

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND.

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## VERY HARD CASH.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "IT IS NEVER TOO LATE TO MEND."

### CHAPTER XLIX.

JULIA, as I have said, went to her own room, wounded unintentionally by a chance speech: she sat down sick at heart; and presently opened her window and looked out upon the starry night, and wondered where Alfred was now; that Alfred for whom nobody else had a human heart, it seemed. "Alfred! my poor Alfred!" she sighed, and half-expected to hear him reply. Then she said to herself, "They all called you false but me; yet I was right: and now they all call you mad; but not I: I believe nothing against you. You are my own Alfred still. Where have the wretches driven you to?" At this her feelings carried her away, and she cried aloud on him despairingly, and leaned upon the window-sill, and the tears ran fast for him.

Presently out of the silence of the night seemed to struggle a faint but clear voice:

"Julia!"

She started, and a muffled scream came from her. Then she listened, all trembling. Again the voice sighed, faintly but clear, "Julia!"

"Alfred?" said she, quavering.

"Yes. Pray be cautious; give no alarm. The house is watched; bring Edward."

She flew down stairs, and electrified Edward and Sampson with the news. "Oh, promise me not to betray him!" she cried.

"Hut!" said the doctor, starting to his feet, "what should we betray him for? I'll cure him for you. I can cure any lunatic that has lucid intervals. Where is he?"

"Follow me," gasped Julia. "Stay. I'll get rid of the servants first. I'll not play the fool, and betray him to his enemies." She sent Sarah eastward, and Jane westward, and then led the way through the kitchen door into the yard.

They all searched about, and found nothing. Then Julia begged them to be silent. She whispered, "Alfred!" And instantly a faint voice issued from the top of a waggon laden with hay and covered with a tarpaulin. "Julia!"

They all stood staring.

"Who are those with you?" asked Alfred uneasily.

"Only friends, dear! Edward and Dr. Sampson."

"Ned, old fellow," groaned Alfred, "you pulled me out of the fire; won't you help me out of this? I think my leg is broken."

At this Julia wrung her hands, and Edward ran into the house for his rope, and threw it over the waggon. He told Julia and Sampson to hold on by one end, and seizing the other, was up on the waggon in a moment. He felt about till he came to a protuberance; and that was Alfred under the tarpaulin, in which he had cut breathing-holes with his penknife. Edward sent Julia in for a carving-knife, and soon made an enormous slit: through this a well-known figure emerged into the moonlight, and seemed wonderfully tall to have been so hidden. His hands being uninjured, he easily descended the rope, and stood on one leg holding it. Then Sampson and Edward put each an arm under his, and helped him into the house.

After the body the mind. That is the rule throughout creation. They examined, not his reason, but his leg. Julia stood by with clasped hands, and a face beaming with pity and anxiety, that repaid his pain. Sampson announced there were no bones broken, but a bad sprain, and the limb very red and swollen. "Now," inquired he briskly of the company, "what is the practice in sprains? Why, leeches and cold water."

Edward offered at once to run and get them.

"Are ye mad?" was the reply. "Daun't I tell ye that is the *practice*? And isn't the practice sure to be th' opposite of the remedy? So get water as hot as he can bear it, and no leeches."

Julia remonstrated angrily. "Is this a case for jesting?"

"Deevil a jest in it," replied the doctor. "Well then, if ye must know, th' opera-dancers apply hot water to sprains: now what is their interest? t' expedite the cure: and the faculty apply cold water: and what is their interest? to procrastinate the cure, and make a long job of it. So just hold your tongues, and ring for hot water."

Julia did not ring; she beckoned Edward, and they flew out and soon brought a foot-pan of hot water. Edward then removed Alfred's shoes and stockings, and Julia bared her lovely arms, and blushed like a rose.

Alfred divined her intention. "Dear Julia," he said, "I won't let you: that is too high an honour. Sarah can do that."

But Julia's blood was up. "Sarah?" said she, contemptuously; "she is too heavy handed:"

and—hold your tongue; I don't take my orders from you; then more humbly to the doctor, "I am a district visitor: I nurse all manner of strangers, and he says I must leave his poor suffering leg to the servants."

"Unnatural young monster," said the doctor, affecting horror. "G'im a good nip."

Julia followed this advice by handling Alfred's swollen ankle with a tenderness so exquisite, and pressing it with the full sponge so softly, that her divine touch soothed him as much or more than the water. After nursing him into the skies a minute or two, she looked up blushing in his face, and said coaxingly, "Are you mad, dear Alfred? Don't be afraid to tell us the truth! The madder you are, the more you need me to take care of you, you know."

Alfred smiled at this sapient discourse, and said he was not the least mad, and hoped to take care of her as soon as his ankle was well enough. This closed that sweet mouth of hers exceeding tight, and her face was seen no more for a while, but hid by bending earnestly over her work; only as her creamy poll turned pink, the colour of that hidden face was not hard to divine.

Then Edward asked Alfred how in the world he had escaped, and got into that waggon. The thing was incredible. "Mirawculous," said Dr. Sampson in assent.

"No," said Alfred, "it looks stranger to you than it is. The moment I found my pistol was gone I determined to run. I looked down and saw a spout with a great ornamental mouth, almost big enough to sit on; and, while I was looking greedily at it, three horses came into the yard drawing a load of hay. The waggoner was busy clearing the pavement with his wheel, and the waggon almost stopped a moment right under me. There was a lot of loose hay on the top. I let myself down, and hung by the spout a moment, and then leaped on to the loose hay. Unfortunately there were the hard trusses beneath it, and so I got my sprain. Oh, I say, didn't it hurt? However, I crept under the hay and hid myself, and saw Wolf's men come into the yard. By-and-by a few drops of rain fell, and some fellows chucked down a tarpaulin from the loft, and nearly smothered me: so I cut a few air-holes with my penknife. And there I lay, Heaven knows how long: it seemed two days. At last I saw an angel at a window; I called her by the name she bears on earth: to my joy she answered, and here I am, as happy as a prince among you all, and devilish hungry."

"What a muff I was not to think of that," said Edward, and made for the larder.

"Dear doctor," said Julia, lifting a Madonna-like face with swimming eyes, "I see no change in him: he is very brave, and daring, and saucy. But so he always was. To be sure he says extravagant things, and stares one out of countenance with his eyes: well and so he always did—ever since I knew him."

"Mayn't I even *look* my gratitude?" whined Alfred.

"Yes, but you need not stare it."

"It's your own fault, Miss Julee," said Sampson. "While ye're fomenting his sprain the creature's fomenting his own insensate passion. Break every bone in a puppy's body, and it's a puppy still; and it doesn't do to spoil puppies: as ye're spoiling this one. Nlist me, ye vagabin. Take your eyes off the lady; and look me in the face—if ye can; and tell me how you came to leave us all in the lurch on your wedding morn."

Julia fired up. "It was not his fault, poor thing: he was decoyed away after that miserable money. Ah, you may laugh at me for hating money; but have I not good reason to hate it?"

"Whist, whist, y' impetuous cracter; and let him tell his own tale."

Alfred thus invited, delivered one of his calm, luminous statements; which had hitherto been listened to so coldly by one official after another. But the effect was mighty different, falling now on folk not paid to pity. As for Dr. Sampson, he bounced up very early in the narrative, and went striding up and down the room; he was pale with indignation; and his voice trembled with emotion, and every now and then he broke in on the well-governed narrative with oaths and curses, and observations of this kind: "Why dinnt ye kill um? I'd have killed um. I'd just have taken the first knife and killed um. Man, our Liberty is our Life. Dith to whoever attacks it!"

And so Edward, coming in with Alfred's dinner on a tray, found the soi-disant maniac delivering his wrongs with the lofty serenity of an ancient philosopher discussing the wrongs of another, Julia crying furtively into the tub, and the good physician trampling and raving about the room, like what the stoical narrator was accused of being. Edward stopped and looked at them all over the tray. "Well," said he, "if there's a madman in the room, it is not Hardie. Ahem."

"Madman? ye young ijjit," roared the doctor, "he is no madder than I am."

"Heaven forbid," said Alfred drily.

"No madder than *you* are, ye young Pump." This to Edward. "That's an ungenerous skit on his profession," said the maniac.

"Be quite now, chattering," said the excited doctor; "I tell ye ye niver were mad, and niver will be. It's just the most heartless imposture, the most rascally fraud I've ever caught the Mad Ox out in. I'll expose it. Gimme pinkpapr. Man, they'll take y' again if we don't mind. But I'll stop that: these inequities can only be done in the dark. I'll shed the light of day on 'em. Eat your dinner, and hold your tongue a minute—if ye can." The doctor had always a high sense of Alfred's volubility.

He went to work, and soon produced a letter headed "PRIVATE MADHOUSES." In this he related pithily Alfred's incarceration, and the present attempt to recapture him, with the particulars of his escape. "That will interest th' enemy," said he drily. He vouched for

Alfred's sanity at both dates, and pledged himself to swear to it in a court of law. He then inquired what it availed to have sent one king to Phalaris and another to Versailles in defence of our Liberty, since after all that Liberty lies grovelling at the mercy of Dr. Pill-box, and Mr. Sawbones, and a single designing relative? Then he drew a strong picture of this free-born British citizen skulking and hiding at this moment from a gang of rogues and conspirators, who, in France and other civilised countries that brag less of liberty than we do, would be themselves flying as criminals from the officers of justice; and he wound up with a warm appeal to the press to cast its shield over the victim of bad laws and foul practices. "In England," said he, "Justice is the daughter of Publicity. Throughout the world deeds of villany are done every day in kid gloves: but, with us, at all events, they have to be done on the sly: here lies our true moral eminence as a nation. Utter then your 'fiat lux;' cast the full light of publicity on this dark villany, and behold it will wither, and your oppressed and injured fellow-citizen be safe from that very hour."

He signed it and read it out to them, or rather roared it. But he had written it so well he could not make it bad by delivery. Indeed, he was a masterly writer of English you must know. Julia was delighted; but Alfred shook his head. "The editor will not put it in."

"Th' editor! D'ye think I'm so green as to trust t' any one editor? D'ye think I have lived all these years and not learned what poor cowardly things men are? Moral courage! where can you find it? Except in the dickshinary? Few to the world their honest thoughts avow; the groveller, policy, robs justice now,

And none but Sampson dares to lift a hand  
Against the curst corruption of the land.

Now, lad, I'm off to my printer with this. They are working night and day just now: there will be two hundred copies printed in half an hour."

"And me, doctor!" said Julia. "Am poor I to have no hand in it? How cruel of you. Oh pray, pray, pray let me help a little."

"Put on your bonnet, then, this minute," said he: "in war never lose a minute."

"But I am so afraid they may be lying in wait for him outside."

"Then we'll give them a good hiding: there are three of us; all good men and staunch," said the indomitable doctor.

"No, no," said the pugnacious Alfred. "Julia does not like fighting: I heard her screaming all the time I was defending myself on the stairs: let us be prudent: let us throw dust in their eyes. Put me on a bonnet and cloak."

"And a nice little woman you'll make, ye fathom."

"Oh, I can stoop—to conquer."

Julia welcomed this plan almost with glee, and she and Edward very soon made a handsome, brazen-looking trollop six feet high. Then it had

to stoop, and Edward and Julia helped it out to the carriage, under the very noses of a policeman and a keeper, who were watching for Alfred: seeing which—oh frailty of woman!—the district visitor addressed it aloud as her aunt, and begged it to take care: which she afterwards observed was acting a falsehood, and "where was her Christianity?"

Alfred was actually not recognised: the carriage bowled away to the great printing-house; it was on that side the water. The foreman entered into the thing with spirit, and divided the copy, small as it was, among two or three compositors: so a rough proof was ready in an incredibly short time: the doctor corrected it; and soon they began to work off the copies. The foreman found them Mitchell's newspaper list, and envelopes by the hundred, and while the copies were pouring in, all hands were folding and addressing them to the London and provincial editors. The office lent the stamps. The doctor drove Alfred to his own lodgings, and forbade him to reappear in Pembroke-street until the letter should come out in the London journals.

That night the letters were all posted, and at daybreak were flying north, south, east, and west. In the afternoon the letter came out in four London evening papers, and the next morning the metropolis and the whole kingdom were ringing with them, and the full blaze of publicity burst upon this dark deed.

Ay, stout Sampson, well you knew mankind, and well you knew the nation you lived in. Richard Hardie, in the very act of setting detectives to find Alfred's lurking-place, ran his nose against this letter in the Globe. He collapsed at the sight of it; and wrote directly to Dr. Wolf enclosing it, and saying that it would be unadvisable to make any fresh attempt. His letter was crossed by one from Dr. Wolf, containing Sampson's thunderbolt extracted from the Sun, and saying that no earthly consideration should induce him to meddle with Alfred *now*. Richard Hardie flung himself into the train, and went down to his brother at Clare Court.

He was ill at ease. He felt like some great general, who has launched many attacks against the foe, very successful at first, then less successful, then repulsed with difficulty, then repulsed with ease, till at last the foe stands before him impregnable. Then he feels that ere long that iron enemy will attack him in turn, and that he, exhausted by his own onslaughts, must defend himself how he can. Yet there was a pause; he passed a whole quiet peaceful day with his brother, assuring him that the affair would go no further on either side; but in his secret soul he felt this quiet day was but the ominous pause between two great battles; one of the father against the son, the other of the son against the father.

And he was right: the very next day the late defender attacked, and in earnest. But for certain reasons I prefer to let another relate it:

*Hardie v. Hardie.*

"Dear Sir,—If you had been in my office when I received your favour of yesterday relating deft.'s ruffian-like assault, you would have seen the most ridiculous sight in nature—vide licet, an attorney in a passion. I threw professional courtesy to the winds, and sent Colls off to Clare Court to serve the writ personally. Next day, he found the deft. walking in his garden with Mr. Richard Hardie. Having learned from the servant which was his man, he stepped up and served copy of the writ in the usual way. Deft. turned pale, and his knees knocked together, and Colls thinks he mistook himself for a felon, and was going to ask for mercy, but Mr. Richard stopped him, and said his attorney was Messrs. Heathfield, in Chancery-lane; and was this the way Mr. Compton did business? serving a writ personally on a gentleman in weak health. So Colls, who can sneer in his quiet way, told him 'No,' but the invalid had declined to answer my letter, and the invalid had made a violent attack upon our client's person, avoiding his attorney, 'so, as his proceedings are summary, we meet him in kind,' says little Colls. 'Oho,' says Mr. Richard, 'you are a wit, are you? Come and have some luncheon.' This was to get him away from the weaker brother, I take it. He gave Colls an excellent luncheon, and some admirable conversation on policy and finance: and, when he was going, says this agreeable host, 'Well, Mr. —, you have had your bellyful of chicken and Madeira; and your client shall have his bellyful of law.' And this Colls considers emphatic but coarse.

"I am, yours faithfully,

"JOHN COMPTON.

"P.S.—Colls elicited that no further attempt will be made to capture you. It seems some injudicious friend of yours has been writing to the newspapers. Pray stop that."

On receiving this letter, Alfred bought another double pistol, loaded it, hired a body-guard of two prize-fighters, and with these at his heels, repaired to 66, Pembroke-street. No enemy was near: the press had swept the street alike of keepers and police with one Briarian gesture. He found Julia and Edward in great anxiety about their father. The immediate cause was a letter from Mrs. Dodd, which Edward gave him to read; but not till he had first congratulated him heartily on the ægis of the press being thrown over him. "The 'Tizer has a leader on it," said he.

Mrs. Dodd's letter ran thus:

"My dear dear Children,—I am coming home to you heartbroken, without your poor father. I saw an East Indian ship go to sea, and some instinct whispered, suppose he should be on board that ship! But, foolishly, I did not utter my thoughts: because they call these instincts women's fancies. But now even Mr. Green thinks he is gone to sea, as the town has been ransacked, and no trace of him can we find. I

met my cousin, Captain Bazalgette, here, and he is promoted to the Vulture frigate, and sails to-day. I have told him all our misfortunes, and he has promised to overhaul that merchant ship if he comes up with her: but I can see by the way his eye shuns mine he has no real hopes. His ship is the swifter, but he may pass her in the night. And then he is bound for New Zealand, not India. I told Reginald my poor husband's expression of face is altered by his affliction, and that he takes himself for a common sailor, and has his medal still round his neck. Our cousin is very kind, and will do all he can. God can protect my darling at sea, as he has ashore: and in his power alone have I any trust. Any further stay here is vain: my heart, too, yearns for my other treasures, and dreads lest whilst I am here, and because I am here, some evil should befall you too. Expect me soon after this letter, and let us try and comfort one another under this the heaviest of all our many troubles.

"With sad heart, I am,

"Both my darlings' loving mother and friend,  
"LUCY DODD."

In the discussion of this letter Alfred betrayed a slight defect of character. He pooch-pooched the calamity: said David had now a chance, and a good one, of being cured: whereas confinement was one of the common causes of insanity even in sane persons. And he stoutly maintained that David's going to sea was a happy inspiration. Edward coloured, but deigned no reply. Julia was less patient, and though she was too loving and too womanly to tell Alfred to his face he was deceiving himself and arguing thus indirectly to justify himself in taking her father out of the asylum at all, yet she saw it, and it imparted a certain coldness into her replies. Alfred noticed this, and became less confident and louder, and prodigiously logical.

He was still flowing on with high imperious voice, which I suppose overpowered the sound of Mrs. Dodd's foot, when she entered suddenly, pale and weary, in her travelling-dress.

Alfred stopped, and they all started to their feet.

At sight of Alfred she stood dumbfounded a single moment; then uttered a faint shriek; and looked at him with unutterable terror.

He stood disconcerted.

Julia ran, and throwing her arms round Mrs. Dodd's neck, entreated her not to be afraid of him: he was not mad; Dr. Sampson said so. Edward confirmed her words; and then Julia poured out the story of his wrongs with great gushes of natural eloquence that might have melted a rock, and, as anti-climax is part of a true woman, ended innocently by begging her mother not to look so unkindly at him; and his ankle so sprained, and him in such pain. For the first time in her life Mrs. Dodd was deaf to her daughter's natural eloquence; it was remarkable how little her countenance changed while Julia appealed; she stood looking askant

with horror at Alfred all through that gentle eloquent appeal. But nevertheless her conduct showed she had heard every word: as soon as ever her daughter's voice stopped she seemed to dilate bodily, and moved towards Alfred pale and lowering. Yes, for once this gentle quiet lady looked terrible. She confronted Alfred. "Is this true, sir," said she, in a low stern voice. Are you not insane? Have you *never* been bereft of your reason?"

"No, Mrs. Dodd, I have not."

"THEN WHAT HAVE YOU DONE WITH MY HUSBAND, SIR?"

#### CHAPTER L.

It was a thunderbolt. Alfred hung his head, and said humbly, "I did but go up-stairs for one moment to wash my hands for dinner; and he was gone."

Mrs. Dodd went on in her low stern voice, almost as if he had not answered her at all: "By what right did you assume the charge of him? Did I authorise you to take him from the place where he was safe, and under my eye?"

Alfred replied sullenly: "He was not very safe, for he was almost burnt to death. The fire liberated him, not I. After the fire I ran away from him: he followed me; and then what could I do? I made the best of it; and gave up my own desires to try and cure him. He longed for the sea: I tried to indulge him: I hoped to bring him back to you sane: but fate was against me. I am the most unfortunate of men."

"Mr. Hardie," said Mrs. Dodd, "what you have done was the act of a madman: and, if I believed you to be anything *but* a madman, the sight of you would be intolerable to me; for you have made me a widow, and my children orphans."

With this she gave a great shudder, and retired in tears.

Alfred rose, pale and defiant. "That is *her* notion of justice," said he bitterly; "pray is it yours, you two?"

"Well, since you ask my opinion," said Edward, "I think it was very presumptuous of you to undertake the care of my father: and, having undertaken it, you ought not to have left him a moment out of your sight."

"Oh, that is your opinion, is it? And you, dear Julia?"

Julia made no reply, but hid her face in her hands and sighed deeply.

"I see," said Alfred sorrowfully. "Even you are against me at heart. You judge by the event, not the motive. There is no justice in this world for me. I'm sick of life. I have no right to keep the mistress of the house out of her own room: there, I'll go: my heart is broken. No it is not, and never shall be, by anything that breathes. Thank Heaven I have got one friend left in this bitter world: and I'll make her the judge whether I have deserved this last injustice. I'll go to my sister."

He jumped up and hobbled slowly across the room, while Julia and Edward sat chilled to the bone by those five little words, so simple, so natural, yet so incredible, and to the hearers so awful. They started, they shuddered, they sat petrified, staring at him, while he hobbled across the room to go to his sister.

As he opened the door to go out he heard stout Edward groan and Julia utter a low wail. But of course he had no idea what it meant. He hobbled down a stair or two. But, ere he had gone far, there was a hasty whispering in the drawing-room, and Edward came after him in great agitation, and begged him to return; Julia must speak with him. He turned; and his face brightened. Edward saw that, and turned his own face away and stammered out, "Forget what I said to you. I am your friend, and always must be for *her* sake. No, no, I cannot come in there with you; I'll go and comfort mamma. Hardie, old fellow, we are very unhappy, all of us. We are too unhappy to quarrel."

These kind words soothed Alfred's sore heart. He brightened up and entered the drawing-room. He found Julia standing in the middle of it, the colour of ashes. Alfred was alarmed. "You are unwell, dearest," he cried; "you will faint. What have I done with my ungoverned temper?" He moved towards her with a face full of concern.

"No, Alfred," said she solemnly, "I am not ill. It is sorrow, deep sorrow for one I love better than all the world. Sit down beside me, my poor Alfred; and oh God help me to speak to him!"

Alfred began to feel dire misgivings.

"Yes," said she, "I love you too well to let any hand but mine wound you." And here she took his sinewy hand with her soft palm. "I want to soften it in the telling: and ah, how can I? Oh, why can I not throw myself body and soul between you and all trouble, all sorrow?"

"My Julia," said Alfred gravely, "something has happened to Jane."

"Yes, Alfred. She met with a terrible accident."

"Ah!"

"She was struck by an unfortunate man; he was not in his right mind."

"Struck? My sister struck. What, was there no man by?"

"No. Edward nearly killed the man afterwards."

"God bless him."

"Alfred, be patient. It was too late."

"What, is she hurt seriously? Is she disfigured?"

"No, Alfred," said Julia, solemnly; "she is not disfigured: oh far from that."

"Julia, you alarm me. This comes of shutting her brother up. May Heaven's eternal curse light on those who did it. My poor little sister! How you weep, Julia. My heart is lead."

"I weep for you, darling, not for her."

"Ah, that is how they talk when those we love are—One word! I shall never see my poor little Jenny again; shall I?"

"Yes, Alfred: if you will but follow her steps and believe in Him, who soothed her last hour, and made her face shine with joy like an angel's while we all wept around; oh dear, oh dear, oh dear, he *said* he had but one true friend in the world. Alas! it is so; you have but me now, who pity you and love you more than heart can utter; my own, my beloved, my bereaved."

What could soften such a shock as this? It fell, and his anguish was frightful, all the more so that he ascribed the calamity to his imprisonment, and mingled curses and threats of vengeance with his bursts of grief. He spurned the consolations of religion: he said heaven was as unjust as earth, as cruel as hell.

She cried out and stopped his mouth with her hand: she almost forced him to kneel beside her, and prayed aloud for him: and when at last his agony found vent in tears, she put her innocent arms round his neck and wept with him.

Every now and then the poor fellow would almost shriek with remorse. "Oh, if I had only been kinder to her! if I had but been kinder to her!"

"You were kind to her," said Julia, softly but firmly.

"No, no; I was always sneering at her. And why? I knew her religion was sincere: but my little mind fixed on a few phrases she had picked up from others, and I——" He could say no more, but groaned with anguish; and let his remorse be a caution to us all. Bereaved we all must be, who live on and on: but this, bereavement's bitterest drop, we may avoid.

"Alfred," said Julia, "do not torment yourself. We girls care little about a few sarcasms; it is the cold heart that wounds us. You loved Jane, and she knew it well, and joyed in it. You were kinder to her than you think, and so her dying thoughts were for you. It was for you she asked, and made your father send for you, and poor I hoped you would come. And, dearest, her last act was to write a few words to you, and trust them to her who she knew loved you better than heart can utter. Since it was her wish, let us try and read them together, the last words of a saint (I have never seen them), and, if they do not prove words of love, then I will let you think you were not a good brother to her you and I, and poor, poor Edward, have lost."

He made a sad sign of assent; and Julia rose and got the enclosure. But, as Jane's last-written words reappeared on the scene in a somewhat remarkable way, I will only say here, that both these poor young things tried in vain to read them, and both in turn burst out sobbing, so that they could not: so they held the paper, and tried to see the words out of their streaming eyes. And these two mourners had the room to themselves till midnight; for even Mrs. Dodd's hostility respected Alfred then, and as for Julia, she was one of those who rise with the occasion:

she was half wife, half angel from Heaven to her bereaved lover through all those bitter hours.

#### CHAPTER LI.

No life was ever yet a play: I mean an unbroken sequence of dramatic incidents. Calms will come; unfortunately for the readers, happily for the read. And I remember seeing it objected to novelists, by a young gentleman just putting his foot for the first time into "Criticism," that the writers aforesaid suppress the small intermediate matters which in real life come by the score between each brilliant event, and so present the ordinary and the extraordinary parts of life in false proportions. Now, if this remark had been offered by way of contrast between events themselves and all mortal attempts to reproduce them upon paper or the stage, it would have been philosophical; but it was a strange error to denounce the practice as distinctive of fiction: for it happens to be the one trait the novelist and dramatist have in common with the evangelist. The gospels skip fifteen years of the most interesting life Creation has witnessed, relating Christ's birth in full, and hurrying from his boyhood to the more stirring events of his thirtieth and subsequent years. And all the inspired histories do much the same thing. The truth is, that epics, dramas, novels, histories, chronicles, reports of trials at law, in a word, all narratives true or fictitious, except those which true or fictitious nobody reads, abridge the uninteresting facts as Nature never did, and dwell as Nature never did on the interesting ones.

Can nothing, however, be done to restore, in the reader's judgment, that just balance of "the sensational" and "the soporific," which all writers, that have readers, disturb? Nothing, I think, without his own assistance. But surely something with it. And, therefore, I throw myself on the intelligence of my readers; and ask them to realise, that henceforth pages are no measure of time, and that to a year big with strange events, on which I have therefore dilated in this story, succeeded a year in which few brilliant things happened to the personages of this tale: in short, a year to be skimmed by chronicler or novelist, and yet (mind you) a year of three hundred and sixty-five days six hours, or thereabouts, and one in which the quiet, unobtrusive troubles of our friends' hearts, especially the female hearts, their doubts, divisions, distresses, did not remit, far from it. Now this year I propose to divide into topics, and go by logical, rather than natural, sequence of events.

#### THE LOVERS.

Alfred came every day to see Julia, and Mrs. Dodd invariably left the room at his knock.

At last Julia proposed to Alfred not to come to the house for the present; but to accompany her on her rounds as district visitor. To see and soothe the bitter calamities of the poor had done

her own heart good in its worst distress, and she desired to apply the same medicine to her beloved, who needed it : that was one thing : and then another was, that she found her own anger rising when her mother left the room at that beloved knock : and to be angry with her poor widowed mother was a sin. "She is as unfortunate as I am happy," thought Julia ; "I have got *mine* back."

Alfred assented to this arrangement with rather an ill grace. He misunderstood Julia, and thought she was sacrificing him to what he called her mother's injustice. This indeed was the interpretation any man would have been pretty sure to put on it. His soreness, however, did not go very far ; because she was so kind and good to him when they were together. He used to escort her back to the door of 66 : and look imploringly ; but she never asked him in. He thought her hard for this. He did not see the tears that flowed for that mute look of his the moment the door was closed ; tears she innocently restrained for fear the sight of them should make him as unhappy as his imploring look made her. *Mauvais calcul!* She should have cried right out. When we men are unhappy, we like our sweethearts to be unhappier ; that consoles *us*.

But when this had gone on nearly a month, and no change, Alfred lost patience : so he lingered one day at the door to make a request. He asked Julia to marry him ; and so put an end to this state of things.

"Marry you, child?" cried Julia, blushing like a rose with surprise and pleasure. "Oh, for shame!"

After the first thrill, she appealed to his candour whether that would not be miserably selfish of her to leave her poor mother in her present distressed condition. "Oh, Alfred, *so* pale, so spiritless, and inconsolable! My poor, poor mother!"

"You will have to decide between us two one day."

"Heaven forbid!" said Julia, turning pale at the very idea. But he repeated doggedly that it must come to that, sooner or later. Then he reminded her of their solemn engagement, and put it to her whether it was a moral proceeding in her to go back from her plighted troth? What had he done to justify her in drawing back from her word? "I admit," said he, "that I have *suffered* plenty for your sake : but what have I done?"

Undeterred by the fear of immorality, the monotonous girl had but one reply to his multi-form reasons : "This is no time for me to abandon my mother."

"Ah, it is her you love : you don't care for me," snapped Alfred.

"Don't I, dear Alfred?" murmured Julia.

"Forgive me! I'm a ruffian, a wretch."

"You are my Alfred. But oh, have a little patience, dear!"

"A little patience? I have the patience of Job. But even his went at last."

[I ought to have said they were in the passage now. The encroaching youth had gained an entrance by agitating her so at the door that she had to ask him in to hide her own blushes from the public.] She now gently reminded him how much happier they were than they had been for months. "Dear me," said she, "I am almost happy : happier than I ought to be ; could be quite so, but that I see you discontented."

"Ah, you have so many about you that you love : I have only you."

"And that is true, my poor Alfred."

This softened him a little ; and then she interwove her fingers together, and so put both palms softly on his shoulder (you never saw a male do that, and never will), and implored him to be patient, to be generous. "Oh," said she, "if you knew the distress it gives me to refuse to you anything on earth, you would be generous, and not press me when my heart says 'Yes' but my lips *must* say 'No.'"

This melted him altogether, and he said he would not torment her any more.

But he went away discontented with himself for having yielded : my lord did not call it "yielding," but "being defeated." And as he was not only very deep in love, but by nature combative, he took a lodging nearly opposite No. 66, and made hot love to her, as hot as if the attachment was just forming. Her mother could not go out, but he was at the door directly : she could not go out but he was at her heels. This pleased her at first, and thrilled her with the sense of sweet and hot pursuit : but by-and-by, situated as she was between him and her mother, it worried her a little at times, and made her nervous. She spoke a little sharply to him now and then. And that was new. It came from the nerves not the heart. At last she advised him to go back to Oxford. "I shall be the ruin of your mind if we go on like this," said she sadly.

"What, leave the field to my rivals? No, thank you."

"What rivals, sir?" asked Julia, drawing up.

"Your mother, your brother, your curates that would come buzzing the moment I left ; your sick people, who bask on your smiles and your sweet voice till I envy them ; Sarah, whom you permit to brush your lovely hair, the piano you play on, the air you deign to breathe and brighten, everybody and everything that is near you ; they are all my rivals ; and shall I resign you to them, and leave myself desolate? I'm not such a fool."

She smiled, and could not help feeling it was sweet to be pestered. So she said with matronly dignity, and the old Julian consistency, "You are a foolish, impetuous boy. You are the plague of my life : and the sun of my existence." That passed off charmingly. But presently his evil genius prompted Alfred to endeavour to soften Mrs. Dodd by letter, and induce her to consent to his marriage with her daughter.

He received her answer at breakfast-time. It

was wonderfully polite and cold; Mrs. Dodd feigned unmixed surprise at the proposal, and said that insanity being unfortunately in her own family, and the suspicion of insanity resting on himself, such a union was not to be thought of; and therefore, notwithstanding her respect for his many good qualities, she must decline with thanks the honour he offered her. She inserted a poisoned sting by way of postscript. "When you succeed in publicly removing the impression your own relations share with me, and when my husband owes his restoration to you, instead of his destruction, of course you will receive a very different answer to your proposal—should you then think it consistent with your dignity to renew it."

As hostile testators used to leave the disinherited one shilling, not out of a shilling's worth of kindly feeling, but that he might not be able to say his name was omitted through inadvertency, so Mrs. Dodd inserted this postscript merely to clench the nail and tantalise her enemy. It was a masterpiece of feminine spite.

She would have been not a little surprised could she have seen how Alfred received her missive.

He sat in a cold stupor of dejection for a good half hour.

Then he lifted up his head, and said quietly, "I'll get the trial over, and my sanity established, as soon as possible: and then I'll hire a yacht and hunt her husband till I find him."

Having settled this little plan he looked out for Julia, whose sympathy he felt in need of after such a stern blow.

She came out much later than usual that day, for, to tell the truth, her mother had detained her to show her Alfred's letter, and her answer.

"Ah mamma," said poor Julia, "you don't love me as you did once. Poor Alfred!"

Mrs. Dodd sighed at this reproach, but said she did not deserve it. No mother in her senses would consent to such a match.

Julia bowed her head submissively and went to her duties. But, when Alfred came to her open-mouthed to complain of her mother's cruelty, she stopped him at once, and asked him how he could go and write that foolish, unreasonable letter. Why had he not consulted her first? "You have subjected yourself to a rebuff," said she angrily, "and one from which I should have saved you. Is it nothing that mamma out of pity to me connives at our meeting, and spending hours together? Do you think she does no violence to her own wishes here? and is she to meet with no return?"

"What, are you against me too," said poor Alfred.

"No, it is you, who are our enemy with your unreasonable impatience."

"I am not so cold-blooded as you are, certainly."

"Humility and penitence would become you

better than to retort on me; I love you both, and pray God on my knees to show me how to do my duty to both."

"That is it; you are not single-hearted like me. You want to please all the world, and reconcile the irreconcilable. It won't do: you will have to choose between your mother and me at last."

"Then of course I should choose my mother."

"Why?"

"Because she claims my duty as well as my love; because she is bowed down with sorrow, and needs her daughter just now more than you do; besides, you are my other self, and we must deny ourselves."

"We have no more right to be unjust to ourselves than to anybody else: injustice is injustice."

"Alfred, you are a high-minded Heathen, and talk Morality. Morality is a snare. What I pray to be is a Christian, as your dear sister was, and to deny myself; and you make it oh so difficult."

"So I suppose it will end in turning out your heathen and then taking your curate. Your mother would consent to that directly."

"Alfred," said Julia with dignity, "these words are harsh, and, forgive me for saying so, they are coarse. Such words would separate us two, without my mother, if I were to hear many of them; for they take the bloom off affection, and that mutual respect, without which no gentleman and lady could be blessed in holy wedlock."

Alfred was staggered and mortified too: they walked on in silence now.

"Alfred," said Julia at last, "do not think me behind you in affection, but wiser, for once, and our best friend. I do think we had better see less of one another for a time, my poor Alfred."

"And why for a time? why not for ever?"

"If your heart draws no distinction, why not, indeed?"

"So be it then: for I will be no woman's slave. There's my hand, Julia: let us part friends."

"Thank you for that, dear Alfred: may you find some one who can love you more—than—I do."

The words choked her. But he was stronger, because he was in a passion. He reproached her bitterly. "If I had been as weak and inconstant as you are, I might have been out of Drayton House long before I did escape. But I was faithful to my one love. I have some right to sing Aileen Aroon, you have none. You are an angel of beauty and goodness; you will go to Heaven, and I shall go to the devil now for want of you. But then you have no constancy nor true fidelity: so that has parted us, and now nothing is left me but to try and hate you."

He turned furiously on his heel.

"God bless you, go where you will," faltered Julia.

He replied with a fierce ejaculation of despair, and dashed away.

Thus temper and misunderstanding triumphed, after so many strange and bitter trials had failed.

### GIVE ME YOUR HAND.

MANIAS are remittent fevers which seize the public mind at uncertain intervals. There will often occur a temporary lull, when a mania is laid, used up, exhausted, and the symptoms of its successor have not yet broken out. But it may be assumed as a rule that the civilised public cannot go on long without some dominant mania. Manias, by their very nature, are social, gregarious, wide-spreading, contagious affections of the national intellect. They are epidemics pervading, either the whole country, or considerable classes and communities of the country. They do not exist as solitary cases; for if, indeed, they show themselves in the eccentricities of single individuals, they cease to be manias, and become monomanias merely.

Manias, like comets, mostly come upon us unexpectedly. Some of them, nevertheless, cast their flaming tails before. Therefore, although prophecies are hazardous, I venture to announce the proximate coming of a new-old mania which has long since been left to charlatans and mountebanks, but which is now reappearing, tinkered up, repaired, and renovated, with additions and emendations, backed by pseudo-scientific proof enough to shake the most hardened scepticism. Fortune-telling, by crossing the hand with a piece, not of silver, but of gold, is already becoming the mode abroad. M. Desbarrolles is being made so much of by the high-minded dwellers in German schlosses, that he cannot get back to his Parisian home; notwithstanding which he announces, in reply to numerous inquiries, his place of residence there, and that the price of his chiromantic consultations is twenty francs.

Certainly, what with spirits and supernaturalities, we are making great psychological advances in this our nineteenth century. While all was still dark in 1745, Dennis de Coetlogon (Knight of St. Lazare, M.D., and Member of the Royal Academy of Angers) published, in English, his decided opinion: "Chiromancy, from *χειρ*, hand, and *μαντεια*, divination, is the Art of Divining the Fate, Temperament, and Disposition of a Person, by the Lines and Lineaments of the Hand; otherwise called Palmistry. This fictitious Art is only practised by Gypsies, Vagabonds, and silly old Women; who have, however, cunning enough to make the Vulgar believe that the seven Planets predominate over the seven Mountains which this Art places in the Palm of a Man's Hand; that the lines therein have a Doctrine of Community with the Length of Life; and that Riches, Accidents, or other Events, are to be judged thereby."

Earlier still, in 1712, our old friend the Spectator says (in No. 505): "This natural im-

patience to look into futurity, and to know what accidents may happen to us hereafter, has given birth to many ridiculous arts and inventions. Some found the prescience on the lines of a man's hand, others on the features of his face; some on the signatures which nature has impressed on his body, and others on his own handwriting. Notwithstanding these follies are pretty well worn out of the minds of the wise and the learned in the present age, multitudes of weak and ignorant are still slaves to them"—worn out even in the so-called Augustan age.

Sir Thomas Browne, fond as he was of the marvellous, displays no faith in Palmistry. He turns up the ridiculous side of the question. "Great variety there is in the lines of the hand. There are also master and principal lines, in some analogy to these, in creatures of five divisions of foot, as apes, monkeys, frogs, with like lesser also, and in great variety. These are also observed in most digitate animals, and variously disposed, as in dogs, cats, &c.; in fin-footed birds, swans, geese, ducks." The kitchen-maid, therefore, while killing her ducks and geese, may beguile her pensive thoughts by telling their fortunes.

In 1863, the wise and learned are endeavoured to be converted to mysterious arts which are despised by multitudes of weak and ignorant people. M. Desbarrolles asserts that chiromancy is as true as nature, because it is based on the harmonies of nature.\* He admits that his book was laughed at when it first came out; but when men saw that it was such a big one, so full of research, quotation, and so on, that they began to fancy there must be something in it. It has rapidly attained its fourth edition, which is more than its author expected, especially in France, for it treats of a science long decried, and which at the first glance appears inexplicable. Now, with slight hopes of gaining the ear of his countrymen, he is sanguine as to the conversion to chiromancy of Germany, and by-and-by of England. He is convinced that it will come in time.

That the hand *is* a feature, cannot be denied. In proof whereof, there are two classes of portrait-painters; those who can, and those who cannot paint a hand—the multitudinous limners who stick it out of sight in their sitter's pocket, and the real artists who, like Vandyke, delight in working out its beauty and its individuality. As Physiognomy judges character from the aspect of the countenance, so Chiromancy appreciates it from the aspect of the hand.

The light broke upon M. d'Arpentigny in this wise: While quite young, he lived in the country, and frequently attended the parties given by the great man of the neighbourhood,

\* Les Mystères de la Main Révelés et Expliqués, Art de connaître la vie, le caractère, les aptitudes et la destinée de chacun d'après la seule Inspection des Mains. Par Ad. Desbarrolles. Quatrième édition. Pp. 624.

who was extremely fond of the exact sciences, and of mechanics in particular. Consequently, he was visited by numerous geometricians and mechanicians. His lady (through the immutable law of contrast) was passionately fond of the arts, and received nobody but artists. From which it resulted that Madame had her reception days, and Monsieur his.

M. d'Arpentigny, neither mathematician nor artist, and wearing the badge of neither clique, indiscriminately attended the evening parties given both by the husband and the wife. He had a handsome hand, and made the most of it, complacently indulging in silent comparisons which always turned to his own advantage. This led him to remark that the arithmeticians and engineers had all knotty fingers, while those of all the artists were smooth. The two entire parties, without exception, seemed to have adopted, as their badge, two different kinds and forms of hand. He was struck by the contrast, and on seeking further proof, met with it. He imagined in people whose fingers were smooth, the impressionability, the spontaneity, the intuition, the momentary inspiration which replaces calculation, the caprice, the faculty of judging at a glance, whose consequence is a taste for the arts. In persons with knotty fingers, he found reflection, order, an aptitude for figures and such sciences as mechanics, agriculture, architecture, engineering, navigation—for everything, in short, which requires the exercise of the reasoning faculty. Convinced on one point, he did not stop there, but went on comparing, studying, interrogating. After thirty years' experience, he established a system based on facts, without troubling himself about the causes of those facts.

M. Desbarrolles goes further. He has fathomed the proof of chiromancy to lie in Magic, and thereby in "The Three Worlds:" the heavens, the earth, and the infernal regions. By the material world, we are connected with the lower world, with things infernal; by the intellectual world, we hold on to the earth; by the divine world, we are attached to the upper world, the heavens.

Chiromancy, adds M. Desbarrolles, is entirely based on the Kabbala. Now, the whole of the Kabbala may be summed up in the sentence, "The strongest magical power is THE WILL." The first kabalistic precept is, "What you always will to do, you will be able to do one day or another." The profundity of which saying becomes evident by putting it in another form. "Is there any greater impediment to a thing's being done than an unwillingness to do it? Is a man ever likely to accomplish anything which he has no will to accomplish?" The rule applies even to animals. One man can lead a horse to water, but can a hundred make him drink, if he won't?

The hand is the summary of the man, his active microcosm. The index, pointer, or first finger, belongs to the planet Jupiter; the medium, middle, or second finger, to Saturn; the annular, ring-finger, or third, to Apollo or the Sun; and

the auricular, the ear-finger, or fourth, to Mercury. At the base of each finger, just on the palm, is, or should be, a little mountain, influenced by its respective planet. The base or root of the thumb is the mount of Venus, opposite to which, and next the wrist, is the mount of the Moon. Between that and the little finger, and separated by two lines from the mount of Mercury, is the mount of Mars. The hand has thus seven mountains, influenced by seven planets, reckoning the Sun and Moon as such.

It will be objected that the planets have long since exceeded seven in number, and that new ones are now being discovered every day. But if they have hitherto been so hard to discover, it was because they are hardly visible, either on account of their distance or their smallness, and that their influence, consequently, can only be secondary. Mercury, Venus, Jupiter, Saturn, are still the most important planets. Uranus, through his immense distance from the Sun, loses his influence over us. Vesta, Juno, Pallas, and the rest, are so minute that their influence is the strength of flies compared with that of elephants. All which logic may be good; still, I do not see how it connects the planet Venus with the thumb, or Mercury with the little finger.

Keep silence, caviller, and hearken to the seer. An overgrown mount of Jupiter produces superstition, excessive pride, the love of domination at any price, the desire to shine. The absence of the mount causes sloth, egotism, irreligion, want of dignity, vulgar tendencies. Saturn is fatality. His mount in excess induces taciturnity, melancholy, love of solitude, rigid religion, the fear of future punishment, ascetism, remorse, and frequently a propensity to suicide. Its absence presages misfortune, or at best insignificance.

Passing by the two remaining fingers, listen we to the revelations of the thumb. The thumb represents the creation. It unites in itself generation, reason, and realisation or the will (which in magic are one). The thumb, then, is the life, the being, the entire man surrounded by the influences with which he must mould his good or his evil, according to the direction which he gives to his will and his intelligence. "In default of any other proof," said Newton, "the thumb would convince me of the existence of a God." *The superior animal* is in the hand; *the man* is in the thumb. M. d'Arpentigny gives us proofs in born idiots, who come into the world without thumbs, or with impotent and withered thumbs, and epileptic sufferers who, in their fits, close their fingers over their thumbs. Moribund persons, he says, do the same.

Magically, the thumb comprises the three worlds with perfect distinctness. The first joint, that which carries the nail, gives the measure of the will, the invention, the initiative faculty. It is the divine world of the kabbalists. The second phalange is the token of logic; namely, of perception, judgment, and reasoning power. It is the world of abstraction. The third, which forms

the root of the thumb, measures, say the chiromantists (who have named it the Mount of Venus), the tendency to amorous passions. It is the material world. The importance of the thumb will also be understood, by observing how it is placed before the other fingers, like an officer in front of the soldiers who obey him. In the thumb, we have at once combined the will, the reasoning powers, and sensual love, the three prime movers of human life.

The nailed portion of the thumb, the first phalange, is in direct communication with the astral light, and is necessarily, from that very circumstance, divine. Consequently, every one who has the first joint of the thumb long and strong, will have a powerful and energetic will, great self-confidence, and an ardent desire to attain perfection in everything he does. If this joint be too long, the force of the will will amount to domineering and tyranny. If it be of medium length, there will be no domineering, but passive resistance, force of inertia. If it be short, there will be a feeble will, fickleness, uncertainty, distrust of one's self, and a disposition to adopt the opinion of others. If very short indeed, there will be an incapacity of resistance, a powerlessness to say "No," complete indifference, recklessness in the concerns of life, discouragements, enthusiasms, unaccountable fits of high or low spirits, brought on, perhaps, by a gloomy or a brilliant sky, religious or military music, and especially by surrounding circumstances, which communicate the pitch of their own proper key-note.

The second phalange represents logic, reason, and the faculty of seeing things clearly at a glance. If it be long and strong, the logic and the reason will be powerful accordingly; if it be short, the logic and the reason will be weak.

The third phalange (which in reality is rather the root of the thumb, and occupies an important place in the *palm* of the hand) shows the greater or less power of the senses, but particularly of sensual, material love. If it be very thick and very broad, the man will be the slave of brutal passion. If it be moderate, and in harmony with the rest of the hand, the man will be amorous, but not in excess. If it be weak, flat, and but slightly apparent, he will have but few and feeble sensual appetites.

To draw a few consequences from the above: The possessor of great force of will (indicated by a long and thick first joint of the thumb) and of small logic (betrayed by a short second joint) will domineer under any circumstances. He will form strong resolutions, but without rhyme or reason. His life will be a storm in which he will be constantly shipwrecked. He will be like a fearless blind man, walking without staff or guide along a rugged path bordered by precipices. He *must* fall down them some day or other. If he have will and logic united, he cannot help succeeding in his undertakings, for he will be gifted with reason and resolution in equal doses. When the will and the logic are of equal length, and the thumb is long in proportion to the other fingers, it is the sign of

a powerful will, since it is based on logical foundations. Such a will may even make itself dominant, but will never tyrannise. When such a thumb is of ordinary dimensions, it means passive resistance.

A person who has the second joint (logic) long and strong, and the first (the will) short, will manifest more reason than resolution. He will see clearly enough, but will incessantly hesitate; he will lay out magnificent plans which he will fear to execute. His reason will tell him to march boldly forward, but he will be kept back by indecision and prudential doubts. He will attempt, and then stop short. He may give excellent advice to others, but he will never do any good to himself.

The dissolute have the two first joints of their thumbs short and slender, and the third, or root, very fully developed.

In the fingers also, the phalanges which carry the nails belong to the divine world; they are the eyes of the hand. [Which calls the eyes of the star-fish to mind.] The second phalanges belong to the world of reason; the third to the material world, as we saw in the thumb. The third phalanges vary but slightly in different individuals, because they represent the material portion of our nature. In general terms, it may be stated that fingers swollen or very thick at the base, invariably indicate a taste for sensual pleasures. Nevertheless, such tastes may be modified by the influence of the mounts and the lines. Short nails, broader than they are long, and on which the skin of the fingers encroaches far, always announce a quarrelsome temper. If the person is naturally good-natured at bottom, such nails cause him to indulge in habits of mockery, jeering, criticising, and contradiction.

These details, and others too numerous to particularise, make one curious to know *what* it was exactly that our chiromantist saw when vouchsafed an inspection of the imperial hand, which warmed his admiration and closed all his doubts. "When we were permitted," he enthusiastically exclaims, "to see the hand of the most extraordinary man of our age, the hand which guides the epoch, did we not behold it so well balanced that it is destined by the necessity of the laws of harmony to restore equilibrium to the world? Did we not discover in it the signs of a superhuman sagacity and intelligence which, in spite of our innumerable experiences, we have never beheld elsewhere?" The seer, it is rumoured, also saw the empress's hand, but was not allowed to examine the Prince Imperial's.

There are Lines to be studied, weighed, and accounted for. The Line of the Heart runs across the hand, nearest to the base of the fingers. It should be clear, decided, well-coloured, reaching the mount of Jupiter. It then signifies a good heart, strong and happy affection. If broken up into several fragments, it is inconstancy in love and friendship, contempt of women, even going so far as to insult them. The line running parallel to it,

nearer the wrist, is the Line of the Head. If the lines of the heart and the head join each other between the forefinger and thumb, it is a bad sign—the presage of a violent death, if occurring in both hands. The head and the heart are led captive by life, by instinct. The man puts a bandage over his eyes while walking close to precipices. M. Desbarrolles, by the way, appears rather fond of precipices. If the line of the heart join the line of the head under the Saturnian finger, it becomes the sign of a violent death, Saturn being fatality. A hand without a line of the heart, is bad faith, maliciousness, aptitude for mischief, iron will, and premature death.

The Line of Life surrounds the base of the thumb, the mount of Venus. When it is long, well formed, and bright coloured, it announces a long and happy life, exempt from serious illnesses; it is also the sign of a kindly temper. When pale and *broad*, it denotes bad health, evil instincts, and an envious disposition. Breadth and paleness always influence lines unfavourably; opposite qualities are conferred by long, well-coloured lines. A short line of life is a brief span of existence. A double line of life is an extra allowance of longevity.

The Saturnine Line, running from the mount of Saturn towards the wrist, is destiny, fatality. Its combinations are multifold, ranging from the height of good fortune to inevitable death upon the scaffold. Chiromantists, therefore, out of kind consideration, often refrain from telling their clients all they see. Hands without a Saturnine belong to insignificant beings. The Esquimaux, for the most part, have no Saturnine; theirs is a vegetative life, slowly dragged on through the rigorous seasons of their tedious year. M. Serras, a celebrated anthropologist, even asserts that the Saturnine, which he calls the Caucasian fold, is found only in individuals of the white race of mankind and its varieties. The Hepatic Line, or Line of the Liver, runs from the mount of Venus to the mount of Mercury. The Ring of Venus is a semicircular Line enclosing the mounts of Saturn and Apollo. It betrays more secrets than I dare tell.

Chiromancy, like other modes of divination, leaves the chiromancer many a loophole of escape, many an opportunity of embroidering the web of the human palm with accidental ornamentation, suggested possibly by some lucky piece of private information. Thus, a broken line, or any other menacing circumstance of the kind, is not fatally bad unless it is repeated in both hands; in the contrary case, one hand almost always corrects the malignant influence of the other. One single unfavourable sign does not suffice to announce a catastrophe; there must be a combination of several fatal signs. One isolated adverse mark is the presumption of an untoward event, a warning of a danger which will present itself, but which may be avoided by consulting the causes—always indicated in the hand by the excess of such or such a mount, the form of such or such

a line, or by other marks as transverse stripes, crosses, stars, on spots where their influence becomes pernicious. Even when all the lines concur in announcing a danger, that danger still may be, if not avoided, at least rendered less terrible by the will and by prudence placed at the service of the will. Herein lies the great use (and charlatanism) of chiromancy.

In this, as in every other art, we are told, the leading rules can be indicated; BUT they are incessantly modified, because diversity, taking its source from unity, is the law of nature. You say, "A man;" but there are a hundred thousand different men: you say, "A tree;" but there are a hundred thousand different trees.

Thus, the mounts of the hand are rarely in their proper place, at the root of their respective fingers. But as nothing in the hand is without its meaning, the displacement of the mounts has also its significance. The mounts, at the base of each finger, resume, as we have seen, the aptitudes or the instincts with which each one of the fingers is inspired by the influence of a corresponding planet; which planet is indicated by the name of the mount. Consequently, the mounts which are in more vehement correspondence with a planet, will exercise on the neighbouring mounts a stronger attraction. Sometimes they will entirely absorb them; and consequently, a mount, by approaching or inclining towards another stronger mount, will carry over to it its instincts, which will be modified by the leading instinct of the planet (or of its representative mount) which attracts it.

If, for instance, the mount of Jupiter inclines towards the mount of Saturn, it is a sad, grave, and sometimes fatal modification of the inclinations inspired by Jupiter. It is often a noble desire to succeed in science, theology, or academic ambition, according to the significations of the other signatures of the hand. If it is the mount of Saturn which inclines towards the mount of Jupiter, it is ambition which gets the upper hand of science; it is a desire to shine in serious matters, to acquire a reputation for austerity or learning, even without deserving it. It also announces celebrity, notoriety mingled with misfortune, brought on, either of them, by overweening pride. The lines are the sensitive, intelligent portion of chiromancy; they modify the actions of the mounts, and the Saturnine suffices, and more, to replace the mount of Saturn in a hand. But—the cool looker-on would say—with such a nice balancing of lines and mounts, it is possible to read, in any hand, any character and any destiny. If M. D. practises chiromancy in sincerity and good faith (which is not denied), he certainly gives dangerous hints to a hundred imitators who will exercise the art quite otherwise.

M. Desbarrolles has a rival fortune-teller, who beats him hollow. One M. Collonges can tell the age and temperament of individuals presented to him; he pronounces whether they are fatigued or not, sick or well; he

states whether a disease is serious or trifling, if death be near, and if death be real or only apparent. And, to ascertain all these particulars, it suffices to place in his ear a finger, or a toe, of the individual to be fortune-told. He then hears a continual buzzing sound proceeding from the finger, interrupted at intervals by chirpings and crackings as of sparks, which tell the gifted listener all he requires to know. If a dead person's finger or toe be employed, no such oracular sounds are heard; all is still; the corpse has no further fortune to tell.

### MILITARY MISMANAGEMENT.

ABOUT seventeen years ago, I went through a short campaign with French troops in Algeria, an account of which was published in *Household Words*.\* At the period of my wanderings in Gallie Africa I made several notes respecting various matters connected with the troops in that colony, and those notes I have still by me. On referring to them, I find that the average yearly mortality among the soldiers during the first fifteen years—from 1830 to 1845—during which the French occupied the country, was 29.7 per thousand, inclusive of men killed in action, or who died of wounds received on the field of battle. This is considerably less than half the average mortality of our troops in India, which the late Sanitary Commissioners' report has shown to be 67.9 per thousand. It may fairly be asked, what causes so vast a difference in the deaths among the troops of the two nations serving in these countries? India is, in truth, a hot place, but Algeria is not a cool one; and, in India, very much greater expense is incurred with a view to keeping troops healthy, than Algeria. I, who write these lines, have served upwards of fifteen years in India, and should know something of the climate, as well as of the working of the military system in that land. In India, too, we have many times lost numbers of men in action, but our campaigns have by no means been so frequent as those of the French in Algeria during the first fifteen years of their occupation of that colony. Moreover—at any rate until the great mutiny of 1857—whenever any great engagement took place in India, by far the most numerous troops employed were native troops, and consequently the number of men killed was very much greater among them than among English soldiers; whereas, the enormous average mortality of 67.9 per thousand relates only to our own countrymen. The question as to how such mortality can be prevented—or the inquiry as to what are the real causes of it—is of vital importance to England, if only as a matter of £ s. d., to say nothing of higher and more humane considerations.

No one who has served in India can say that

\* See *A Campaign with the French*, in vol. xiv., page 49, *Household Words*.

our soldiers die in cantonments or barracks from want of looking after, or from over-work. The care taken of them may be injudicious, and may be calculated to cause the very result which it is meant to prevent, but we must not deny that—by the regimental authorities and medical officers, at any rate—the health of the men is held to be a matter of primary consideration. During the meeting of the British Association at Newcastle in September last, this subject was brought under discussion, and I observe that nearly every one of the speakers assigned a different cause for the existing evil. Some, laid the blame on the intemperance and vice of the men; others, on the bad climate and the heat of the country; many, on the “ill-ventilated barracks, with filthy cesspools in the midst of them,” in which the men are obliged to live; but none of these do I hold to be the reason for the enormous number of deaths, by which a whole regiment, a thousand strong, is completely swallowed up in from fourteen to sixteen years. I maintain that the intemperance of our soldiers in India is not greater than that of French regiments stationed in Algeria; and whatever amount of drunkenness exists is much more the effect of the idle life the men are forced to lead than the cause of their sickness. That India is by no means as healthy as Great Britain, or that the heat of the climate is very great, no one will deny, but neither the one nor the other of these reasons would account for the mortality lately brought to light by the Sanitary Commissioners' report. In the first place the English regiments in India are seldom stationed in unhealthy localities, nor are the men allowed to expose themselves to the heat of the sun. The officers, most of whom expose themselves very much in shooting or hunting, do not die in any thing like the proportion of the men. Moreover, I have always remarked that the men are never so healthy as when on the line of march, or in camp, when they are much more exposed to the heat than in barracks or quarters. Nor do I attribute so much of the evil to faulty barracks. Although much might be done to improve those buildings, I have seen far worse ventilated barracks in England and Ireland, than I have in the East; and of late years there has been a vast improvement in barrack accommodation throughout India. And I may here notice a singular fact connected with the mortality of our troops in India, which is, that I have remarked almost invariably that the number of admissions to hospital are greater, and the deaths are far more numerous, in regiments where the commanding officers take the greatest care to prevent men drinking more than a certain quantity of liquor at the regimental canteens, and where there are most “check roll calls” in the day to keep the men out of the sun.

What, then, can be the true cause of such vast sickness and so great a mortality among men who are selected from the most healthy of their class when they leave England, and who land in India as strong as on the day when they

embarked? I hold the reason—the original reason—to be far more of a moral than a physical kind, or at any rate that moral reasons form the causes, while the physical reasons which most persons regard as the causes, are simply the effects, of the evil. Our men in India have too little to do, and idleness in India, as in every other part of the world, is the cause of evil, even to the prostration of nearly all physical energy.

Take the daily life of an English soldier in India. It is one of enforced idleness. By seven o'clock in the morning, his drill and duty for the day are over. He has no fatigue or cooking duty to do; all that, is done for him by the native servants of his troop or company. In some regiments he does not even clean his arms; and I have known cavalry corps in which the grooming of the horses was done by native syces: the men merely looking on or making believe to brush the horses' manes and tails during stable hours. By eight o'clock the breakfast-time is over, and from that time until one the men have nothing whatever to do but to lounge on their cots and sleep away the forenoon. From dinner to evening parade, or stable hour, the men are similarly without any occupation. Those who would like to go out shooting, are forbidden, as it is supposed that exposure to the sun is injurious to health. It is true that in most regiments there are libraries for the men; but how many of the latter can read, or of those who can read how many do so; how many are there who care to read hour after hour and day after day? To drive away the ennui caused by a hot climate, the men require physical as well as mental work, and this physical work should have an object in it, or the men will not take to it in earnest. I have seen in some regiments in India, large buildings erected in which all kinds of games and gymnastics were encouraged, so as to keep the men engaged during the heat of the day. So far as it goes, this plan is good, but all play is no more beneficial than all work. These makeshifts to give the men occupation, do very well for a time, but they soon die a natural death. Nothing can be better than athletic games and gymnastics for soldiers, but these should be in hours of play, not in hours of work; and this reminds me how I observed the men of the French army occupied in Algeria when not engaged in their military duties.

In the French army, every recruit is supposed to know a trade on joining the army. If he has not yet learnt a trade, he is taught some occupation after joining his corps. Should he be ignorant of reading and writing—or, knowing these, should he wish to improve his education, so as to qualify himself for promotion—he goes to the regimental school for four hours every day when he is not on guard or on fatigue duty. Once his schooling is over, he is put to work at some trade or handicraft: or should he not know one, he is put to learn one. In every French regiment, there are regular gangs of butchers, bakers, cooks, carpenters, masons, gardeners,

builders, labourers, cart-drivers, watchmakers, silversmiths, tailors, shoemakers, blacksmiths, and what not. All these trades or handicrafts are under their regular head men, and every soldier when he can work, may, and does, gain a certain sum per day, by working in the shop of his trade. In Algeria, the whole of the government work is done by these military artisans, who, as well as the state, are gainers thereby. The men thus earn extra pay, and the government get work done better and cheaper than they could do by employing the people of the country: besides treasuring up the vast advantage of always having a corps of workmen at command. The system of regular organised workmen is the true secret why the French army get on so well when on service. In the English army we have nothing of the kind, except as regards the tailors and shoemakers, and (in cavalry regiments) the saddlers and farriers. There are many good workmen who enter our ranks, but, through want of practice, they soon forget what they knew. In Algiers, I have seen a whole pile of barracks, large enough to contain three thousand men, that was built entirely by a regiment of the line, from the digging of the foundations to the making of glass for the barrack windows, and not a day's drill or manœuvring had been neglected while the work was going on. Throughout Algeria, miles upon miles of excellent public roads have been made entirely by the troops: the men being paid a small additional sum by the state while so employed. Thus the government gained by getting their work better and very much cheaper done than could have been effected by private contractors, while the troops gained a very comfortable addition to their regular pay. I don't say that out-door work of this nature could be carried on in India at all seasons of the year without more or less detriment to the health of the men; but I am very certain that it could be done for several months in the Upper Provinces and other parts, and that the men would look upon the change as the greatest blessing—as affording them a most wholesome relief from the dreadful monotony of cantonment life. What would be easier than for a regiment to go under canvas every year, and move to wheresoever its services might be wanted for road-making, bridge-building, or other such work? The men would gain in health, in pocket, and, above all, in that knowledge how to overcome difficulties on actual service which so distinguishes the French army. When one of our Anglo-Indian regiments takes the field the men are as helpless as babies. They have been so long accustomed to have everything done for them by their cook-boys and other native servants, that they can do nothing for themselves, save clean their clothing and arms, and not always that. They can and do fight well, but this is not all that is required of a thorough soldier. He is obliged to work at every other trade in turn. We repeat what was said in a former paper, "The handicraft trade a man has been brought up to, his peculiar fitness for one occupation more than another, even the hobby which it pleases him to

ride, are all swept into the general fund, as contributions of labour." Surely here are golden rules for military observance, and which we ought not to be above copying of our neighbours. If ever an army wanted an entire and radical reform in this respect, it is our army in India. We drive our soldiers in that country into all kinds of vice and intemperance, by the do-nothing life which we force them to lead. And this, with the fact before our eyes, that so long as a man is properly clothed, and his head protected from the sun, those persons who are actively employed in the open air are invariably the most healthy. Algeria is quite as hot during the summer months as any part of India that I have been in; yet the French soldiers in that colony labour at all kinds of handicraft in and out of doors, without detriment to themselves, and with a far smaller amount of mortality than obtains among our European troops in India.

Let any one who wishes to know the amount of baggage, and the number of camp-followers which follow our armies into the field in India, read MR. RUSSELL'S Diary in India, recording what he saw in that country during the campaigns under Lord Clyde, which followed the mutiny of 1857. The native cooks, washermen, grooms, tent-pitchers, and the hundred other natives who follow the soldier whenever he goes into camp—each individual native taking with him his wife and children, and often his father, mother, uncles, and brothers—exceed all belief: they seem to be more numerous than the sands of the sea. Nor is the evil of this immense following confined to the camp-followers themselves, for these, in their turn, must have their followers. In addition to the commissariat that feeds the troops, each corps must have a large bazaar establishment to feed its followers. The extent and ramifications of these hangers-on may be in some degree conceived, when I mention that, during one of our campaigns in Afghanistan, although the followers were reduced to the lowest possible numbers, there were European regiments that counted no less than seven native camp-followers to every effective English soldier. Many old Indians will say that our men could not dispense with these native servants, and that if they attempted themselves to do the menial work of the barracks their health would suffer. Now, I am an old Indian, and have seen service in the Punjab, in Afghanistan, and in other countries; and I altogether deny that our English soldiers would suffer, even if deprived of all their native servants to-morrow. Surely our men are not more helpless than Frenchmen! And I have seen a brigade of the latter take the field for months in the burning plains towards the frontier of Morocco—a far hotter climate, with far fewer resources than any I have marched through in India from Peshawur to Calcutta—not having with them more camp-followers than they would have in Europe. The average number of non-combatants with a French column in the field in

present, and these are nearly all suttlers or shopkeepers, who are allowed to follow the troops and sell odds and ends of comfort to the men. In our Anglo-Indian camps, the number of camp-followers is something like seven or eight hundred—I have known it as high as eleven hundred—per cent more than the fighting men! In other words, where the French in Algeria take one camp-follower in the field, we take from seven to eleven hundred!

Our military legislators need not go far to learn why campaigning in India is ruinous work. When every company of a hundred men requires something like a thousand followers to administer to their comforts, no wonder that we have often to extricate ourselves from difficulties with little credit or honour. According to the last army estimates, the number of English soldiers now serving on the Indian establishment is eighty-three thousand five hundred and twenty-one: so that, if the statistics of the Sanitary Commission be true, the number of deaths in that country must be close upon six thousand every year; and, from what I have witnessed in the country, I believe this figure is not overstated. Surely such a state of things should not be allowed to exist without some attempt being made to alter it for the better! Six thousand men represent the whole brigade of Foot Guards. Imagine the whole of this corps dying off and having to be replaced every year! Even reduce the number by one-half, and it is hardly conceivable that we should allow three thousand able-bodied men to vanish off the face of the earth every year, without making an attempt to stop such mismanagement as must exist somewhere. Yet I fear that no effort will be made in the right direction. Old Indians, and particularly old Indian doctors, have an idea that to save English soldiers' lives in the East they must be allowed to do nothing whatever for themselves; and if changes be made in our Anglo-Indian military system, I fear they will be for the worse, and not for the better.

Connected with the subject of our soldiers' health in the East, there is the subject of military cookery: which is and has been, from time immemorial, a standing disgrace to the English army. In India the cooking for the men is done by native cook-boys: the men themselves being allowed to take no part whatever in preparing their own food. What are the consequences? A recruit joins his corps, lives and serves his time in India, and—if spared to return—comes back to England entirely helpless to perform what every officer or soldier who has been on service knows to be the very first of military duties, unconnected with actual fighting: namely, that of turning to the best and most healthy account for himself and his comrades, the meat, flour, vegetables, and rice, provided for rations. Unless, or until, the cook-boys of his troop or company have reached the camping-ground, there is no breakfast or dinner that day. I have seen again and again, on the march in India, dozens of

pounds of rice and flour thrown away, after being drawn from the commissariat, because the native cook-boys of the troop had not reached the camp in time to prepare these rations for food. As to preparing coffee, baking bread, making soup, or roasting meat, you might as well ask an Anglo-Indian soldier to draw out the lines of a ship of war.

And need I speak of the waste, the dirt, the uneatableness, of the soldier's food when it is prepared by the greasy native cooks who spoil what is given them to cook, and who as often as not disgust the soldier with his rations, owing to their own personal filth alone? It would be out of reason to expect that the rations and means of the private soldier could, either in India or in any other country, be made to furnish such dinners as are to be had only in wealthy households; but there is no reason why our troops should not have wholesome, clean, and even tasty cookery, such as is to be had in the French army, and, of late years, in our own navy, whenever a man-of-war is in port, or can obtain fresh vegetables. To visit the cook-house of a French regiment, or of an English man-of-war, half an hour before dinner-time, would give a satiated alderman an appetite. I have tasted a good vegetable soup on board H.M.S. Marlborough, in Malta harbour, as any gentleman would wish to put upon his table. Why should our troops not have their rations as well cooked as their brethren of the navy? Our ships go into every climate and to every country; but do we ever hear it said that in any part of the world it is too hot for Englishmen to cook sailors' dinners, and that native cooks ought to be provided for the men-of-war on the African or East Indian stations? Some years ago, I visited the French settlement of Pondicherry, on the Madras coast, and visited the barracks of the battalion of Marine Infantry doing duty in the garrison. I found the cooking all carried on by the men themselves, as in France, and I found the kitchens as clean and neat as they would have been in Europe. I found that the men had excellent bread, baked by soldiers who were paid for their work, good soup, well cooked vegetables and rice, and were much better fed than our men in the Madras Presidency, at less than two-thirds of the cost.\* With the French troops in the East Indies there is not one single native follower of any kind, except with the officers: who, if they keep horses, or if they are married men, have servants of the country. The consequences are, the soldiers are much more healthy than our men, their pay goes very much further, and the government feeds them at two-thirds of the ex-

\* This, however, ought to surprise no one, for according to the French and English budgets of 1862-63, we pay 15,139,379*l.*, for an army of 145,450 men and 14,116 horses, whilst the French pay 14,599,000*l.*, for an army of 400,000 men, a reserve of 150,000 men, and 105,000 horses. That is to say, we pay over half a million more money than the French pay for one-fourth the number of men, and about one-seventh the number of horses.

pense we incur, which, with our Anglo-Indian force of nearly eighty-four thousand men, would be no small item in our Indian budget.\*

## PAINT AND VARNISH.

How should the world get on without Paint and Varnish? Though damaging to the core beneath, when laid on with too broad a sweep and too juicy a brush, they are yet, in a certain degree, necessities in a make-believe old life, "where nothing is but all things seem," and where matters are so oddly ordered, that sometimes the highest truths have the effect of the wildest falsehoods. Think what it would be if we all lived in rough-hewn moral chambers, unpainted and unvarnished—nothing but the bare boards, with the grain of the wood showing up in jagged lines, and the heads and points of the nails starting out for the riving of our garments! Horribly uncomfortable, surely, with no good sleeping accommodation possible—not so much as would give one space or ease for a noonday siesta, with the sun stalking through Leo overhead! This was the kind of thing that was tried once—in imagination at least—when Madame de Genlis built up her Palace of Truth out of her internal consciousness, and set her puppets to inhabit it. And a fine mess they all made of it: all but the little sly boots who had the wit to secure the talisman which included paint and varnish among its properties, and so was enabled to send her husband blessed and deluded to the grave. And sly boots, if not right according to the nobler patterns, was at least wise in her generation, and understood the nature of men and husbands.

Think of the miserable gorilladom of the world, if the outside sweetness of society were laid aside—if the paint-pot was empty and the varnish-brush dry; if, instead of "My dear Mrs. Smith, this is indeed kind of you—I am charmed to see you," said amiably, and with an electric clasping of the fingers, your friend growled out: "Here is this odious woman again! why did they let her up?" Think of the consternation that would seize on poor Mrs. Smith's undoubting soul, if, in place of the smooth serenity of former custom, this gnarled and knotted reality was suddenly to meet her! Would it be right, indeed, that it should? Where the necessity of turning the seams outside, and letting the north wind whistle through chinks and cracks, which a little putty, painted over and varnished, could stop out as well as heart of oak? Look at that assemblage of bland and well-dressed guests, each accustomed to adulation, and preparing for it as in the natural order of things; and think of the apoplectic

\* The Conductor of this Journal has, in his rambles during the last few years, watched the training of French soldiers in several large garrison towns of France. It is scarcely credible that such a system can be in daily action at a dozen places within a few hours' steam-journey of these shores, and be so lost on authorities at home.

indignation that would seize on each if the truth came out instead! There is that old lady mumbling through her false teeth on the sofa, in the delightful pursuit of hunting down her neighbour's reputation; she is nearer eighty than seventy, is as brown as chocolate, and as lean as the starved apothecary, yet she dresses with the youngest. Her head is adorned with a flowery wreath perched on the top of her luxuriant bright brown wig; her arms and neck are bare; and, for all pretence of matronly covering, she wears a gauzy Indian scarf thrown gracefully round her bust of whalebone and wadding, through which the chocolate-coloured wrinkles are distinctly visible. But the ladies cluster round the old creature—the gentlemen too—admire her dress, praise her good taste, and tell her that she surpasses herself to-night, and looks younger than the pretty little bride there in the corner. Her foolish old head wags with contentment, and her silly old heart swells with satisfaction. But they?—they laugh quietly in their sinful sleeves while thus painting her wretched effigy an inch thick. If she could hack away that great mass of glaring red, she would see some rather different linings underneath. "You wretched mockery of womankind—you poor benighted old coquette—why, in Heaven's name, don't you go home and cover your miserable bones decently? Have you no daughter of the third generation to tell you what an object you make of yourself, and how utterly absurd you are?"

Then there is that household of small means—notoriously small; but where the lady dresses so stately in her well-preserved velvet, and the husband has always a decent shirt-front, miraculously washed; where such a noble and sufficing outside is kept up, no matter what the poverty or scantiness of the material beneath. How they are flattered and complimented to their faces! How her tact and management, and their joint tastefulness and power of adaptation, are acknowledged and commented on!—winged words of honeyed sweetness flying like cooing Cupids in their ears. Strip them of their paint and varnish, their horsehair, their wadding, and their peacock's feathers, and the cooing Cupids would reveal themselves then as ugly, water-logged, wooden dolls: the household of small means would hear one-half of their world laugh at them for pretentiousness, and the other half condemn them for extravagance. So, too, that pretty-looking girl with her long repentirs meandering down her neck, her embroidered jackets, her high-heeled boots, her bead necklaces, and all the thousand-and-one pardonable coquetries of her age and condition, how would she find herself travestied from the pleasant limning of her daily contemplation? "Pretty" and "attractive," and "always so nice, Julia, dear," now—with her patterns in every one's hands and her fashions on every one's back—she would be "bold," "forward," "dressy," "vulgar," "done only to attract men, odious creature!" then. Suppose, too, instead of "Jones, my boy, you are a connoisseur in wine.

Just taste this capital port, and give me your candid opinion," it were, "Jones, you barely know South African from 'forty-eight; and all the heavens might blaze with comets before your dull palate could discover any special flavour in the vintage. I grudge throwing away that yellow seal on you!" why Jones's dinner would choke him.

Why do we live in a genteel neighbourhood, with the rents steadily rising everywhere, when we are so poor we can scarcely find sustenance to feed that Behemoth of a rent of ours, which eats us up, body and bones? Simply because we are poor; because we must paint over the bare boards of our impecuniosity, and varnish our deal, and stain our pine too cleverly for detection; because we cannot afford to do the daringly simple things permitted to our friend Snooks, with any number of thousands at his back. Snooks may, if he chooses, give an Apician feast in a woodman's hut, and people would only say "How odd!" winking to each other as they sipped his claret with the velvet on. Claret with the velvet on may be sipped in woodmen's huts if Apicius wills: but La Mère Gregoire's piquette drunk in small tumblers outside the barriers?—My friend, if you patronise the piquette, and cannot rise to the height of the claret, take care to paint your deal table of the latest fashion, and spend an extra penny on a superior kind of varnish. A man must be wealthy who can afford to appear poor, according to the way of the present world, and the morality of the generation extant.

The telling of diplomatic lies is another matter of paint and varnish, which one scarcely likes but cannot see one's way out of, for many governmental cycles at all events. A vast deal of this paint and varnish flows from the Treasury Bench; and the Foreign-office is so smothered in successive layers of them that no one now attempts to understand the nature of the original wood beneath, or to dream of guessing at the name of the forest-tree which supplied it. But if this is bad, the undraped truth would be sometimes worse; and, when delicate questions were incubating, and either a dove or a cockatrice depended on the careful handling of both egg and hatcher, perhaps, if a thousand free but clumsy hands were thrust into the nest perpetually and all at once, the cockatrice would be hatched oftener than the dove: so often, indeed, that the whole revenues of the land would be swallowed up in keeping his comb red and his scales shining. Paint and varnish in the Foreign-office do a great many questionable things: they make seemingly clean and wholesome, dirty places which ought to have been washed out, or cut out, or burnt out, instead of being merely varnished over into a fine mellow tone; they hide weak places and unsound places; make a grand marble column out of a sorry deal board; line the walls with antique oak when the real core is lath and plaster; and cover an acre of soiled hempen canvas with the picture of heaven, tenanted by angels and the loves and graces. They renew last year's decay, and huddle up the dilapidations

of centuries under a bran new coat of arsenious green: all of which is bad enough; but the clumsy hands breeding an endless succession of cockatrices might perchance be worse, and of graver consequences in the end.

Marrying for love seldom needs much paint beyond that belonging to the condition as by right: but marrying for money, and making believe that it is for love?—convenience transformed to passion?—interest putting on the semblance of devotion?—why, bushels of paint and gallons of varnish are not enough to make black white there, or to smooth over the awkward inequalities that cannot be planed away! The wicked little lady daubs herself all over with the rosiest pigment at command: she hides the pictures in her heart—the big yellow purse, the opera-box, the diamond necklace, the flaming carriage, and the stately household, under the paint of an all-shadowing love—she scrawls all sorts of Arcadian pastorals over the hempen canvas which else would show too coarsely; and if she is wise as well as wicked, she will go on painting and scrawling to the end of time. Usually she is too indolent and too careless to renew the dilapidations; and, when the first coating has rubbed off, never seeks to lay on a fresh one. Unless, indeed, there is a contingency in the background, and her husband's will may still make or mar her fortunes. When rich old men, or rich unpersonable young men, marry pretty portionless wives, they had better keep that contingency in their own hands, if they care for pleasing landscapes on their walls, or visions of Arcadian beauty in their galleries. We have our special paint-pots for love, whereby we cover up all the ugly spots of temper and unkindness, of small passions and mean ways that else belong to us, till we seem wingless angels to our fellow-love. This we all do alike; not of design, and with no foregone intention to deceive, but by the natural ordering of the condition. Ah, well! wait till matrimony, that terrible disenchanter, has worn off the varnish, and then see what knots come up through the bare boards, what ugly veinings, what flaws and cracks and rents and rotten fibres are beneath, not one of which was seen in the beginning, while the varnish of love was fresh and bright. Is it good for man that there should be this time of dreaming and deceit?—is it good that the ruggedness of the future should be masked beneath the varnished smoothness of the present?—that love should usher in the soul's waking with the morning songs of birds and the hived sweetness of flowers, with rosy clouds resting on the mountain-tops, and the gracious veiling of the lake breaking up into multiplied forms of misty beauty, when the truth lying behind all this loveliness and delight traces out but sadness and despair and the terrible rising to the gaunt day-work of disenchantment? It may be that some good purpose, some strong and holy shaping, lies in these fond dreams of the spirit: it may be that truth, in the beginning, would be too hard and

angular for the soul to bear, and that if men were not softly led by illusion, they would faint by the way, and droop and die, and never reach the goal at all. If Love could not plume himself in angel's wings, who would care to harbour him in their hearts? Should we choose unrest, disquiet, sick jealousy, the maddening strife of passions unallayed, and duty and desire impossible to be united, unless we believed we held the ultimate good of life in our hands?—unless we thought to hear seraph's footsteps round about us, and the songs of cherubs over our heads? Love! Love! oh, you do well to paint your wings rainbow-hued, and your bow of golden glimmer, and your arrows flowery red! You do well to promise everlasting joys now in the beginning! What if we waited for truth and the ending, Love? What if we peeped behind the mask, and stripped the paint from the bow and the wings, dear Love? What if we saw you as you are, and as you will be, when you have flowed down the turbid stream of use and many days, and are then no longer young Love, but old and well accustomed—no longer hope and the unknown, but disappointment and the fathomed? Ah! and what then? Why, then, dear Love, all the wise in heaven and earth would shade their eyes from yours, and hide their faces when you passed by; they would snatch their hands from out your grasp, and steel their lips against your touch; they would work and they would weep, they would fast and they would pray, but they would put from them, as too bitter to be borne, the disenchantments of your arts and the waking from your sorceries! Ah, Love! Love! Love! for one honest soul that you have blessed with true joy and led up to unswerving good, count your hecatombs of slain in the plain and the flood, and your legions left stranded in despair, desolate, undone, and withered for ever!

Good humour, or what passes by that name, is very often only a matter of paint and varnish. It ought to be more, I know; it ought to be the clear grain, close and well knit, of a pure and cleanly growth—true marble and no stucco—mahogany or rosewood or knotted oak or grand old ebony, no wretched make-believe of pine and deal painted and varnished to a lifeless simulacrum. And yet how often it is nothing else! What fiery passions are seething in that inner caldron, when the outward seeming is the smoothest and fairest to be imagined! What a blackened monument of angry tempers and burning hatred, of despair, and all uncharitableness, are daubed into the likeness of a Carrara monolith, with the base surrounded by a procession of all the virtues, and on the capital an angel: and a first-rate likeness! Often when the smile is sweetest and the laugh is loudest, and the veiled eyes are cast down with gentlest pressure, or lifted up with broadest glory—often when the pictured story on the surface is of the blithest, sometimes of the most heroic—the heart beneath is most cankered, and the original tracing

of that pleasant picture was made by the twists and folds of the serpent's trail. But paint and varnishing do wonders; and if you cannot dig down your blackened monument of angry passions, as you ought to do, perhaps the next best thing is to make it look as much like Carrara marble as you can. Which has a better effect from the hill-tops, and is not defacing to the landscape. But whitening sepulchres is a perilous employment.

A church is not exactly the fitting place where to hide the paint-pot, one would think; and yet the church-pew has very often a large supply hidden under its well-cushioned seat, with a varnish-brush lying to the left all handy, and a first-rate choice of colours. Church-pews are thick with paint, and no expense of wit and material spared to make plain and ordinary woods do the duty of the costliest and the rarest. One has to be contented with a vast amount of stucco and painted hempen canvas there; but, like the Treasury Bench, perhaps the truth unvarnished would be worse, so we may be content to be saved from greater evils by the sacrifice of small veracities. Is it for the good, quite, of simple souls, that those small veracities should be stripped of their paint and varnish, and the inharmonious mosaic work underneath pointed out to all eyes? It may be; but it is surely just a question, touching the ultimate value of the present course. Paint and varnish the beginnings and the ends of letters; those much-abused conventionalisms, which stand as rampant unveracities confessed by all! "Dear sir" to one man whom your soul despises, and against whom your gorge rises; and "your obedient servant" to another, on whom you are comfortably wiping your feet. Paint and varnish, my dear friend, paint and varnish every inch of it!—only to be defended on the plea that the gorilladom of the Palace of Truth would be a worse condition of things; and Taranaki ransacked for steel to supply bowie-knives and tomahawks not the best translation of Plato's Model Republic or Sir Thomas More's Utopia.

Paint and varnish, too, overlie the whole system of hospitality, and the manner of entertaining your friends, now in use; from the cumbersome dinner, costing more than a month's quiet issue of the household funds, to the crowded soirée, where the lace flounces are torn, and the silk trains are walked on, where nobody speaks to anybody, and where the supper-table is a scramble, and the drawing-room a Babel; where there is no enjoyment, no sociability, no real hospitality, and no true pleasure, but only paint and varnish, and very coarse gilding to look at, and the core just the deadest and stupidest wooden puppet ever pulled by strings, and made to dance to order. But what is *not* paint and varnish, is the pleasant supper. If any one wants to know the meaning of good company, let him inaugurate a series of small suppers, where the men have brains and can talk, and the women are all amiable and pretty, perhaps some of them too with brains and the power

of being vocal—let him compare his creed with that other code of gilded magnificence, and say which is best. He will get no credit for the one, granted; he will make no show, cut no dash, eclipse no one, rival no one, make no one envious, and perhaps incite to no emulation: but he will have drunk his pure emulating water out of a crystal goblet, which is better than wine-merchant's wine turned over the lip of a huge vase of gilt albata, studded with mock jewels.

Paint and varnish the social orderings, everywhere. Paint and varnish all the funeral pomp, and all the marriage pomp, and all the christening pomp, so much delighted in, and in which weak men and women invest so large an amount of social salvation. Paint and varnish—and of what dim and mournful hue!—the heavy silver plates, the silver handles, and the polished oaken coffin, the pall and the plumes and the mutes and the housings—all to convey a wretched bit of senseless clay to its last resting-place, where, in a few years, it will have mingled with the dust, the oaken coffin crumbling and decayed, the silver plates and handles blackened and destroyed, and the whole of that once grand and living humanity compressed into a tibia and a skull, an os femoris or a few scattered vertebræ, tossed out at random by a sexton in his cups. Paint and varnish—white lead and lake for the most part—the marriage pomp of cake and carriage, wedding breakfast and the prancing horses with white favours at their ears. Why not be content to come together in God's name and Love's, without all this silly symbolism, which, though it once meant something true and human, is now but a mere piece of conventional acting, meaning so much money squandered on the occasion, and no more? What does it signify to the world at large that Miss Sarah Jones has married Mr. William Brown, she without a penny-piece to bless herself withal, and he with his clerk's salary of two hundred and fifty pounds a year, paid quarterly, income-tax deducted? The only persons interested on the occasion are the respective fathers and mothers, a stray sister or two, or perhaps a home-keeping brother: it may also be that a young lady or so—one or more—looks pale and is down-spirited, perhaps has a cough, loses appetite and flesh, and is often seen with wet eyelashes and a swollen upper lip for some weeks during the event, before and after; or that sundry young gentlemen, in numbers proportioned to Miss Sarah's personal charms, become suddenly moody and Byronic, or spiritual in a melancholy sort, and Emersonian; but beyond that very limited circle who is there to care for the proceedings of these two worthy young people? And oh! why should they make street shows of themselves, and spend no end of money on certain rites and ceremonies, which, for all positive value, are just so many "medicine bags," or Numbo-Jumbo fetichisms, and no more?

Poor young mother! You let baby cut his teeth on your best Trichinopoly chain now, be-

cause the glitter pleases him, and you know the gold to be pure: wait for the tenth! I think that you will find that old battered ring of well-chewed India rubber quite good enough for Decimus, for all that he is the finest of the lot and the most beautiful: "Sitting up like a king," says nurse, at an age when, by natural rights, his head should be hung upon damaged springs, with his backbone a mere line of gristle, jointed secundum artem. You have learnt the core of motherhood by this time, and can dispense with pigments.

Paint and varnish, on the hands and lips of the fashionable physician, who declares, my dear madam, that you are all nerves, the most sensitive creature alive, needing with tenderness a perpetual change of air and amusement; when all you want, my dear madam, is a severe course of the Whole Duty of Man, and some little skill in mastering a refractory temper. Paint and varnish on the lawn bands of the fashionable preacher thundering against vulgar vices, not likely to assail his well-bred congregation, but salving delicately over those to which by nature and position they are prone; paint and varnish on the barrister defending an unsavoury cause—on the attorney making black seem white, and smudging over white with pailfuls of forensic ink; paint and varnish on the politician talking bunkum on the hustings, or nonsense in the House—on schoolmasters and schoolmistresses writing their half-yearly reports to the parents—on testimonials—on quack advertisements, with their respectable vouchers. Paint and varnish, indeed, on nine-tenths of our modern life: the real thing covered up and hidden, and no honest showing forth of difficulties or blemishes, of weak spots or of splinters. And though a fair outside is a grace, yet when the whole thing is outside, we may be excused for longing earnestly for something solid within, and for relegating paint and varnish to the limbo of shams insupportable to honest human souls.

#### BETWEEN TWO FIRES.

IN the autumn after the election of the present Napoleon to the French Presidency, law business of importance took me to Châlons, the well known central station on the great Chemin-de-Fer de l'Est, that joins Paris to Strasbourg.

A valuable estate near Luneville had been left to my ward, Mademoiselle Eloïse Espinasse, the year before, by her uncle: a rich manufacturer of Lyons, whose affairs, thanks to the rascality of a lawyer at Bar-le-Duc, had become so embarrassed and in such a frightful state of confusion, as to require my personal attention. It was important that I should help my agent, Monsieur Fabrice Rouget, of Châlons, to disentangle the difficulties and defeat the mean arts and subtle machinations of the pettifogger whom we had combined to expose and to defeat.

Nine weary days I passed at Châlons, toiling over chests of dusty parchments, and trying to master the intricacies of French provincial law. O what muddy seas of mediæval

lore did not that wearisome M. Rouget plunge me into! What endless harangues did he not deliver on the former frontiers of Poitou and Guienne! What hateful and irrelevant discussions did he not lead me into, about feudal rights, military tenure, soccage, and the Salic law! Whether he purposely intended to confuse me, whether he was unable to explain the provincial law, or whether he wished to make an endless Penelope's web of the whole business, I could not decide.

All I was certain of, was, that at the end of the third day I got very irritable at the tedious way in which French provincial lawyers managed their affairs, and devoted to the infernal gods M. Rouget, mediæval law, Châlons, and the Latouche estate. I devoted to the same gloomy deities, all those dull-eyed pedants and obscure legal writers who hid themselves, like the pursued cuttle-fish, in clouds of ink and water; who would not set down a plain thing plainly, or a brief thing briefly, but who went on shaving and shaving at a simple enunciation of justice until they had reduced it to as many slices as an eating-house ham.

But let me describe my tormentor, M. Rouget. He was a thin fleshless man of fifty, who rendered his natural pallor more perfectly corpse-like by always wearing a badly-cut seedy suit of black. I suppose he had eyes, but I really never particularly saw them, as he always wore huge green spectacles of the sort offensively denominated "goggles"—blinkers, in fact, rimmed with blue steel, and glassed in like miniature railway danger-signals. If his eyes showed at all inside these green caverns, they showed no more than the wick of a candle shows, inside a horn-lantern. By no bold front view, by no stealthy side view, of those eyes, could I discover any expression in them. M. Rouget might be dying of ophthalmia; but, for all that, those hideous spectacles had much the effect of intentional masks until the candles were lighted or the gas-light fell on them; and then they struck me as resembling the two lamps that you see on an advancing express train.

Yet, who could be afraid of such a living corpse, such a legal Lazarus, with his flabby uncertain walk, his restless imbecile shuffling manner, and his thin tremulous yellow lips? Why, one blow from the shoulder would have killed him; with one grip of my hand I could have flattened him against his wall of deed boxes; with one wrestling throw I could have dashed him through his office-window into the cathedral court-yard below.

This was almost my nightly train of thought, as at nightfall I left the great ecclesiastical lawyer of Châlons, and paced slowly back to my hotel. The very suspicion I felt to be a sort of crime, for M. Rouget had overwhelmed me with attentions. I had been literally fêted at Châlons. It had been all I could do, to remain at the hotel, and not take up my quarters with my French colleague.

I bore this entanglement, intentional or unintentional, pretty well, for nine days. It is my

habit, my nature, to appear to bear, to listen, to dally, and then at once to rise and snap all hindrances, and plunge away into freedom. M. Rouget thought he had in me a patient, on whom he was daily to rub in liniments of old law, for any length of time; but imagine his astonishment when, on the tenth morning, I announced my resolution to set off by the eleven o'clock A.M. train, that very day, to Bar-le-Duc, and there confront our enemy, the lawyer who had given us so much trouble.

"I advise you not, I advise you not, Monsieur Hudson," said M. Rouget. "You are impetuous, he is a fox; you will make nothing of him; you will lose a valuable day, which I had intended to devote to the topography of the Latouche property in the thirteenth century, tracing it downward to the present hour."

Anything, even a fight with M. Gouffet, was better than that, so off I went, leaving the thirteenth century entirely at the disposal of M. Rouget.

I found M. Gouffet, a benevolent-looking cheery person, with white hair and a red face. He was all submission, all politeness, all conciliation—until at last I drove him into a corner, and slightly punctured him with the needle of logic; then, he arose a devil—a devil wrapped in flames—he seemed not to speak to me, but to spit at me; he defied me, he threatened to beggar Madlle. L'Espinasse, and all who aided her. He paraded before me all the flaws in the legal ropes by which old M. Latouche had hoped to bind his estate together.

A lawyer never strikes. I bowed, I smiled—which made him flame out again—put on my hat, and took my leave. I got back to Châlons in time for the table d'hôte. I found, however, on my table, a pressing invitation from M. Rouget to come and dine with him at six o'clock, tête-à-tête. I had no time to refuse, though I was tired and worried: so I dressed and went.

The dinner was a good one; the wine was excellent. M. Rouget's eyes gave a glow-worm, or rather corpse light, kind of glitter when I told him of my ill success.

"M. Gouffet is not so patient as I am," he said.

"It is war to the knife, now," I replied. "We must press the matter fast. I will go to Luneville myself to-morrow, survey the estate, and collect witnesses."

He startled when I said to-morrow.

"Good!" said M. Rouget, oracularly; and was silent for some minutes, as if thinking. "Just what I was going to propose."

All at once he rose, went to the chimney-piece with a preoccupied air, and took down a letter that was stuck in the frame of the mirror.

"A thousand pardons," said he, "but I have been so absorbed in thought to-day about this business, seeing how much you want it settled. This letter came for you half an hour after you left."

I took the letter; it was from England; from my ward, Mademoiselle Espinasse. It ran thus:

"Dear Guardy. I write you a hurried line to tell you that I have heard lately from our friends at Luneville. They do not know you are in France, but beg me to warn you against your agent, M. Rouget, of Châlons. He was many years ago, they have discovered, imprisoned at Bordeaux for aiding in a forgery. He is now supposed to be deeply engaged in Red plots. He is 'a bad subject' altogether, and no one knows what he is aiming at, as he seems to preserve a sort of respectability. Alfred is so fond of his pony. Mary Danvers is the dearest girl," &c. &c. &c.

My worst suspicions, then, were realised. My presentiment had been well founded. That green-eyed corpse in the seedy evening-dress, was a villain, perhaps in league with the more violent Satan of Bar-le-Duc to rob my poor ward of her little property, and to bamboozle me.

I could have beaten down the green-eyed corpse with that heavy Bourdeaux decanter that stood at my elbow; but, it was necessary for me to dissemble, so I bit my lips, and folding up the letter, apologised for reading it.

M. Rouget laid down a bunch of raisins he was stripping, and a green glimmer of distrust, as from the eyes of a starving wolf, emanated from his spectacles. I suppose my voice had for the moment changed; perhaps I had turned paler.

"Nothing disagreeable, I hope, in the letter from England?"

"Well," said I, hesitatingly, "it does not contain very pleasant news. Some law business of mine has gone rather against me."

M. Rouget went on with the raisins; his suspicions were disarmed. He took an almond and dipped it in his white wine.

"Ha," he said, "law business *will* sometimes go wrong. One plants, one waters; but another picks the fruit."

How could I deny such a truism? I turned the conversation.

"Is there any truth," I said, "by the way, M. Rouget, in these perpetual rumours of plots against the President? The Journal des Débats seems full of them to-day. Some railway clerks have been seized——"

"Seized!" said Rouget, spasmodically, leaping up and clutching at the tablecloth. "I did not read it! Where?"

"At Rosières aux Salines," I replied, somewhat astonished at the lawyer's unusual excitement.

"Oh, at Rosières," said M. Rouget, quietly resuming his seat and his ordinary death-like manner; "that is nothing to us Châlons people. These newspaper fools, these ape-crétins, are always discovering mares'-nests now, especially in these eastern departments, where we are all so loyal. Besides, railway clerks! Why should railway clerks conspire! Now, to prove to you the absurdity of these libellous stories, let me tell you that our beloved President has been stopping incognito near here, and comes through to-morrow night with only two attendants, on his way to Nancy, whence he returns to Paris. The few who know this, have been much agitated

by the news, for we should have liked to have fêted our beloved President."

"It is strange," I said. "Are you sure of this?"

"Am I sure? A word with you, my dear English coadjutor. Take my advice; go to Luneville to-morrow, by the President's train; you will have good opportunities of seeing him; moreover, you like quickness. There will be no delays; the train will be sure to go at express speed."

I had already determined to go to Luneville to-morrow, and, canard or not, I might as well go by the President's train, both for speed and safety. If the story were a mere provincial on dit, the train would be real enough.

I decided to go, and told M. Rouget so. The train was the 4.30 P.M. train, that would bring me into Luneville about daybreak, and give me a long day for the survey.

I never saw any one so exhilarated as M. Rouget seemed to be at my decision. He rubbed his skeleton hands; his eyes shot out a green light, as if they had been moderators, with the lights newly screwed up; he said "Good!" three times, and then, advancing towards me, shook both my hands.

"Now, my dear sir," he said, "before I wish you good night—for I must work till midnight—frankly, did you not begin to think me slow?"

"Well, I did."

"Ah! You do not understand the ways of us French lawyers; we begin slowly, and end by storm. Let me assure you, on my word of honour, that the day you return from Luneville shall see our affairs assume a very different shape. Mon Dieu! How easily I forgive a zeal so honest, an impatience so natural, in such a cause, on the part of a young practitioner. Good night—au plaisir—au revoir! I meet you to-morrow at the station. I may be of use to you, and I want to see your beloved fellow-passenger. I am proud to be of the least service to you, monsieur; there is no obligation on your side. Good night. God have you in his keeping!"

My suspicions began to thaw. "Those friends of Eloïse are," I thought to myself, "prejudiced—no prejudice like country-town prejudice—I will not believe them. No rogue would have rejoiced at my going to Luneville, to see matters and collect witnesses, for myself. M. Rouget is a pedant, but no rogue. The Luneville people have, perhaps, confounded Rouget with Gouffet."

I went to bed and slept soundly, and yet even through my dreams there buzzed a reviving distrust of the reanimated corpse. And the words of Eloïse's letter rose before my eyes, as if they had been written with phosphorus.

Tuesday, the seventh of November, was a beautiful autumn morning. The sky was pale, but clear and radiant. The beech-leaves glowed dusky-orange in the sun; the birds, those little spendthrifts of the moment, sang, heedless of coming winter; the yellow lime-leaves blew

gaily round the children playing in the public walks of Châlons; the dew hung in quicksilver drops on the kail plants in the garden of the Hotel of the Red Eagle. My day passed in writing letters. Eloïse, my ward, was to be married in January. I had to further matters, and to write to Captain Mason, her intended, who would be detained at Malta until Christmas.

An early dinner, and a short preliminary walk along the banks of the Marne, soon brought round the time for the 4.30 train. By a few minutes past four, I was in the station, superintending the pasting a blue label, inscribed "Luneville," on my solitary trunk.

"Now," thought I to myself, still suspicion-haunted, "I will go to Eloïse's friends at Luneville, as soon as I set foot in the place; I will ascertain at once what grounds they have for bringing these strange charges against a man like——"

A corpse-like hand touched my shoulder; it was M. Rouget's. He was cold and taciturn as ever.

"Come, come," he said, "take your ticket before the Unknown comes; he will be here soon."

The lawyer glided before me with soundless feet, and a haste and energy unusual in him. We came to the grated aperture where tickets were given out.

"One first-class ticket to Luneville," I said.

The clerk made no answer, but looked at M. Rouget.

I repeated my request.

"Not by the 4.30 train?" said the clerk, interrogatively, to M. Rouget.

"Yes, yes! I tell you, by this train, by this train. Why not this train?" replied M. Rouget, angrily, and thrusting a card, with some writing on it, towards the clerk.

The clerk muttered something, drew a ticket from a pigeon-hole, stamped it, handed it to me, raked in the money I paid, bestowed another peculiar look on M. Rouget, and sat down and continued his perusal of the newspaper.

"The poor fellow," said M. Rouget, seeing me surprised, "is brother to one of those clerks who have been arrested at Rosières, and he has been to me about the affair to-day. I advised him to take no steps. But hush, here comes the President!"

At that moment three close carriages drove up to the station gate, and two gentlemen wrapped in military cloaks, their faces hidden by high fur collars, leaped lightly out, and hurrying across the platform, entered a first-class carriage; four others, in ordinary travellers' dress, went to take tickets for the whole party.

The passengers for the train were numerous. They were already taking tickets, disputing about change, buying newspapers, securing seats, ebbing to and fro. M. Rouget had already directed my trunk to be put under the seat of a carriage—four from the luggage-van—for, he said, that was the safest place in the train, and with the least vibration. He was so cordial and anxious for my comfort, that I could not help thanking him.

My travelling companions were an Austrian gentleman, his wife and daughter, and three sons. The father was a portly round-headed man, with large prominent moustachios, and no beard; his wife a lady-like well-dressed person, with a courtly manner. The boys were sturdy little fellows, about ten, seven, and four years old. The daughter was a pretty blonde of seventeen, blue-eyed, lively, and radiant with all the happiness and hopefulness of youth.

M. Rouget saw where my eyes were magnetically drawn.

"Ha! you fripon," he whispered, "I see you will have a pleasant journey to Luneville. Ha! Beautiful young English miss at home, take care, you are about to lose one of your slaves!"

I laughed, and bantered M. Rouget on his versatility. "I never before," I said, "heard you attempt so poetical an ejaculation."

"Ha!" he replied, turning away his green eyes, "an old lawyer had need be versatile; he meets many sorts of people, many friends, many enemies."

I got in, bowed to the family, and took my seat. I threw my plaid over my knees, I placed my hat on its peg, I put on my travelling-cap, and, shutting the door, talked through the open window to M. Rouget. The stoker and the driver, wrapped in winter great-coats, and silent as men of their craft usually are, had already taken their places on the engine. The guards seemed invisible, it struck me; but they had, I supposed, taken their seats in their own special carriages. Indeed, M. Rouget said so.

It was a peculiarity about M. Rouget's eyes that they sometimes seemed phosphorescent; they were phosphorescent now, when he re-slammed my carriage-door, and screwed the handle round tight. He was in a state of good-humoured delight, the corpse was animated, all because I was going to Luneville in company with a pretty Austrian blonde and her family!

The bell rang, the last passengers leaped in, just in time; the engine's mighty heart began to beat; a red flag was waved in a way I had never observed before; M. Rouget cried "Adieu!" there was a smother of white steam cloud, a battle-rattle echoing from the station roof, and we were off. Châlons-on-the-Marne, town-house, cathedral, parish churches, convents, champagne cellars, beautiful bridge, adieu!

In continental travelling there is none of that irrational and disagreeable suspicion so common in the Island of Islands. I and the Austrian family soon got acquainted. I and the count exchanged newspapers and discussed politics. I won the countess's heart by playing with the children, and drawing odd faces for them on the steam of the window. The count, a good-natured though not a brilliant man, was full of the rumours of revolution in Paris, and the reports of republican discontent in the east of France. He was specially astonished when I told him of our illustrious fellow-traveller; he could scarcely "credit the rumour," he said, "as he had come that very morning from Paris, only

stopping an hour or two to show his daughter Châlons; and the Journal des Débats announced that the President would that very day receive a deputation from Cherbourg. But this may be a mask," he added, "for the President is a dark man, and moves in darkness."

Soon after this remark the count fell asleep, and the countess and the children following suit, I and the beautiful blonde had the conversation to ourselves. The sunset began transforming the whole world with its enchanted light; the crimson and yellow vine-leaves glowed like burning metal; the broad grey curtain of western cloud melted into yellow, and in a moment afterwards flushed into rose; my companion was enchanted by the sight, and her beautiful eyes were fixed on those lines of golden light that seemed like steps to some Heavenly temple, with absorbed delight. I was charmed by her enthusiasm, and told her so. Then we talked about art and music. Gradually as it became darker we grew silent. That sunset had undone me; I was in love.

Loisy and Vitry le François flew by us; my fair vis-à-vis had fallen asleep; I was looking out of window, amusing myself in trying to distinguish forms in the uncertain light. All I could see, was, that it was a wide lonely open country. We must have been somewhere between Vitry and Blesme when a crackling sound awoke me. I thought at first it was fancy, but it increased. It was like the sharp crackle of fire spreading among straw. I had visited America and had stood in danger from prairie fires, and I knew the terrible sound well.

I softly opened the window and looked out. A gust of hot smoke, mingled with sparks, drove towards me from the carriage next but one, the carriage next the luggage-van. The train was on fire!

I turned to awake my fellow-passengers, but some mysterious instinct of fear had already aroused them. The count was wild with excitement, the children and the ladies were clinging together. The count flung open the carriage-door, and shouted to the guards for help. The whole train was now alarmed. When I looked out of the opposite window there were men thrusting their heads out of every window. But no guard came or answered. On went the train at a more tremendous speed than before, swaying with the fury of its speed, and hurrying on flaming through the darkness.

"There is but one thing to do, count," said I. "The flame spreads towards us; it will soon reach the next carriage, which is empty. I will try and creep along the footboard, and find a guard, to signal the engine-driver. The wind is high; no guard hears our voices. Do you remain firm, and tranquillise the ladies. Dear ladies, be calm, the train must soon stop!"

I stepped out on the footboard, and, clinging from window to window, contrived to reach the guard's carriage. But it was empty. A torn signal-flag lay on the floor. When I returned, I found the count gone. No one knew when, where, or how he had gone; he had either fallen or thrown himself out. The countess lay

swooning on the floor, the children were crying, the smoke now poured in through the lamp-hole at the top of the partition, and the panel was hot to the hand.

Suddenly the countess rose to her feet, stared round her with the eyes of madness, and exclaimed: "O Karl, Karl! He is dead! Karl is dead; he has fallen." And stepping out on the footboard before I could touch her, she either fell or threw herself into the darkness.

I shall never forget the shriek of the countess's daughter as her mother reeled and fell. Some dreadful impulse seemed to urge her to the same dreadful death; but I held her, and implored her to be calm, and to help me to save the children. By this time the flames had begun to reach us through the charred partition; the very floor would soon be hot under our feet. She promised me she would do what I advised, and drew the children to her.

The train still went on at the same appalling speed; already many of the passengers had cast themselves out; many others were frantically screaming to have the train stopped. Again I tried to reach a guard, but the flames drove me back. The luggage-van, and the next carriage, were vomiting flames. I returned to my own carriage, and found it empty—on fire. I staggered, and fell back into the darkness. I remember no more.

When I awoke, I was in the hospital at Luneville. I was lying with my head bandaged; my bed was one of a long row of beds. A neatly-dressed nurse smiled when she saw me open my eyes, and made a gesture to some one who stood out of sight. A soft little hand pressed mine, and I heard a voice: it was the voice of Eloïse Espinasse.

"Dear, dear Guardy," she said, "how ill you have been! Alfred and I thought at one time you would never have got over it; but, God be thanked, you are at last given to us again."

"Bless you, Eloïse, and Alfred too; how long have I been here?"

"Six weary weeks. They telegraphed for me, and Alfred brought me over. The doctor says you will soon recover now."

"And the count," I said, "and the countess, and—all?"

"And all? And Mademoiselle Héléne, you

mean; all nearly well—only bruised—thank God, all escaped without much hurt. Mademoiselle Héléne talks much of you. And O Guardy, you love her—I'm sure you do."

By degrees, as I recovered strength, I heard the whole story. The train had been set on fire by some Red conspirators in hopes of destroying the President: who, after all, had not travelled by it, although he had sent two or three officers of his personal staff. The engine-driver and guards had been bribed, or in some way or other gained over. They were sent to the galleys for life. The accident was but slightly mentioned in the French papers, although several persons lost their lives. The President desired the plot to be as little known as possible.

From the count—whom I strongly suspected of having made a rather premature attempt on his own selfish account—I heard that he had thrown himself over a sloping bank, and suffered nothing more severe than a bad shaking. The countess had fallen stunned, with her head not more than two inches from the rails. The long train of carriages had passed her as she lay insensible, but she had escaped. When I left the carriage one of the children got on to the seat, trying to look out of window to see where his mother had fallen; in doing so he had overbalanced himself and fallen. The flames had then come in so fast that they had threatened instant death to Mademoiselle Héléne and the remaining children, who, believing me killed, had stepped out on the footboard, and one by one dropped. Many extraordinary escapes of this kind could be testified to, by many living persons who were in that train.

"But the best of all, Guardy," said my ward to me one day when she came to see me, "is, that they have discovered that M. Gouffet, at Bar-le-Duc, and M. Rouget, at Châlons, were in league in this affair; and they are both to be sent to the galleys; and ever since they have been arrested, our law matters at Luneville have gone on well, and all will soon be settled; and Alfred says I am to marry him as soon as you are well enough to give me away."

It must have been a sudden thought of the lawyer of Châlons to make me a victim to his cruel plot. But he did much better. He made me known to a charming wife, to whom I am devoted.

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