume their old relations in a moment as if nothing had happened, which Lady Jane did with perhaps more tenderness than before. Bnt into this question there is no time to enter. When Lady Jane went in softly, as if she had left her mother half an hour before, into the morning-room, the Duchess flung away her papers with a great cry, and rushed upon her daughter, clasping her almost fiercely, looking over her shoulder with all the ferocity of a lioness in defence of her offspring. She would have ordered the carriage at once to take Lady Jane away, or even have gone with her on the spot, on foot or in a cab, to a place of safety: but Lady Jane would not hear

of any such proceeding. She calmed her mother, as she had soothed her father, and in an hour's time Winton was in that little room, which suddenly was turned into Paradise. He had been carrying about with him all this time a special licence ready for use, and as everything can be done at a moment's notice in town, even in February, Lady Jane Altamont, attended by a small but quite sufficient train, and before a whole crowd of excited witnesses, was married next morning at St George's, Hanover Square, like everybody else of her degree. Needless to say that there was in the 'Morning Post' next morning, as well as in most of the other papers, an account of the ceremony, with a delicate hint of difficulties, unnecessary to enter into, which had gone before. This was read by many who understood, and by a great many more who did not understand; but nowhere

with greater excitement than in the rectory-house of St Alban's, E.C., where Mrs Marston took the fashionable paper, poor lady, because in that wilderness she was so out of the way of everything. She rushed in upon her husband in his study (who had just seen it in the 'Standard' with feelings which are indescribable) with the broadsheet in her hand. "Listen to this, William," she cried solemnly; "didn't I tell you it was none of our business to meddle! and your fine Duke, whom you were so anxious to be serviceable to, and that never said thank you—— But I told you what you had to expect," Mrs Marston cried.

THE FUGITIVES

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CHAPTER I.

HELEN GOULBURN was sitting alone in the great drawing-room of her father's country-house on an evening in October. It had been very sultry during the day, and the great heat had ended in a thunderstorm and torrents of rain. Now all the tumult and commotion of the elements were over. The night was cool and fresh. The great windows were open to the unseen garden, from which a sweetness of honeysuckle and mign-

onnette and late roses came in upon every breath of the fitful night air. The room was an immense room, far too large for a solitary occupant. She and her lamp and her white dress made a lightness in one corner; the rest of the huge drawing-room was faintly lighted with candles, of which there were regiments about on the walls, reflected vaguely from mirrors here and there, on tables and consoles and cabinets,—but yet not enough to give anything like light to the vast shadowy room, which was full of everything that is rich and rare—of everything at least that the highest price could buy or the best workmen produce. The windows, a long line of them, all draped in that shadowy whiteness, stood open, as has been said. Most girls of Helen's age would have been afraid to sit all alone, with so many windows opening on to a lawn, which in

its turn swept downwards into the park, at so late an hour. Sometimes the lace curtains swayed in the night wind as if put aside by a shadowy hand. It was difficult to keep the imagination from developing some stealthy figure half hidden in the drapery, some one coming in, out of the darkness outside. The house was full of wealth, and the temptations to a sudden raid might have been many. When the branches swayed in the night air, bringing down a shower of raindrops, or some twig cracked, or one of the mysterious noises of which darkness is always full, broke the absolute quiet—any one of those sounds, which yet were scarcely definite sounds at all, might have conveyed a tremor to the lonely occupant of all this mystic space and solitude. But Helen sat unmoved. She was used to the vacant bigness of the great house, often in-

habited by only herself and her little sister, and a crowd of servants. She had been in the hands of a governess till very lately, and in the routine of lessons and the certainty that a schoolgirl was not likely to be interrupted by visitors, had escaped all consciousness of the isolation of the great house. It was the most splendid in the county, surrounded by a beautiful park, embosomed in great trees. When Mr Goulburn bought it from the decaying proud family to whom its glories belonged, Fareham was already a noble place; and he had added greatly to it, had built out a room here and a room there, and enlarged it with every extravagance of convenience that lavish wealth could think of. He had built and decorated in the most costly way the splendid room in which his daughter was sitting; he had fitted out for her a

suite of rooms worthy of a princess; the very servants were lodged as half the well-to-do people in England would have been glad to be lodged. Outside, in the darkness of the summer night, full of dew and rain and soft fragrance, were acres of flower-beds and conservatories, tended by a regiment of gardeners.

But notwithstanding all this splendour, the county looked very shyly on the new member of its sacred and select society. He had brought very good introductions, and he gave such dinners as were not to be had within a hundred miles. The Duke called, an honour scarcely less than royal condescension; but the surrounding gentry showed no enthusiasm in following that example. Helen was then still in the school-room, which furnished the ladies with a very good excuse; but even after the ball, which was given on the occasion of her coming out, and

which certified that event to all the world, no genial circle of neighbours collected round her. Even her youth, her solitude, her motherless and friendless condition, did not call forth the sympathy of the county people. Never was girl more solitary. Her governess, who it had been arranged was to stay with her as chaperon, had married suddenly the widowed vicar of the parish, and deserted her not long before the period of which we speak: and she was left alone, the mistress of the wealthiest, most barren, and splendid house in all the district. She had crowds of servants to do whatever she bade — carriages, horses, whatever, as the servants' hall said, heart could desire — but no friends. Little Jane, her little sister, was the offspring of a marriage which her father had made "abroad," and of which, except this child, no trace existed. It

was only on his return with the baby, six years before, that his extraordinary wealth had shown itself. Before that period Helen had been left at a school in the country—but not in this part of the country—where she had been happy enough with her companions. But when her father returned from "abroad," everything had been changed for her. An *ayah* had brought the baby home, and Helen had first become aware of the existence of a little sister when she saw a big pair of dark eyes gleaming out of the palest of little faces over the dusky nurse's shoulder. She had been taken away from her school from that day, and ever since had lived the life of a princess, waited upon by innumerable servants, and living in luxurious houses. But her father had always lived the life of a bachelor, notwithstanding his possession of these two daughters. His friends had been

all men. There were great dinners now and then; and occasionally Helen had seen through an open door a glimpse of a long splendid table laden with plate and crystal, and baskets of fruit and flowers, where her father's friends were being entertained. But no ladies had come to the house, nor, after the childish companions of her school, had she had any friends in her new magnificence, except Miss Temple, who had been very good to her, and whose departure had brought a poignant sensation of loss into the girl's mind. It was almost the only keen feeling she had ever known. She had come into society with something of the bewildered, uncertain vision of a creature bred in the darkness, who is dazzled and confused rather than delighted by the light. The people who came to the ball had been as figures in a dream to her. The whole scene was

like something in the theatre. She was scarcely aware that she was herself not a spectator, but an actor in it, walking about mechanically among the guests, making her mechanical curtsey when her father brought up now one strange face, now another.

And after that one ball, silence had fallen again upon Fareham. The porter at the lodge received sheaves of cards, and some carriages even penetrated through the grand avenue to the hall door; but no one entered the house. Doubtless there were some hearts in those carriages in which there vibrated some touch of pity for the millionaire's shy, motherless, inexperienced daughter. But the county was wonderfully intact, and its gentry had made up their minds to discourage the advent of Money among them. A few years of perseverance would no doubt have made an end of that irra-

tional notion; but in the meantime they distrusted Mr Goulburn. He was far too rich; it was insolent of a man who, so far as any one knew, was nobody, to be richer than all the squires put together. A ball in such a house might be tolerated. It was like a public ball; you took your own party (for in this respect the invitations were most liberal), and, save that one of your men had to sacrifice himself to ask the girl of the house to dance once, you kept yourselves to yourselves, as you did at the ball for the hospital or any other subscription assembly. This was what the county people said. And as for Helen, she was often dull, but she had not learned to blame anybody for her dulness. She thought it a law of nature—it was no one's fault.

All this explanation is to show how it was that Helen found nothing unusual

in her own position, alone in this great dim room, with all the windows open. The windows always were open, except in the depth of winter. The darkness without had no dangers for her; it never occurred to her that any strange apparition might disturb her solitude. She liked the stillness, the night air, the fragrance from the garden. Though she usually went to bed early, yet on this night she was not sleepy. She was reading a novel; that was one of the luxuries which her father provided regularly. She had not read many books that were worth reading, but of novels all kinds. When the butler came softly into the room, with the intention of closing up the house for the night, she stopped him.

"Are you going to sit up to-night, Brownlow?" she said.

"Yes, Miss Goulburn, as usual on

Saturdays, till the last train comes in," the man replied.

"Then leave the windows open a little longer."

"Yes, Miss Goulburn," he said. But he did not go away forthwith; he extinguished the candles on the distant tables and in the sconces, moving like a shadow (though he was very substantial) in that elegant desert of costly furniture, until finally Helen's figure in her white dress, lit up by her lamp, became the one definite point in the darkness. She was at some distance from the windows, in the winter corner near the fireplace, now all dark. Everything was dark except that one spot. The soft and almost stealthy closing of the door was all that testified to Brownlow's departure; he had become invisible before. In the great stillness his soft and regular step, subdued and re-

spectful, as a good servant's ought to be, yet stately, was heard retiring, thick though the carpets were and closely fitting every door. He went away through those softly carpeted corridors and across the great marble hall to his own part of the house. And once more absolute silence and solitude abode with Helen. The night air came in softly, swaying the curtains; sometimes a bough creaked, a long tendril of some creeping plant shook out a few rain-drops, a moth dashed against the panes. No other sound in heaven or earth. And Helen in her white dress gave a heart to the darkness. All alone, no one near her, yet not afraid!

CHAPTER II.

WHAT was it that stirred?

Scarcely a sound at all — not half so definite as the cracking of the twigs, the boom of the night moth against the window; yet it affected Helen as those sounds never did. When it had occurred twice she raised her head. It was nothing, and yet—— Again! What was it? Though you would not call it a sound, it made the air thrill as no sound of the inanimate ever does. She looked up, but the light of her own lamp blinded her. She could scarcely see beyond its charmed circle. Then a slight jar succeeded to the soft pressure, as of a human

foot upon the turf. A sound that conveys purpose and energy, how different is it from the aimless noises of nature! She rose up in great, though restrained alarm, with a cry almost on her lips. Then Helen reflected that all the servants were far away, that a scream would not help her much; and though her heart beat wildly, almost taking from her both sight and hearing, she still could, after a sort, both hear and see. She stood up, closely drawn against the wall, looking out with puckered eyelids. Then a hand stole between the curtains of the nearest window: they were pushed aside, and a dark figure showed itself, at first indistinguishable, a something merely, an emblem of mystery and danger. Helen's scream got vent, but in a low cry only of fright and dismay. Then all at once the fluttering of her heart stopped, her pulses regained their steadiness.

"Papa!" she said, "oh, how you have frightened me! Why didn't you come in the other way?" It was a great relief, for her terror had been all the greater that she had never experienced any visionary alarms before, and her imagination was unprepared. She put out her hand to the bell, "I will ring for Brownlow——"

Her father did not leave her time even for another word. He sprang forward and caught her arm. "Don't do anything of the kind," he said. "I want no Brownlow. I am going again immediately. I want no one. I don't wish it to be known that I have been here."

It was certainly her father, but not the placid, prosperous, moneyed man she knew. His coat, which was of a rough kind she had never seen him wear before, was beaded with rain. His face was pale

and haggard; his dress bore traces of mud, as if he had scrambled over ditches; his boots were wet and clogged with the damp soil. She looked at him with a terror she could not express, and he looked at her with a somewhat stern inquiry in his eyes.

"But you are wet: you want—dinner—something?" she faltered. "Shall I run and bid them bring——"

He shook her slightly, still holding her arm. "Are you good for anything?" he said. "Have you any stuff in you? Now is the time to test it. Go and get that white rag off. Put on your darkest dress, and come with me."

"Come with you? To-night, papa?"

He gave her a slight shake again. "It will neither be to-night or any other night if you make so much noise. What are you capable of, Helen? Are you able to be quick, and silent, and brave? Can

I rely upon you? — if not, say so; but make up your mind, for there is not a moment to lose."

She grew whiter than her white dress, and looked at him with gleaming, wide-open eyes. She had read of appeals like this, but she could not remember how the heroines responded. She said, faltering, "I can be quick, and quiet, papa."

"That is all that is necessary; but we have not a moment's time to lose. No one must know that I have been here. I shall go out again outside the window and wait for you. Go up to my room, to the little Italian cabinet near my bed, on the right hand. You know it, and you know how to open the secret drawer? Here is the key: bring me a little portfolio, a sort of letter-case you will find in it. Stop; that is not all. Change your dress and put on thick boots, and

a cloak, and a veil. Then go and bring Janey——"

"Janey! papa? She has been in bed for hours."

"Did I say she was not in bed? Take up the child out of her bed, wrap her in something, and bring her down-stairs. You can surely carry that little thing down-stairs. After that I'll take charge of her myself."

"But, papa, Janey! she is so little. If I wake her she will cry."

"Not she! But why wake her at all? Lift her, and wrap her in something warm; she need not be awoke. My poor little Janey! I can't go without my Janey," he said to himself.

Helen scarcely knew what she was saying in her consternation and surprise. "If you are going anywhere, papa, and want to take Janey—at this hour—would it not be best to order the brougham?"

"Would it not be best to order a coach and six, with half-a-dozen fools to draw it?" he said savagely. Just then some far-off sounds were audible, some one moving in the silence of the house. Mr Goulburn made a hurried step towards the window. Then paused and said in a half-whisper, which he seemed to try to make kind, "Let me see what mettle you are made of, Helen. Do what I have told you without betraying yourself—without attracting any one's attention. Show what you are good for, once in your life."

He disappeared, and Helen stood for a moment like one in a dream. Was it a dream? and would she awake?—or had the rest of her life been a dream to which this was the awaking? She felt that her father was watching her from behind the white mist of the curtains, and that she dared not delay. She went up-stairs mechanically. The huge house

lay silent like an enchanted palace. On Saturdays it was always possible that the master might not return until the late train, and it was common for the great household of servants, badly ruled and prodigal, to hold a sort of domestic saturnalia on that night. Faint sounds of fun and frolic were to be heard from the servants' hall — very faint, for Brownlow had a sense of his responsibilities — and all the guardians of the place were out of the way. Helen went up, unseen and solitary, to her father's room and her own. She did what he had told her—changed her own dress, and took the Russia leather letter-case, which was full apparently of papers, out of the secret drawer of the cabinet. But there she paused; the other part of the mission was more difficult; and Helen stood still again, with a beating heart, outside the door of little Janey's nursery, where the nurse

certainly ought to be, even if all the other servants were off duty. What should she do if the nurse were there? Her mission was difficult enough without that. When Helen went in, however, to the luxurious rooms appropriated to her little sister, no nurse was visible. The child of the millionaire slept, unwatched, like the child of the poorest clerk. A faint night-light burnt in the inner room. There were acres of stairs and corridors between little Janey and the highly paid functionary who was supposed to be devoted to her body and soul. She might have died of fright before any one could have heard her cry. Helen stood, breathless, at the foot of the little bed in which Janey lay fast asleep. She thought she had never realised before what perfect rest was, or the beauty of the child who lay with her pretty round arms thrown above

her head, rosy with sleep and warmth, her soft breathing making a little murmurous cadence in the stillness. How can I have the heart to wake her? Helen said to herself; a new sentiment, half tenderness, half fear, seemed to awaken in her heart. To wake the little one to this hurried incomprehensible night journey seemed terrible — yet somehow Helen felt a reluctant conviction that Janey would adapt herself to the adventure better than she herself should. The child's sleep, however, was so profound, and there was something so contrary to all the prejudices of education in waking her up at that hour, that only the thought of her father's severe and haggard countenance kept Helen to her errand. She had even turned away to go back to him — to say that she could not do it —when the greater evil of having to return again, and of, perhaps, meeting

nurse next time, prevailed. She got a warm little pelisse, with many capes—a piquant little Parisian garment, which had tantalised all the mothers in the district—out of its drawer, and put the little shoes ready. Then she bent over her small sister and called her. "Janey, wake up, wake up; papa wants you. Wake up; we are to go with him if you are quiet and don't cry."

The child sat up in her bed, awake all at once, with big, dark eyes, opening like windows in her pale face. "I am not doing to cry," she said, and stared at her sister through the gloom, which was faintly illuminated by the night-lamp. Janey was, as Helen had anticipated, much more at home in the emergency than she was. She woke up in a moment, as children do, not with a margin of bewilderment and confusion such as is common to us — but wide

awake, with all her little intelligence fresh and on the alert.

"What is it? what is it, Helen?"

"I don't know; but you are to go down to papa. You are to be quiet; you are not to cry. We are going with him."

"Where? where?"

"I don't know," said Helen, ready to weep with the strange and wild confusion, the sense of misery and wretchedness which was involved to her in this overthrowal of all habits, this sudden secrecy and adventure in the dark. But little Janey clapped her hands. It was a delightful novelty to the child. She pulled on her stockings on her own small pink feet, her eyes dancing with pleasure and excitement. No need to carry her down asleep, as Helen with terror and doubt of her own powers had feared.

"You must be quiet; you must be

quiet — not to let the servants know," the elder sister whispered.

"I am doing to be quiet," said the little girl, delighted with the mystery. She thrust her big doll into her bed, and covered it carefully, while Helen, not knowing what she did, picked up various fugitive articles, half-consciously, and put them into the pockets of the ulster which she had put on.

"Be dood, baby, and keep my little bed warm till I come back," sang little Janey.

"Oh, hush, hush! you are to be quiet — you are to be quiet," Helen said.

They crept down the great stairs like two ghosts, fantastic little shadows, so unlike anything that could have been expected on that grand staircase at that hour. But they met no one. The sounds from the servants' hall were a little more

audible as the evening went on. The master was absent, the master's daughter too shy and timid, even had she heard them, to take any notice. The hours of licence were approaching when even Mr Brownlow relaxed the bonds of discipline. As these sounds reached them, little Janey clasped her sister's hand tighter. But it was the sense of a mischievous escapade, not of a mysterious calamity, which was in her mind.

"What will Nursey say?" the child said with a low laugh.

Even the whisper frightened Helen. The lights flared in all those vacant passages, but gloom lurked in every corner; the great rooms were all dark and empty: not a living being, not a sound of habitation was in the magnificent costly place, except the squeak of the footman's violin, the far-off laughter of the servants — so much for so little!

Amid all the confusion and terror of the moment, Helen always recollected the vacant lighted staircase, the hall with its marble pillars, the vast darkness of the dining-room standing open — not a creature near, except those two helpless creatures equipped for flight; but on the other hand, the servants' merry-making, and the squeak of the fiddle painfully scratching out a popular tune. They paused to listen for one moment, holding their breath. Then they went into the drawing-room, where Helen's lamp was still burning close to the wall, making the darkness visible. Her book was still lying open on the table. She had left the heroine at a painful crisis, but it was not so terrible as this.

Helen closed the door behind her with great precautions, and Janey, a little frightened at the dark, clung to her closely.

"Where is papa? I don't see papa," cried the child.

"Oh, hush, hush!" said Helen, frightened by the sound of her voice.

He was standing behind the curtains waiting for them.

"How long you have been!" he said to her in a low, stern voice; but he opened his arms to the child. "My little Janey — my little darling!" he said, bending down on his knees to bring himself within her reach. Janey clasped her arms round his neck, and kissed him, with open-mouthed childish kisses.

"Where are you doing to take me, papa?" she said, her dark eyes dancing with excitement. He raised himself up, holding her closely clasped to his breast, and carried her out into the night.

What a strange night-walk it was— through the country lanes, all heavy and

muddy after the storm, and dark as the darkest midnight; brushing against the rustling, thorny hedges, stumbling over heaps of stones, through the pools at the roadside, and upon the slippery grass; here and there crossing a stile at haphazard, with no guide but instinct; here stealing past a cottage, shrinking from the lamps of the doctor's gig, which threw a suspicious light upon them. Helen, following, dragging her weary feet through the muddy ways, holding up the long skirts not intended for such usage in her arms, her veil over her face, felt herself shrink, too, when the light flashed upon them. But who could have supposed that it was the master of Fareham and his children that were out there in the muddy lanes? Once at the turnpike, where they were all as well known as the day, her father, whom she always saw before her, a vague, dark shadow with

the child in his arms, replied in a gruff feigned voice, with a fictitious country accent, which gave Helen a sharp shock, to the good-night of the gatekeeper. To avoid notice was one thing, to tell a practical lie was another. This, in the midst of her confused wretchedness, gave her a painful prick of sensation. Janey in her excitement had begun to prattle at first, but had been summarily silenced by her father, and now drooped upon his shoulder fast asleep, her face half hidden in the rough collar of his coat. Between the other two not a word passed. Helen was too miserable and too much bewildered to ask any questions; she followed submissively.

The little station was within about a mile of Fareham, but a mile is long when trudged through mud and rain by unaccustomed feet, in a gloomy night, and with a heavy heart. A late train

going express to town which otherwise would have scorned this little station, had been arranged to stop there for the convenience of the man of business, the well-known Mr Goulburn, whose affairs were on too colossal a scale to be managed by the ordinary means of communication open to everybody. Sometimes he had special parcels to send by the guard: sometimes a clerk who had "run down" for some special directions, or an associate acting with him on some great city board, whose time was too valuable to permit the loss of a moment, took advantage of this train; and sometimes he himself, jumping into a dogcart the moment the latest guest had departed after a sumptuous dinner, had rushed up to town by it. The station-master and the porters were like his own servants, and the whole place all but kept for his convenience. He crept up to it now,

keeping carefully in the shadow, out of the glare of its poor paraffin lamps.

"Keep yourself muffled up, and your veil down, and go and get the tickets," Mr Goulburn said, in the low and peremptory tone in which he had throughout addressed Helen. She went without a word; she who had never in her life done any such thing for herself. The clerk peered at her through his wicket; the solitary porter stared as she stood alone on the little platform. She was left there by herself until the train came up, and the three persons who formed the *personnel* of the station had nothing to do but to stare at her, and ask about the luggage which she did not possess. When the train stopped with its usual little fret and commotion, Mr Goulburn suddenly came forward and plunged into an empty carriage. His high coat-collar, the slouch of his hat, and finally,

the figure of the child asleep upon his shoulder concealed him effectually. Helen could not help wondering whether she were as effectually disguised, and the thought once more gave her a sharp pinch of pain. Why were they hiding themselves? There was not a word spoken while the train rushed on, tearing through that darkness which they had just traversed so slowly and painfully. Only once, and that when they were but just started, did any communication pass between the father and daughter. They both looked out towards the home they had left, though it was invisible as they left the little station. Upon the road close by the lights of a carriage were visible, slowly approaching. It was the carriage which, when Mr Goulburn was absent, was despatched to meet the last train on Saturday nights. The last train from London

was not due for half an hour, and the coachman came along at a leisurely pace, slowly climbing the road to meet his master, who was flying, disguised and shameful, in the other direction. The contrast was so strange that he looked at Helen, and their eyes met. Something piteous was in his look. It contained a whole world of misery, of consciousness, of appeal which was almost humorous, amidst the profundity of pain. She had asked no questions, she had scarcely ventured to form to herself an idea of what the cause of this flight could be, but for the first time her heart was touched.

"Does she not tire you, lying on your shoulder? I could take her a little, papa," she said. She could think of no other way of showing her sympathy. He shook his head and pressed the child closer to him. Was it that the touch of her innocence made him feel

less guilty? Was it that to convince himself of the strength of the natural affection in him made him think himself a better man? or was it only the one real and true sentiment which may still preserve the least worthy from perdition? Helen looked somewhat wistfully at her little sister, lying in all the *abandon* of childish sleep, helpless yet omnipotent, across her father's breast. She had never been a favourite like little Janey. No passion of parental affection had ever been lavished upon her, and, in consequence, she knew her father better, and perhaps secretly trusted him less, than children ought to do—though she had never said this even to herself. But for the moment, she sitting alone opposite to them, carried off from all her anchors, swept into some wild sea of the unknown, looked at them wistfully, and envied the father and the child.

In a few hours more Helen understood much more perfectly what the metaphor meant which we have just employed. At midnight they embarked in a steamer which, after feeling its way down the river through a thousand dangers, plunged into the Channel just as daybreak made the rough waves and flying foam visible. It was a small, old, almost worn-out boat, and the voyage was one of the longer and cheaper ones which tempt the passengers from the ordinary routes, to their profound suffering and repentance. Helen had never been at sea before. She lay trembling while the vessel creaked and plunged, not knowing what to reply to Janey's inquiry why the ship went up and down. Why, indeed? It seemed to do so on purpose, tossing them up one moment and down the other with that sickening repetition which helps to make up the

agony of a voyage to the inexperienced. In the morning, in the perplexing and painful daylight of which Helen felt afraid, she did not know why, they landed on foreign soil. Her father had changed during the night, she could not tell how. Was it possible that already on the previous evening he had worn the large whiskers and carefully smoothed hair which seemed to have grown lighter, redder, than it used to be? She scarcely knew him when he came on deck, and he gave her an uneasy look when he met her eye. She did not, however, suspect the truth as yet, nor did she in the least understand his disguise. She was only full of alarm and wonder, not knowing what to think.

CHAPTER III.

"WHERE are we going, papa?" Helen had walked some way, bewildered and wondering, through the foreign streets, confused by the strange language round her, the unfamiliar look of everything, the strangeness of her situation altogether. They had set out walking, and seemed, she thought, to be going on vaguely from street to street without any aim, passing hotel after hotel, at any of which she would have been glad to rest and collect her thoughts after the rough voyage and all the agitations of the night. "Where are you doing to take us, papa?" said little Janey, run-

ning along by his side. The child was pale, too, and her pretty, costly clothes had already acquired that look of crumpled finery which garments too good for common use so easily assume. Helen, too, had found it very difficult to manage her dress, with its train, made for no greater exertion than to sweep over the velvet lawns at Fareham. It had dropped from her hand now and then. It had got crushed and crumpled and a little soiled with the wet deck. It looked like a dress that had been worn all night. The signs of the night journey and rough sea were unmistakable upon them. Mr Goulburn made no reply. He murmured something to soothe the little girl, but made no answer to Helen. Their questions, however, seemed to rouse him to action. He went into a shop which was full of *articles de voyage*, and there bought a

large second-hand portmanteau, considerably battered, and one of those iron-bound trunks which are used by Continental travellers. Then he put a purse into Helen's hand, and took her to the door of another shop, in which were exhibited all kinds of feminine apparel. "Buy what is wanted for yourself and *her*," he said. Helen had scarcely ever in her life so much as entered a shop alone, but necessity overcomes everything, even the shy inexperience of a girl. She went in submissively, trembling to face the brisk saleswoman, all her schoolroom French deserting her in this earliest emergency. Nevertheless, she managed to do what was absolutely essential. As for Janey, she proved herself much more a woman of the world than her elder sister. The whole adventure was a frolic to Janey—a frolic which the voyage had unpleasantly interrupted,

but which had now regained its jollity and excitement. She made her choice among the different dresses exhibited to them with unfailing promptitude. "I am doing to have this," she said in her childish peremptory tone, to the great delight of the shopwomen, who gathered round her, offering her their wares. The little English child, recovering all the vivacity of her childish spirits, and excited by the laughter and flatteries, though she did not understand them, of the French milliners, was an amusing little figure, and the scene like a scene in a comedy. Janey inspected all the garments, feeling the texture with her baby fingers, assuming a hundred little airs of importance. She chattered without ceasing, a perpetual flood of remarks, while the women laughed and admired.

"What does she say?" they asked the one among them who partially justified

the "*Ici on parle Anglais*," in the shop-window.

"Elle est délicieuse," the shopwoman said; "elle est jolie comme un cœur: et d'un goût!"

Janey did not understand a word, but all the same knew she was being applauded, and her little head was turned by the notice bestowed upon her. "We came without any boxes or frocks or anything, and papa is doing to let me buy whatever I like," said Janey.

The women were curious beyond description when this was rapidly reported to them by the one who understood. All this strange little scene went on while Helen, still half dazed, stammered out her orders in her faltering, imperfect French, and accepted timidly what was offered to her. The colour came to her cheeks, and a painful prick of life to her being, when she heard her little sister's

indiscreet explanation. "We left all our things behind — by mistake," she said, trembling, a tingling, smarting blush dyeing her face. The timid falsehood redoubled her own confusion, but it did not do much more. It changed, Helen thought, the looks of the women. They followed her about, she fancied, trying to elicit further revelations from Janey, pressing every kind of outfit upon her; watching her as if—— What did they imagine? Did they think she would steal something? Helen's heart swelled so in her simplicity that she thought it would burst. She held Janey's hand closely in her own, and squeezed it tight. "Don't talk so, don't talk so," she whispered. And then asked herself, with an indescribable pang, why should not the child talk? A grey light of knowledge, a vague, miserable twilight of consciousness, like the first lightening of a gloomy

dawn, was stealing over her. When she had made her purchases—two frocks for Janey, the simplest which that little heroine could be prevailed on to accept, and a plain dark dress for herself, and a supply of underclothing,—she found her father at the door, with the box he had bought upon a cab. This was how they were provided with the luggage which is indispensable to respectability. Helen could not but look at him with different eyes, now that she felt herself a party to this fraud, which she began to be conscious of, without knowing what it meant. What did it mean? Almost involuntarily unawares had not she herself made a false statement in explanation of the extraordinary straits in which they were placed? She watched her father, and found him altered, she could scarcely tell how. His hair had changed its colour; his beard had grown miracu-

lously in a single night. What did it mean? Her heart ached with the question, but she did not know how to reply.

He took them to the railway after this —to the railway again, after all their past fatigue. He was not negligent, however, of their comfort, but made them eat at the buffet, and took a *coupé* for them, filling it with all the picture-books and papers he could find, with baskets of fruit and chocolate and bonbons. "Here is a corner where my little Janey can go to sleep," he said, putting the child tenderly into it when the train had started. Janey jumped upon his knee, and began to chatter and give him an account of her own achievements at the shop.

"They understood me," said the little thing, "better than Helen. I can't speak French, but they understood me better than Helen. Papa, do you hear? they

understood me——" Here she paused and gave a sudden cry. She had a pretty way of calling the attention of the careless listener, drawing his face round with her little hand upon his chin. "Papa!" she said, in great alarm, "you have dot hair on your chin, and it moves. Oh! papa!"

His face grew crimson. He turned the child down from his knee, giving her a sudden sharp blow on the cheek with his open hand—a blow which was nothing, yet like a revolution of earth and heaven to Janey, and to Helen too. Then, muttering a curse under his breath, he turned to Helen, who was watching him, pale with terror and wonder and indignation. "Well!" he said, defiantly; "out with it! You are a spy upon me too. Let me hear what you have got to say."

"I have nothing to say, papa," said Helen, trembling. She looked at him wistfully, with miserable insight in her

eyes. She saw now that it was all false—hair and complexion and even expression. It seemed to her, as she looked at him, that it was not her father at all; that it was some strange masquerader of whose identity she never could be sure again. There had been no special devotion between Helen and her father; he had been kind but careless, and she too had been careless, though affectionate enough; but the miserable pang with which she seemed to lose her hold of him, and with him of everything solid and steadfast in the world, was more terrible than anything she had ever felt before. Her life seemed to be rent up by the roots. Janey, whimpering and astonished, took refuge in her corner, and by-and-by, worn out, dropped happily asleep. But Helen could not sleep. Worn out too, but watchful, she sat upright by her father's side, not venturing to look at him, seeing

the long, flat, level lines of the country fly past the carriage-windows with a tedium that made her eyes ache. And he too sat bolt-upright, not looking at her. She had found him out; and he perceived that she had found him out; but yet she had not got a step farther, or discovered any real clue to the meaning of the flight which she shared.

They travelled all that night, the second since they left home, Janey sleeping in her corner, but Helen sitting sleepless, though worn to death; and next day in the forenoon stopped at a sleepy little French town, by a slow, pale, chalk river, amid interminable lines of poplars. Words could not tell the weariness which possessed Helen, the overmastering desire she felt to lay herself down anywhere, it did not matter where; while at the same time the routine of the continued movement had got into her brain, and it seemed to have

become natural to go on and on, watching those long lines of distance, those flying plains, monotonous and endless, those rivers and fields. When the train stopped with a jar, and with cramped limbs they stepped out and stood upon the ordinary soil, the stoppage itself was a shock to Helen's nerves. It was mid-day of a bright October day when they drove over the stony pavement in a jumbling omnibus, and rattled into a large square inhabited by a cathedral and town-hall of imposing architecture, with two little soldiers in red uniforms lounging under an archway, and two people crossing the sunshine, going in different directions. The white houses, tall and trim, with their green *persiennes*, the great tower of the church cutting the blue sky, the two figures crossing the sunshine printed themselves vaguely on Helen's mind. She could not see anything

plainly for that vision of her father always before her who was not her father. She did not like to look at him, yet saw his changed countenance and false beard all the time with that sense of the insupportable which only our own flesh and blood ever give us. She could not forget it as Janey forgot, from whose little mind the incident of the night had fled like last year's snow. Janey ran into the bare, carpetless room at the inn, and climbed up upon the wooden chair at the window, and called to papa—"Why do they have all the curtains drawn at the windows, and why is there nobody in the street, and why are the soldiers so little, and what have they dot red trousers for?" cried Janey. The blow had gone from her recollection. She thought no more of that novelty of the beard. She had slept all night, and she was no longer tired, though she was pale.

"Do you mean to stay here, papa?" said Helen. It is dreadful to sit at table with any one and not to speak. She could not bear it; if he would not say anything to her, she must talk to him.

"It does not look a very interesting place, you mean? No picture-galleries or fine things to see. That is a pity; but if you do not object to it too much, it suits me to stay here for a little while."

"I do not object at all, papa," said poor Helen, ready to cry, "only — only——" She looked at him with wistful eyes.

"Only what? If you don't object to me and everything about me, you should try not to look as if you did. Understand, once for all, that *I* understand my own motives and you don't. And I don't mean to be forced to explain by any one, much less my own child."

"Papa," said Janey, "you souldn't be cross. You dave me a slap last night,

but I never was cross. I did not look like this," and she covered her innocent forehead with the most portentous of frowns. "I forgave you," said the child, mastering the "g" with an effort, and looking up at him with a countenance clear as the day, not like the troubled face of Helen. The man was more touched than words could say. He caught her up in his arms.

"Yes, my little darling," he said, "I did; God forgive me! I gave this dear little cheek a tap. I may have done other things as wrong, but none that I regretted so much. But you forgive your poor old father, Janey? I would not hurt you, my pet, not a hair of your pretty head, for the world."

"I knew you would be sorry, papa," said the little girl, with the air of a little queen. Then she lifted up her tiny forefinger, with serious yet mischievous warn-

ing, "But you sould never be cross," she said.

How different was Helen's state from the innocent, tender play of the child! She sat immovable and looked on at this pretty scene, seeing her father's countenance change, the hard lines melt, a tender light come over it. He kissed his little Janey with a kind of reverential passion. "I will try, my little love," he said, as humble as a child. And while he kissed her half weeping, and she clung with both her little arms round his neck, Helen felt herself rigid as stone. She could not be touched even by that which was most pathetic in this little episode — the real emotion of the man whose conscience was certainly not void of greater offences, yet whose heart melted at the pretty majesty of his child's reproof, her innocent counsel and authority. Helen sat and looked on like some one entirely outside, a world

apart from this tender union. She did not share the emotion of it, nor the sweetness. Her heart seemed made of lead; her eyes were dry as summer dust. She turned away from them, not to see the innocent rapture of the father and child. The bare little *salle à manger*, with its long table thinly covered; the bare board; the windows with their close white curtains; the all-prevailing odour of soup and cigars; the clashing of the ostler's pails outside; the high-pitched voices; the language only half comprehensible,—made up a scene for her which she never forgot. Their strange meal was over—a dozen unknown dishes—and they had been left with a plate of fruit on the table and a bottle of *vin du pays*, which Helen thought so sour. She was wearied to death, but she no longer felt that devouring desire to lie down and go to sleep. The pain had roused her; it

seemed to her for the moment as if she could never sleep again.

Then she went up-stairs to the little bare bedroom above, where two white beds stood side by side, two windows with the same white, closely fixed curtains, a carpetless, curtainless room, with everything as bare and wooden, as clean and white, as could be desired. She had to open the new trunk and take out all their new things, which did not belong to her, which belonged to a fugitive, the daughter of a man who had fled from his own country and home in disguise, and at the dead of night. It seemed to her that she could never tolerate this livery of shame, or think of it save with a burning as of disgrace upon her countenance. Perhaps it was partly because she was so worn out that she took everything so tragically. She went out afterwards to see the town, following her father, who led little Janey

by the hand, delighted by all her demands. The little girl prattled without ceasing, asking questions about everything. "Why are they such little soldiers?" she said; "they are like the little men in my Swiss village; and why have they dot red trousers instead of red coats? Is it with walking in the enemy's blood, papa? like the Bible," said Janey.

"Hush, hush! there cannot be anything like that in the Bible, Janey."

"Ah! that is because you don't read the lessons. You should read the lessons every day," said Janey, delighted with her *rôle* of counsellor, "like nurse, papa! How funny it would be when nurse went up-stairs and found only dolly in my little bed, and Janey gone away!" She laughed, and then looked at him with a look of examination more keen than that timid, wistful look of Helen's. "But I like this," she added; "it is funny. Why do the

little children wear caps? And what funny little shoes, that make such a noise! And why do they all speak French, papa? Who taught them to speak French?" Janey, in her fresh wonder, put all the threadbare questions that everybody has put before. She skipped upon the rough stones by her father's side, holding his hand tight; and the three people who were in the great square (besides the soldiers) looked upon the pair with kindly eyes, and pointed out to each other that the newly arrived *Anglais* worshipped his child. They have the domestic instinct above all—they adore their infants. "But *tiens*," they said; "is it madame the young wife who follows with a look so *maussade?*"

The sympathies of these spectators were all with the father and the child. Helen followed like a creature in a dream. The great, silent, empty, open cathedral,

with its altars all dressed in artificial lilies, and the scent of incense still in the air, came into her silent picture-gallery with all its details distinct, yet strange ; and the long line of boulevard with its trees, and the white houses with their veiled windows, and the clanking of the *sabots*, and the little soldiers in the archway. They gave her no pleasure as of a novel sight, but they completed the vague, feverish world around her, so dim to her mental perception, yet keenly clear to her outward eye in the sharp blueness of the sky, the more vivid tints of an atmosphere without smoke. They went over all the town thus, mounting to the ramparts, going through all the narrow streets : Janey dancing along with her hand in her father's, Helen following, silent, like a creature walking in her sleep, taking in all the novel scene only as a background to the pain of her soul.

CHAPTER IV.

THE little city of Sainte-Barbe was the quaintest and most slumbrous of little French towns, and that is saying a great deal. The walls were intact and in good order, supplying the inhabitants with pleasant walks, which few people took advantage of. Their pretence at defence was antiquated and useless, but then there was nothing to defend nor any enemy intending to attack. From the ramparts you looked out upon a great plain bounded towards the north with hills, and dropping southwards into those low swelling slopes and hillocks which form the best vineyards. Sainte-Barbe was on the edge of a rich

wine country verging upon the Côte d'Or; but there were no vineyards close to the town, which rose up, with its cluster of towers, its high walls and peaked roofs, out of the plain. It is to be supposed that in former days it had been a centre of more important life, for the cathedral was large enough for a metropolis, and the great town-hall, with its fine belfry, looked like one of the warlike municipalities of the middle ages. These two great buildings stood and sunned themselves, resting from whatever labours they might once have known, in a sort of dull beatitude — the one with half-a-dozen erratic worshippers coming and going, the other with three little red-legged soldiers under its grand gateway. Now and then a tourist who had heard of these buildings stopped for a few hours on his way from Italy to Paris to see them; but the fame of them was fast fading out, now

that nobody thinks of posting from Paris to Dijon, and it was the rarest thing in the world to see a stranger in the streets. For the first week the townsfolk said among themselves, "Tiens! voilà les Anglais!" when Mr Goulburn and his daughters appeared; but at the end of that time became familiar with the appearance of them. It was a curious life which they led at the Lion d'Or—in a quaint discomfort, which may be amusing to tourists in high spirits, but to the timid and troubled English girl was the strangest travesty of existence. The mixture of small discomforts with great troubles is perhaps the combination above all others which procures most entire and complete confusion in life. And the want of a room to sit in other than that wooden bedroom, where every movement of a chair jarred upon the bare planks, began after a while to mingle in Helen's mind with all the

painful circumstances of their flight, so that she scarcely knew what it was that made her so wretched, so disjoined from all her past. Twice a-day the little party ate in company with some of the best people in Sainte-Barbe. M. le Notaire, who was unmarried, an old bachelor, and M. le Maire, who was a widower, took their meals regularly at the Lion d'Or. They tied their napkins round their bottle of wine when they left after one meal, and tucked them under their chins when they next sat down. On Sunday there was an officer who came in his uniform, with his sword clanking, who impressed Janey with great awe, accompanied by his wife and their little boy and *bonne*, who sat down next her charge and dined too, cutting the child's meat for him, and having a little wine poured out for her by her mistress from the family bottle. Janey could not eat her own dinner, so absorbed was she

in watching this party. She pulled Helen's dress to call her attention a dozen times in a minute. "Oh! what would nurse say?" she cried, with big eyes of astonishment. "Look, Helen! he has some of that that you would not let me have, and he is so little—much more little than me. And he has dot wine: and oh, look! he has put his knife in his mouth—he will kill himself. And now he has his hand in, the nasty little boy!"

"Cela amuse mademoiselle de voir manger mon petit," said the lady across the table in a tone of offence.

Helen blushed as if she had been caught in a mortal sin. "Oh no, madame —only—elle ne sait pas——" she murmured in apology.

"He has dot his knife in his mouth, and that will kill him," said Janey. "She ought to tell him. Oh, little boy, little boy! *couteau—bouche!*" she cried, with

the anxiety of her age to put everything right.

Mr Goulburn tried to apologise. "My little girl thinks it is her business to set everybody right. She takes it upon her to regulate my conduct and manners. I hope you will forgive the little impertinent. Besides, she is astonished to see the *bonne* by your side, madame, at table. It is contrary to our English usage. Forgive her," he said.

"Oh, *de rien*, monsieur," said the French lady, politely. "We all know that England is the most aristocratic of countries. Do not apologise; there is great good in that—the *canaille* are kept in their place."

"The *canaille* are in all places, madame," said M. le Maire. "They are among us when we least suspect it. Persons of the best manners, the most irreproachable in appearance——"

"Ah, if M. le Maire takes the point of

view of the highest morals! It is well known that the blessed apostles were but fishermen and labourers," said the lady; "but we could not now invite a sailor smelling of the sea, or a ploughman fresh from the fields, to eat with us. There are lines of demarcation."

"Madame," said the Maire, "I have been warned from the police of a person completely *comme il faut*, handsome, young, tall, well brought up, a hero of romance—you would be enchanted with his description,—who has done everything that a man can do of perfidious and wicked —if he should pay us a visit here——"

"Ah, monsieur, what a dreadful idea! But perhaps it is evil companions, bad influences—and then, when one is young, everything may be recovered."

"With *le beau sexe* youth is always the first of virtues," said the Notaire.

"Listen—they are not always young;

madame should have seen the journals of England a little time ago—monsieur here could tell us, no doubt. A great company of merchants in London has lately made bankruptcy. Impossible to tell you what ruin they have produced. The great, the small, widows and orphans, poor officers in retreat, little functionaries, priests—what in England they call clergymen—all ruined, without a penny, without bread!" said the Maire, throwing up his hands. "*Mon Dieu!* even to hear of it makes one suffer. And figure to yourself the chief—he who was first in this *compagnie*, a man rich as the Indies, living *en prince*, and for whom nothing was too good, has taken flight, instead of ending his life with a pistol-shot, as would have been done in France—has taken flight, with enormously of money in his pockets! You have seen it, perhaps, in the journals. Such things happen only in England. *Mon Dieu!* he

has saved himself with the money of others. And one talks of *canaille!*" the Maire concluded, wiping his forehead. He was warm with indignation, feeling the force of his own eloquence.

Helen did not understand all this—or nearly all; but she caught a word now and then, and her father's face filled her with alarm. It had been smiling enough at first, though with that drawn and artificial smile which she had only remarked of late; but by degrees Mr Goulburn's head had dropped, he stooped over his plate, fixing his attention on that, yet now and then directed a furtive glance from under his eyebrows at the speaker. And his face grew ghastly pale, yet he took out his handkerchief and wiped his forehead with it. His hands trembled as he raised his glass to his lips. The *vin du pays* was not likely to inspire much courage, but he drank a large quantity, large enough to

make the Maire and the Notaire stare. All this Helen remarked, though perhaps no one else did. He did everything he could to preserve appearances; but her attention was roused, and she was on the alert and saw everything, and almost more than everything. What had he to do with this story of disgrace and ruin? Some one came in at this moment, a stranger, who was placed in a seat on her other hand; but she was so intent upon her father that she did not even see who it was. There was a pause, which seemed terrible to her —and to him; but which to the others was a most natural and simple, nay, flattering moment of silence after the Maire's impressive remarks.

"You say such things happen only in England; is no one ever bankrupt in France?" Mr Goulburn said at last.

"Alas!" said M. le Maire, "misfortune comes in all countries. But a French

commèrçant bears it—not so well as your countrymen, monsieur. I have known men who have undergone that and now hold up their heads again; and I have known men, *ma foi!* who could not bear it, who thought of nothing but a pistol-shot. One follows the customs of one's country. I have heard that Englishmen grow fat upon it. Pardon! you understand that is a pleasantry. No one can have more respect for the English than I."

"It is a pleasantry, M. le Maire, which an Englishman hears with very little pleasure," said Mr Goulburn. Helen looking at him with her anxious eyes, felt that her father was glad of some cause for seeming angry, and caught at this justification of his own excitement. But while her mind was intent upon him, watching him with an eager anxiety and curiosity beyond words, she started to

hear herself addressed on the other side. "Is it possible that it is Miss Goulburn? Can I be mistaken? a pleasant voice said in English. She turned round quickly, and found a fair-haired and very sunburnt young man, whom she did not at first recognise, and upon whom she looked with suspicion and alarm. Her fears had been excited, she could scarcely tell how or why. Every one who knew her seemed a possible enemy. Were they not fugitives, whatever might be the cause?

"You do not remember me," said the new-comer; "which, perhaps, is not wonderful. I left Fareham four years ago, Miss Goulburn; but I think I cannot be mistaken in you. You were only a child then; and now!—but still I think it is you: and perhaps you will remember my name—Charley Ashton? I went to India——"

"Yes, I recollect. Are you going

home now to — to Fareham?" Helen said, with fright in her eyes.

"That we should meet here of all places in the world! Yes, I am on my way home; and there is all about the cathedral in Murray, and besides, there is a bit of engineering I wanted to see, and I had a day to spare,—what a lucky chance for me! You, I suppose, are making the grand tour, as it used to be called. Travelling, like necessity, makes one acquainted with strange quarters. This is not much like Fareham, is it?" he said, with a laugh. That careless, happy laugh, without thought of evil! Helen looked at, admiring it as an old man might have done.

"No; we are only here—for a little while."

She knew by instinct that this would be their last night at Sainte-Barbe, and that she must not encourage any renewal

of acquaintance. The young man gazed at her with such a look of kindly inquiry, almost tender in the sympathy that mingled with it, that Helen felt the tears come to her eyes. He divined that there was something to be sorry for, and he was ready to be sorry and to sympathise, whatever the trouble might be—though the troubles, he said to himself with a smile, of the rich man's daughter were not likely to be very hard to bear.

"That is like my luck," he said; "unless you are going back to England, which would be the best of all. Then I should ask leave to follow in your wake. There is no one now to care much when I get home; a day or two sooner or later doesn't matter. My mother is not there now to mind. And to tell the truth, Miss Goulburn," said young Ashton, "I am just as glad to put off the first plunge. Poor

old father! I daresay he'll be glad to see me; but to find *her* not only gone, but with another in her place!"

"Poor Mr Ashton was so lonely," said Helen, coming out of her own troubles for one moment, "and Miss Temple is so kind: it does you good to speak to her. She never meant any harm. She was so sorry for him—do not be angry with Miss Temple. I think I love her," the girl said, the tears slowly gathering in her eyes, "better—oh yes, a great deal better than any one—than any other woman in the world."

"Do you?" he said, touched by the sight. Charley Ashton did not know how many other troubles in poor Helen's heart found grateful outlet in those tears. They dropped upon her dress and frightened her lest any one else should see them, but the young man was altogether

melted by Helen's emotion. "That shall be my best reason for loving—at least for liking her too," he said. "Thank you for showing me how much you care for her. What a lucky inspiration I had to come to Sainte-Barbe! I had been just thinking of you, wondering if you would be much changed — if, perhaps, I should find you at Fareham."

"I think I am very much changed," she said, sadly shaking her head—while he looked at her, smiling, with a look of subdued yet tender admiration. He did not venture to look all he felt, yet he could not keep it from appearing.

"Yes, I think you are changed," he said, with a confused laugh. She was thinking of the last week, he of the last five years. He had admired her then as a child—for Helen had been tall and precocious. Now he could not tell her

how much more he admired her as a woman, and Helen was too sadly preoccupied to interpret justly the lingering glance that dwelt upon her. She had never had any lover, nor was she at all aware that the vicar's son had any special recollection of her; that he should recognise her at all, filled her with surprise. But at the same time the sense of something sympathetic by her side, of some one who was young like herself, and English, and looked kindly at her, gave the girl a sense of consolation. He laughed, but certainly he meant nothing unkind. The moment after, young Ashton gave Helen, all unawares, a sudden blow which forced her back upon herself. He said with a little eagerness, but calmly, as if it were the most ordinary question in the world, "Do you go back soon to Fareham? I have come home on sick leave.

I shall have only a little while at home. I hope I shall see you while I am there."

"Oh! said Helen, trembling all over with the shock, "I do not know—papa has never told me. Perhaps—we may not be back for a long time; perhaps —not at all. I don't know."

"Not back at all! Has Mr Goulburn sold it?" young Ashton said, and his changed countenance grew long. He was as much disappointed as she was startled; and for a moment both looked, though from very different reasons, as though not at all indisposed to mingle their tears.

"I don't know," said Helen. She looked away from him, her voice shook, —there was trouble indescribable in her face. And he remembered that he had been gone for four years; that he had not heard very much about them for some time

back; that many changes might happen, especially in the fortunes of a man in business, however great he might be, and apparently beyond the assaults of fortune. What could young Ashton say or do to show his sympathy? He did not even know how far he might inquire.

"I beg your pardon," he said. Helen looked up at him timidly, and gave him a little nod of assent, and a faint smile. She granted him his pardon freely. She thanked him for the feeling in his face, but she said nothing more. The secret was not hers, and she did not even know what the secret was. Meanwhile her father had begun to see what was going on. He had looked furtively from the corner of his eyes at the stranger, and had ended by remembering who he was; and he did not know what young Ashton knew, where he

had come from, what he might be doing there. When he saw that Helen was fully engaged in conversation, he got up softly and walked away. The sight of a face he had once known made his heart beat wildly, and filled him with a sickening sensation. He went out by a door behind, so as never to come within the stranger's range of vision. What did he want here? and what would the girl tell him? Would she have the sense to hold her tongue? though, indeed, the very sight of her would be enough if young Ashton knew. He began, without a moment's delay, to put back his clothes into his portmanteau, and prepare again for flight. Who would have thought that such a thing could happen here? Had the danger been greater, he would have understood. For the sudden appearance of pursuers in search of him, he was always pre-

pared, but not for the ludicrous simplicity of a peril like this; a neighbour's son! What evil genius had brought him here? It seemed a very long time before Helen came up-stairs. It had relieved her to see her father disappear, and she had yielded to the pleasure of talking to her contemporary, her old friend (as she thought). But after all, in about ten minutes she had held out her hand to him timidly, rising up as she did so, to go away. "But I shall see you to-morrow?" he said. She only smiled faintly and said, "Perhaps," but even as she said so shook her head. In her heart she felt certain that they would leave Sainte-Barbe that night.

And so they did. In France all the great trains go by night; there was one very late which called at Sainte-Barbe, on the way to Paris. The clatter and clang of the omnibus which met this train

disturbed the whole town at midnight so much, that M. le Maire had set every kind of machinery in motion to have it discontinued; but as the convenience of the two extremities of the railway, Marseilles and Paris, forbade this, the authorities paid no attention to the protest of Sainte-Barbe. The few guests in the Lion d'Or felt a double grievance this night, in that the omnibus, after making its usual noisy circuit from the stables, waited, pawing and champing for five minutes, under the *porte cochère*, having baggage placed upon it, and carrying away travellers at that hour. Who could they be? Oh, *les Anglais:* that went without saying. Certainly *les Anglais;* they were the sort of people who would do such a thing simply because it was unlike the rest of the world—though it was the action of a fiend, the landlady exclaimed afterwards, to take such an

infant from her rest at such an hour. Young Ashton was still astir, smoking his cigar out of the window with a quite unnecessary regard for the feelings of his hosts, when the omnibus turned out of the great doorway. He thought he saw a pale face look up at his window in the uncertain glimmer of the moon, which was dim with flying clouds, and he let his cigar drop on the head of an ostler below in consternation. Could it be that they had gone away? "Gone away, because I am here!" this young man said to himself. But it seemed a thing too impossible to be true.

CHAPTER V.

It was scarcely daylight of the ruddy but chill October morning, when the travellers set out from the station at which they had been dropped. They had been left there to wait for the diligence, which only left on the arrival of another train from Paris. All had been black and silent at the little station of Montdard, when they were shot out, to the dismay of two or three half-awakened officials, who regarded them with alarm and suspicion. It was very rarely indeed that any one arrived in the middle of the night at Montdard, except from Paris, the train from which did not come in till five o'clock. What were

they to do in the meantime? Mr Goulburn had got little Janey in his arms fast asleep. With her dangling feet, and her pale little head thrown back on his shoulder, she looked more like a sick young woman, long and wasted, than a child. Helen followed closely as a shadow, asking no questions, following every indication of her father's will, silent and watchful, cold and miserable. The gloom around and the suspicious looks of the railway men, and the cold that went to her heart, all began to be familiar. It did not even occur to her to think of the existence which had ended about ten days ago, the life of warmth and luxury and softness, which knew no disturbance, which was waited upon by assiduous servants, and spent in such careful guardianship. She thought of it no more. What she wished for was not her draped and curtained room at Fareham, with its

carpets in which the feet sank, but a comfortable bench somewhere, or rush-bottomed chair in a corner out of the wind, where she could get her ulster more closely about her, and put a shawl over Janey's feet; or, as the very climax of comfort, another white-curtained wooden room with two little beds, where she could lie down with Janey next to her. Helen in her heart had bidden farewell to Fareham for ever and ever. She did not know even where they were going; and it gave her a gleam of comfort to hear her father explain to the sleepy yet vigilant porter in his blouse, that he was going to Latour, where there was to be a sale of the woods on the property of the late Count Bernard de Vieux-bois. Mr Goulburn explained that he had heard of this only at the last moment, and that, as he had no time to lose, he had been obliged to bring his daughters with him,

though the journey was so fatiguing for the little one. The French heart is very open to children, and the man with the blouse managed to open the door of a dismal *salle*, where at least *la petite* would be sheltered from the cold wind. How kind they are to Janey! Helen thought. The rough peasant-porter with his bristly beard, a man who might have figured in a revolutionary riot, and probably had done so, one time or another, caressed a floating lock of her fair hair which fell from her father's shoulder with his rough hand, with the softest look of reverence and pity. "*Pauvre petite!*"—he brought an old braided overcoat, fine, but faded, from an inner room to lay on her feet—"It would have been better to leave her *à la maison*," he said. *À la maison!* People who know no better, say the French have no word that means home; but Helen felt this word go through and

through her like a sword. Where was the house to which Janey belonged, where she could find her little bed and her little corner by right? As for Mr Goulburn, he put himself on the bench against the wall in the most painfully constrained attitude to make Janey comfortable. His face, as he looked down upon the child, was lighted up with the most trembling tenderness. He had wronged many people and deprived many children of bread, but he loved his own with a passionate devotion. He could not separate himself from his child. Helen, so watchful beside him, saw it all with an ache of wonder in her heart. She did not understand, perhaps, that clinging of a guilty man to the one thing innocent and sweet in his life. She was sorry for her poor little sister thus dragged about the world, and perhaps a little sorry for herself. If it was necessary for him to fly from one

place to another, why should little Janey be made to fly too? And Helen turned her thoughts back upon the Lion d'Or with unspeakable regret. It was not an attractive place, but still it was shelter and safety. What thoughts were going on in her father's mind, who could say? There were other places of refuge which would have been safer than France, but he had little time to choose. It was not much more than chance which had determined the route they took in leaving England, and he had remembered Sainte-Barbe as the most unfrequented place he had ever seen. But the village which he had chosen must surely be out of the world if ever village was. Among the hills of Burgundy, above the vineyards, beyond the reach of commerce, in the country where the old Gauls fought, and where even the Prussians had not penetrated — what could be more safe?

and yet who could guarantee its safety? "We should have been better in Spain," he was saying to himself.

The diligence started at five o'clock for Latour. It was speedily filled, in the little interior, with five or six young peasant-women in their white caps, each with a baby, little foundlings, or the children of poor shopkeepers and workpeople in Paris, brought to the country to be reared —the healthy hills of *la Haute Bourgogne* being much approved for that purpose. The travellers managed with great difficulty to get possession for themselves of the *banquette*, a covered seat like a sort of phaeton, with leathern curtains capable of closing in front, which occupies the place behind the coachman in these rural vehicles. They had ten long leagues to traverse before they got to their journey's end. Poor little Janey, very pale and shivering, lost for the first time her child-

ish adaptability, and whimpered pitifully, with cold feet, and the wretchedness of her disturbed rest; and a more melancholy and jaded party never confronted the morning mists. They rattled along as in a dream, seeing the country gradually unfold itself, now just visible in the faint grey of the dawn, anon developing into clearer light, the hills rising black against the yellow east, then showing their grass slopes and broken bits of cliff as the sun struck here and there a long golden dart driving away the shadows. A crisp sprinkling of hoar-frost was upon the fields, and the roads were hard, and resounded under the horses' feet, which made sound enough, with all the jingling of the rude harness, and all the creaking of the springless coach, for a whole cavalcade. In front of the *banquette*, beside the coachman, sat a large priest and a man wrapped in

the thick blue overcoat with its braided collar which the French peasant loves. The talk of these two was all of the old Count de Vieux-bois's woods. The hills between which the road passed were entirely bare of trees, and Count Bernard had been the subject of much pleasantry, the priest said, when he planted his lands with an unprofitable crop of forest. But time had proved Count Bernard to be right. These voices went on dreamily in Helen's ear, making a sort of drowsy song to the accompaniment of the wheels and the horses' hoofs. But Mr Goulburn listened closely to all the heavy talk. The impulse of trade was strong in him, and the idea of turning over money now in his present downfall and fugitive condition roused him. He had seized upon the pretext, catching it up at the moment of necessity from an advertisement in one of the papers, to give

an excuse for his hurried journey. But the idea pleased him the more he dwelt upon it. He listened with the greatest attention to all that was being said; he recovered the activity and energy of mind that was natural to him. To outwit fate in such a way would be in itself a kind of triumph. He did not disturb little Janey's head, which lay on his shoulder, but he withdrew his arm from her as his thoughts quickened. A man of business is always a man of business, however direful may be the plight in which he finds himself. Pale, uncared for, haggard as he looked in the morning light, his bosom's lord sat more lightly upon its throne than it had done since he left England. So far even as appearances went, there was this good in Mr Goulburn's false decorations of hair, that they did not grow in the night.

They passed through a number of

villages, changing horses with much noise and clangour here and there—a proceeding which cheered up Janey almost as much as the thoughts of a bargain did her father; and through one quaint and wonderful town, all walled and embattled, where the lanterns still hung across the streets as in the days when aristocrats were hanged by that easy method of getting rid of an undesirable intruder; and by dreary old *châteaux*, grey and homely, without any softening of trees or park to link them to the surrounding country. By-and-by, after a long, long waste of road, they came upon the masses of trees which had hung upon the horizon like clouds, and which showed where Count Vieux-bois's estates began. Beautiful feathery larches, big pines, and sturdy oaks clothed the slopes, and changed the whole character of the country. And after a while the diligence rattled into a

long village street with a church at one end and a quaint old castle at the other, more imposing than anything they had yet seen. The street was irregular, now broad, now narrow, widening out in the centre into a kind of place or square, in which there were two or three white houses, several storeys high, with green *persiennes* half closed. The rest of the place consisted of cottages, mostly thatched and humble, with a little post-office, and a cavernous shop in which were all kinds of possible and impossible goods. The "general merchant" of France is different from him of England, just as *sabots* and blouses are different from country-made shoes and fustian coats. And at Latour the *sabots* and the blouses were universal. M. le Curé himself wore a pair over his shoes in bad weather, leaving them at the door of every house he visited. The diligence stopped with a jarring shock

and noise, suddenly drawn up before the humble door of another Lion d'Or, a popular sign in the district. But this one was little more than an *auberge*, a village public-house, with its description posted up in straggling letters, *ICI on loge à Pied et à CHEVAL.* There was no *porte cochère*, no courtyard to mark the importance of the hotel, but only a *salle à manger* looking out upon the pavement, low-roofed and dark, and smelling as usual, but worse than usual, of bad cigars and the *pot au feu.*

There were several men seated at the long table eating their breakfast when Helen and little Janey followed their father into the room; one or two others who had finished their meal were smoking their cigars—they were all talking in high voices, harsh to unaccustomed ears. The farther end, the only unoccupied place, was far from the window, and in

a kind of twilight. Little Janey grasped her father's hand tight till the little soft fingers almost hurt him. "Oh, take me away," she cried, "take me away! I won't do there. Take me home, papa—take me to my own home."

He took her in his arms and carried her to the quiet corner. "My little pet," he said, "I wish I could; but it's a long, long way off, Janey. You must try and be contented here."

"Oh, papa," said the child, "I want to do home! I want to do home! I don't like it here. I don't like—nothing at all but—home."

"Janey, Janey!—speak to her, Helen. You will like it better after: the people are always very kind to you. And you are tired, my little love. You will like it better when you know——"

"I want to do home!" cried Janey; but the sudden odour of the soup put

under her nose wrought a revolution in her mind. "And I am so hungry," she said, her tears drying up. She raised her head from her father's shoulder where she had been past all consolation the moment before—and slid down from his knee. Ah! why is six so much more easy to console than eighteen? or eighteen than fifty? might be said in other circumstances. But in the present case the father and the little child had both regained their spirits, and it was only Helen whose heart lay like a lump of lead in her breast.

That evening Mr Goulburn called her into the small room which he was to occupy, with an air of some embarrassment. There had been no sitting-room possible at Sainte-Barbe, yet it was practicable to occupy a corner in the *salle à manger*, when all was quiet there. But in the Lion d'Or at Latour it was never

quiet. In the evening the villagers came in to consume slowly their sour *piquette*, or bitter *chope*, and fill the place with clouds of smoke; and the two crowded yet scantily furnished bedrooms, in which the strangers were lodged, were the only places in which they could talk. Mr Goulburn called Helen into his room. He was embarrassed, and did not know how to begin. Helen's look of inquiry seemed to paralyse him. He stammered and hesitated and cleared his throat. At length he said, with the rapidity of one who is anxious to get over a painful operation, "I wanted to speak to you, Helen. There is one little matter: unnecessary to enter into my reasons for it. While we are here, I mean to call myself by my mother's name, Harford, instead of Goulburn."

"Papa!" her pale countenance was suffused with the most violent colour.

Pale, worn out, and weary as her looks had been a moment since, she was of the colour of passion now.

"I mean what I say," he said sharply, his own disguised face catching fire at hers. There was a touch of shame in his anger, yet his eyes blazed into a sudden burst of fury, which again was partly put on to hide the shame. "I do not see that I need enter into all my reasons to you. I am satisfied that it is expedient, or I would not do it; and that ought to be enough for my child."

"It is not enough, it is not enough, papa," said Helen. "I cannot call myself out of my name."

"Then you will do what you please," he said; "but I shall employ the name I have told you; you can do what you please: but in that case you shall not be owned as a daughter of mine."

The world seemed to go round and round with Helen,—the poor little world so bare and poverty-stricken, the walls with their blue and white striped paper, the bare boards and white-curtained windows. She looked at him piteously, seeing his face blurred and magnified through the two tears of pain and passion in her eyes. "Why is it?" she said with a pathetic appeal; "oh, tell me why it is! If I knew why, perhaps I could bear it better. Oh, papa, tell me why!"

His first impulse was to silence her imperiously and send her away, but a better inspiration followed. "Did you never hear of men in business who were ruined, Helen? Did you never read of destruction coming in a single day? I was a rich man a fortnight since, and never dreamt that such a calamity—was possible. It came upon me all at once. Misfortune of the most complete kind—

ruin. I had nothing for it but to take you and the child and hurry away."

"Oh, is that all, papa? are you sure that is all? Not—what they were speaking of last night?—not—oh, forgive me! —I did not understand; only the loss of your money—no more that that, papa?

A painful contraction, almost a grimace, went over his face. The rage which he had partially assumed before was now real, but he did not show it. He clenched his fist at her, but kept it in his pocket, and put on a smile which looked something between a grin and a snarl. "Most people would think it was quite enough —and more than enough. Now you know my secret. I did not want—to make you unhappy," he said.

"Oh, unhappy! it is the contrary; if you knew how happy you have made me!" said Helen, with the first real smile that had visited them for days in her wet

eyes. "You have taken off the weight *here*—oh, it is all gone, and I can breathe. You have lost your money, poor papa! I am so sorry, and yet I can't help being glad. After all, what does it matter? We have enough, and we are together. Oh, if you knew the things that have been going through my wicked, wretched heart! Papa, will you forgive me?" the girl cried, growing pale and clasping her hands. "Oh, I ought to ask your pardon on my knees!"

"We will dispense with that formula," said her father, with a chilly smile which froze her fervour; "perhaps this will teach you to refrain from hasty judgment. There can scarcely be a case, let me entreat you to believe, in which I shall not be the best judge of us two."

"Yes, papa," she said submissively: then added with a timid look, "but would it not have been better to have stayed and

met it in the face, whatever it was? To be unfortunate is not any harm. What could ruin do to us, but to make us poor? Papa——"

A sharp laugh from him cut her short; he could have struck her as he struck Janey when she found out his disguise, but he did not dare to treat the elder sister so, and she was more easily managed in the other way. "It seems to me," he said, "that you are doing precisely what you have just promised not to do. We have agreed that I am the best judge, and the judge I mean to be, in my own concerns. Therefore go to bed, and recollect that to-morrow you are Miss Harford — and know nothing about that other name."

She shrank a little away, looking at him with piteous eyes. "Yes, papa," she said; "but——" and stood looking with a beseeching, tender entreaty. She

clasped her hands, but she did not say anything, though every moving line of her face, the glimmer of moisture in her eyes, the quiver in her lips, all spoke. In his impatience he stamped his foot on the floor.

"By Jove! you will drive me mad," he cried, "with your fancies and your hesitations. Do what I tell you—hold your tongue, if you are so scrupulous about an innocent social pretence. What does it matter to those French clowns what name I call myself by? Will they be any the wiser? And I hold that a man has as much right to his mother's name as his father's. It is the same thing. There, Helen, I forgive your nonsense, because you are tired out, poor child! Go to bed."

"Yes, papa," she said, but still she did not budge. All this time the voices

and noises were going on below, sounds of disputation, quick fire of talk, more vivacious and louder in tone than anything English; outside and in, there were sounds of conversation going on. All this babel of sound continued while these two quiet English persons had their explanation, which meant so much; the rest meant nothing. When Helen thought of it after, she always remembered the discussion in the *salle à manger*, and the clatter of words which Jeannette on the top storey flung down to her mistress below-stairs.

But as for herself she had said her say. Her father bade her good night in a peremptory tone, dismissing her beyond appeal. But he was very kind, and kissed her, though she was conscious of a thrill and tremor about him when he did so, which she could not understand to be

suppressed rage. But as it was, Helen retired with a weight gone from her heart, as she said—yet not such a complete relief as she had felt at the first moment. Only ruin, only poverty! these were nothing. But then—people were sorry for men who had lost all their money, nobody was cruel to them, or thought it their fault; it was nothing to be ashamed of; the best people in the world (she reflected) have been poor; therefore why, *why* had he fled from home? Why had he not faced the worst? Better even, Helen thought, to have endured a little vexation, to have given up everything, than to have become fugitives, and worn disguises, and feared a friendly face, and changed their name. The weight came back as these strange details recurred to her mind. That false beard! would any deprivation, any scorn

of cruel creditors, any misfortune have been so bad, so debasing, so shameful as *that?* And why should Charley Ashton's honest face have so appalled him? Ah! Charley Ashton could meet the gaze of all the world and never flinch; he would not disguise himself, nor hide himself, whatever might be the danger. Helen tried to represent to herself that she was not the judge, as he had said—that her father must know best; but there is nothing so difficult to believe as this, especially when reason seems all on our side.

The pain was gnawing again when she lay down by Janey's side. Poverty: but we are not poor! Helen said to herself, almost leaping up in her bed. They had spent a great deal of money and spared nothing; indeed there had never been any attempt to spare anything. It was not an art they understood. But, happily,

sleep began to steal upon her young eyes, even in the midst of her agitation. The night before had been one long vigil; she could not be kept awake, even by the misery of these thoughts.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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