

"THE STORY OF OUR LIVES FROM YEAR TO YEAR"

# ALL THE YEAR ROUND

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## A SILENT WITNESS.

BY EDMUND YATES.

AUTHOR OF "BLACK SHEEP," "CASTAWAY," "THE YELLOW FLAG," &c. &c.

### CHAPTER VII. PRECAUTIONS.

THE sharp jingle of the rusty bell startled Captain Studley, endeavouring to piece together his wandering thoughts, and to realise to himself what had occurred. After a hurried glance at his daughter, who was lying moaning in her half-sleep, and tossing to and fro upon her pillow, he left the room, and with quick, nervous footsteps made for the gate.

"Who's there?" he asked, in trembling accents, before he opened it.

"All right," was the answer, in Heath's well-known deep voice.

"You have been a long time," muttered Studley, as he closed the door behind him.

"The chemist had gone to bed," said Heath, "and I had to knock him up; but he was a civil, stupid fellow, and swallowed my tale, and gave me all I wanted with the utmost readiness. Has the servant returned?"

"Yes," said Studley; "she came soon after you left. I spoke to her as we agreed, and it ended pretty much as you anticipated—she was frightened at the idea of infection, and would not come in; so she has gone home, promising to send her mother, who is accustomed to nursing sick people, in the morning."

"So far, so good. By that time we shall know what to do with her," said Heath.

"Now tell me about your daughter."

"Not in there—don't go in there," cried Studley to his companion, who was making for the dining-room; "stand here on the steps for an instant."

"Where you please," said Heath, with a contemptuous shrug of his shoulders; "only let me know. Has she come to her senses?"

"Yes," answered Studley; "that is to say, partly, poor girl. She looks round her in a strange dazed way, and does not seem to realise where she is. More than once she has started up in bed with a short, sharp cry, and, when I have tried to soothe her, she has asked me if it were not a horrid dream. Of course I told her it was; but she is in a pitiable state, constantly moaning and tossing about in the bed. I don't know what we shall do with her!"

"This draught will keep her quiet," said Heath, taking a vial from his pocket, "more especially if you add to it five drops from your own laudanum bottle. It is of vital importance that for the next twenty-four hours she should be ignorant of all that has passed, and so far helpless as to be unable to leave the room, or hold communication with anyone but you."

As Studley took the bottle he raised his eyes searchingly to Heath's face, saying, "There is—there is nothing in this but what you said, Heath, I suppose?"

"Bah!" said Heath, snatching it from him, extracting the cork with his teeth, and pouring some of the contents down his throat. "I suppose that will satisfy you of its harmlessness. Take it now, put the additional five drops to it, and see that she swallows it at once; and as soon as she drops off come to me."

"Not down-stairs," said Studley quickly; "we can sit on the landing outside her door. It would be dangerous to leave her unwatched."

"It would be a great deal more dangerous to have her listen to what we said,"

said Heath; "but I can satisfy myself on that point when I come up. One word more. She has said nothing but what you have told me? she has made no reference to—to anything that she saw?"

"Not a syllable," said Studley; "indeed she can scarcely be said to have got her senses back yet."

"Give her that, then," said Heath, "and we shall be sure of her for the time we require."

After Studley had gone up-stairs, Heath went into the dining-room and looked round him. The lamp shone brightly; the fire which he had lighted when he came to clear the room was burning in the grate; the jewel-casket and its contents had been removed, and the cloth replaced. One of the hanging corners of this cloth was deeply stained. In making his careful survey he came upon this, and, taking out his pocket-knife, cut off the dark corner, and ripped the cloth above it into jagged strips.

"That looks as if a dog had done it," he muttered to himself. "What was that he said about a mark on the carpet? Ah, here it is!" and stooping down he examined it thoroughly. It was not on the carpet, but on the hearth-rug—an irregular-shaped crimson stain. Heath considered for a moment. Then he thrust the poker in amongst the burning coals. When he had made it red-hot he pulled the poker forth, and holding it immediately above the stain, let it drop, left it there for an instant, and then rolled it three or four times over with his foot, finally picking it up and replacing it in the fender. "I think that will do," he said, looking at it, "nobody could doubt but that that was the result of an accident, and now every troublesome trace is destroyed. A close risk though," he muttered, shaking his head, "and with such a fellow as this in confidence, who can tell when he is safe?" He turned to go up-stairs. Then suddenly looked over his shoulder at the spot where *that* had been. There was a dark shadow there now, he could swear. He stepped back to the table, turned the lamp round, and the shadow was gone. Then with a last sigh of relief he left the room.

He found Studley waiting for him on the landing at the top of the stairs. No sound came from the bed-room, though the door was ajar, and Studley, pointing towards it, whispered "She is sound."

"Did you give her the draught?" asked Heath.

"Yes," said Studley, "she took it quite quietly, and scarcely knew what it was—I believe you can do anything with her now—and in a few minutes she fell into quite a peaceful slumber. Poor girl!" he muttered, "it would be almost better for her if she never woke."

"That is entirely a matter of opinion," said Heath, "but what we have to do is to attend to business. This wretched affair—brought about, mark, by sheer necessity, not by any wish of mine—has changed the whole programme; the money and jewels plainly are no longer safe here, they must be removed by me instead of by you as we originally intended, and no steps must be taken towards parting with the diamonds for months to come."

"Where do you propose to take the things?" asked Studley.

"I think to Paris, but I have not decided yet," replied Heath.

"Why can't I take them?" asked Studley eagerly. "I cannot remain in this place; I shall go mad if I remain here."

"And what is to become of your daughter?" asked Heath, turning upon him savagely. "She cannot go from here; she holds our lives in her hands, and you are answerable for her. You must remain here professedly in charge of your sick child, and all the inquiries that are to be made, and all the work that is to be done outside must be done by me."

"When will he be missed, do you think?" whispered Studley.

"That is the first point on which I intend to assure myself," said his companion. "I shall go to town the first thing to-morrow morning, in order to ascertain if his intention of coming here to-day was known to anyone."

"I shouldn't think it would be," said Studley. "It isn't very likely that a fellow who was coming down to pay money which he had lost at cards, would care to inform anyone of his errand."

"No," said Heath, "I think you are right there. And there is another reason why he should keep silence."

He pointed as he spoke towards the bed-room door.

Studley at first looked up at him blankly, but suddenly he said, "Great heavens! I had forgotten all about that. If she really cared for him, it is enough to turn the poor girl's brain."

"That is an additional necessity for keeping a strict watch upon her," said

Heath, "and that duty and responsibility must necessarily devolve entirely on you. However, she can be safely left now for a few minutes, and I want you to come down-stairs and help me to pack those things in the portmanteau."

When the portmanteau—a strong black one, with Studley's name on it in white letters—was fully packed, it was found to be very heavy indeed.

"You will have some difficulty in carrying this, won't you?" asked Studley, who had to take both his hands to lift it from the ground, "and yet it would not be advisable to give it into anyone else's custody."

"I can carry it well enough," said Heath, "and you may be perfectly certain that no one else touches it, until its contents have been deposited in a place of safety. By the way, I shall want to be up early in the morning, and to get across to the station before the omnibus starts. Is there any chance of obtaining a fly in the village?"

"They keep one at the Lion," said Studley; "but the train before that which the omnibus meets goes soon after seven o'clock."

"That is the one which I intend to take," said Heath. "It would be advisable for me to show early at the bank, and I have rather a hard day's work before me there. I shall lie down in your den for a few hours, and I am sure to wake in good time. You, I suppose, will sleep in the chair by your daughter's bed-side?"

"Yes," said Studley, "I suppose I must."

"You will be guided in your conduct to her by circumstances, remember," said Heath. "From the little I have seen of her she is a girl of great force of character; but you will have sufficient influence over her to keep her quiet for forty-eight hours. In that time I shall be back, and we can consult further. Now good-bye."

He put out his hand, and had held it out for a minute before Studley met it with his own. For an instant an angry flush rose on Heath's cheeks, but it died away speedily as he repeated, "Good-bye; remember all that depends on your care and watchfulness!" When he reached the captain's room, Heath smoked a pipe and read a book—he could not have told you what, the first that came to hand—before stretching himself on the ragged old ottoman which was to serve him as couch. When he had blown out the light and

closed his eyes he fell asleep at once, and slept calmly and peacefully until daybreak, when he awoke, and taking the portmanteau with him, walked off to the Lion, where he roused the still slumbering stable people and ordered a fly.

Some of the younger gentlemen attached to the banking establishment which was still known as Middleham's, were a trifle late in putting in an appearance the next day, for on Monday morning they were accustomed, as they described it themselves, to "cut it rather fine." Sunday was for most of them a day of pleasure and recreation; in the summer time they "to the woodlands did repair," and boating excursions and campings out, and dinners at the various pretty suburban places of resort, the return from which was often prolonged late into the night, rendered their forced early rising more than usually disagreeable. Even during the autumn and winter, Sunday was the chosen day for these social gatherings among themselves or with other joyous fellows of the same age and standing in life, the result being that there was immense difficulty in what the witty Moger described as "brushing the cobwebs out of your eyes on Monday mornings."

The relations between the younger gentlemen and Rumbold, the bank porter, who sat on a hard bench immediately inside the ever swinging doors, were of a confidential nature, and much freedom of talk passed between them. In former days they were in the habit of receiving from Rumbold information regarding the movements of Mr. Middleham, who had been by Moger irreverently christened "Old Fireworks," and was generally spoken of by that appellation; and now the same agency was worked, and Rumbold was called upon to report progress in the case of the present manager, who, at the same fount of humorous inspiration, had been dubbed "Hampstead." A stout, red-faced, black-haired man, Rumbold, who was reported once to have been a butcher, and whose knowledge of prime cuts and wing-ribs was utilised by the younger gentlemen at the social feeds, for which he acted as their caterer; otherwise a quiet, unassuming man, with a sharp eye for any suspicious-looking character on the wrong side of the swinging doors, and a power of throwing a whole scuttle full of coals on to the fire at one cast, a quality which did not diminish his popularity with those of the younger gentlemen,

whose fate it was to encounter every buffet of the wind which each customer brought in with him.

"Halloo, Rummy!" said the latest of the younger gentlemen, as he bustled into the bank, looking very blinking about the eyes and very dry and feverish about the lips, "I am a trifle late this morning—has Hampstead come?"

"Come?" said the porter, who, since the occurrence of the murder, had, with his wife, taken up his quarters at the bank, the old housekeeper being pensioned. "Come! I should rather say he had come. He walked in as I was sweeping out the office this morning, just before eight, looking as fresh as paint, and carrying a portmanteau. He told me to ask my Missus to send him up some breakfast—am and eggs, and tea—and when I was last in there to make up his fire he was blazing away at the papers like one o'clock."

"What's he brought a portmanteau for," asked Mr. Smowle, as he hung up his great-coat and hat in the little passage appropriated to those garments—"he can't be going away?"

"Can't he be going away?" said the porter, whose phrases, whenever possible, were of an interrogatory character, "I should say that he could be going away very much; and more than that, that he is, seeing that he asked me to get him a Continental Bradshaw just now."

"What a lark," said Mr. Smowle. "Then we shall only have old Frodsham in charge, and we can easily fudge him. I shall be able to get a little longer sleep then. I am beastly tired this morning I know. Am I last, Rummy?"

"All except Danby," said the porter, "he ain't turned up yet."

"Danby not come? Why, he's generally the first of all."

"Yes, generally," said the porter, "but I suppose he's been keeping it up, like the rest of you."

Mr. Smowle has hardly perched himself on his rickety stool behind an enormous ledger, when Mr. Heath's bell rings violently. Mr. Smowle breaks off a very interesting story about his previous night's exploits which he is telling to his neighbour, a story in which "three goes of Scotch whisky," seemed to bear a conspicuous part, to remark that "Hampstead is in a rasping humour this morning, Rummy says—he's been here since ever so early, and is walking into the work like knife."

"He will be walking into some of us

like knife I should think, from the manner in which he rings his bell," said Mr. Bente, the gentleman addressed. "There it goes again. Look at old Rummy running!"

Mr. Heath sat at his desk in his private room up to his eyes in business; the black portmanteau, carefully laid down on the side on which Studley's name was emblazoned, was on a chair within reach; and even in the midst of what seemed to be his most pressing business, Mr. Heath would cast an occasional glance at this portmanteau, to assure himself of its safety. When he thought of it and its contents, notwithstanding all the fearful anxiety on his mind, he could scarcely refrain from a cynical smile. If the clerks in the outside office only knew what that portmanteau contained! if the detectives, who were supposed to be still at work, piecing together scraps of evidence! if the newspaper writers who were so sarcastic on the detectives, and so confident that nothing would ever come of their search!

Monday was always a heavy post day at Middleham's; and that morning an enormous pile of letters had been brought in. They were in various languages, but the manager seemed to read them all with the same facility. Many of them dealt with enormous sums, and these he laid aside, reading the ordinary ones through at a glance, and noting his instructions in regard to them in a small, fine hand on the back of each. To the important documents he gave greater time, going into deep thought and heavy calculations, out of which he came with furrowed brow and aching head.

"I am sick of it," he murmured, pushing away a mass of papers from before him. "I must go; this business is telling on my nerve and my brain. Once let me see myself well clear of this affair, and I will quit Middleham's and its reminiscences, for ever. Now for the first step." He rang the bell sharply, that peal which had attracted the attention of Messrs. Bente and Smowle.

"I wish to see Mr. Danby," he said, glancing over the letter which he held up before his face at the attending Rumbold.

"Mr. Danby ain't arrived yet, sir," said the porter, in a deferential voice, very different from that in which he was accustomed to carry on his conversations with the younger gentlemen.

"Not arrived!" said Mr. Heath, laying down the letter and glancing at the clock

on the mantelpiece. "Ask Mr. Frodsham to step to me and bring the attendance-book." When Rumbold had left the room, the manager opened one of the drawers of his desk, and, taking out a small looking-glass, carefully surveyed himself in it. Returning it to its place, he opened another drawer, whence he took a silver flask, which he placed to his lips, and had just restored it to its former position, and turned the key upon it, when Mr. Frodsham entered the room.

"Good morning, Frodsham," said the manager. "I have a bit of special work here which I wanted Mr. Danby to do, and I find he has not arrived. I have not been able to check the attendance of the gentlemen since I took up my position here; but I believe he is pretty punctual, is he not?"

"Most punctual, sir," said Mr. Frodsham, "and I cannot understand his absence, unless indeed he is ill. Now if it had been Mr. Smowle—"

"Yes," said Heath, with a grave smile, "I could understand it very well then. Oh, here is the attendance-book." He took it from the porter, and turned over a few of the leaves. "No, as you say, Mr. Danby is always one of the first to arrive, while Mr. Smowle figures horribly."

"Danby, surely, must be ill," repeated Mr. Frodsham.

"I should hope not," said Heath. "He is generally a steady young man; but he is mortal, like the rest of us; and yesterday was Sunday, and he may possibly have been with some of the other gentlemen on a jollification and have overslept himself, or be suffering from next morning's headache. Will you be good enough to ask the gentlemen whether Mr. Danby is in company with any of them yesterday?"

Mr. Frodsham departed on his errand, and in a few minutes returned.

"No," he said. He had questioned all the gentlemen, and they had none of them seen Mr. Danby, since the closing of the bank on Saturday afternoon.

"Well, then, it is no use our worrying ourselves further about it," said Mr. Heath, "except that if he has not arrived by twelve o'clock, I wish you would be good enough, Frodsham, to send a messenger to his lodgings, and inquire whether he is really ill."

"I should hope it would be nothing serious," said Mr. Frodsham, "Danby is a general favourite in the bank."

"And he would be particularly useful to me at this moment," said the manager,

"as he writes better French than any of the others, and I shall probably have to leave this matter of Mieville and Company, of Brussels, in his hands."

"Are you going away, sir?" said Mr. Frodsham, with surprise.

"Only for a night or so," said Heath; "but I have information this morning of something going on in Paris which, I think, will require looking into by me presently. If Danby is ill, the Mieville matter must stand over till my return. So see that he is inquired after, please."

Most of the younger gentlemen had returned from their luncheon, and Mr. Smowle was cursing the fate which compelled him to return to work immediately after the mid-day meal, without allowing him to indulge himself in the solace of tobacco, when the faithful Rumbold, in one of the intervals of fire-stoking, sidled over to the desk, and, while pretending to be occupied in moving one of the large ledgers, said,

"There's going to be a vacant stool, I guess, in this establishment, Mr. Smowle."

"What do you mean by that?" asked Smowle, looking up.

"What do I mean?" said Rumbold, as usual, interrogatively, "why, exactly what I say. The guvner's sent up a messenger to young Danby's lodgings to see if he was ill, and the messenger has just come back."

"Well, there's nothing much the matter with him, I suppose," said Mr. Smowle. "Monday morning head-ache, eh, Rummy?"

"Oh, isn't there nothing much the matter with him?" said the porter, with a redundancy of negative. "What do you think the answer at his lodgings was? That he went out some time yesterday afternoon, without saying where he was going or when he should come back, and he didn't come home all night; and they have heard nothing of him since."

"Hallo, Walter D.; hallo, my young friend!" said Mr. Smowle, shaking his head; "this looks very bad. I hope you are not going to rob me of my character as the black sheep of this establishment, because that wouldn't do me much good, and might do you an amazing amount of harm. Didn't say where he was going, and didn't come home all night? Ah, well, well, well! What did Hampstead say when he heard that message?"

"What did he say?" said Rumbold. "Why, he shook his head very hard, and didn't seem to like it a bit. Mr. Frodsham was in the room when it came, and he seemed regularly in the dumps."

"No right-minded person, Rumbold," said Mr. Snowle, looking up at him, "could contemplate any lapse from the paths of virtue without feeling, as you are pleased to express it, 'in the dumps.' Besides, Danby, unlike myself, was of some use in this establishment."

"That's just what's put the manager out so," said Rumbold. "He isn't one to take on because one of you gentlemen has a sick head-ache or has been out for a lark; but he wanted Mr. Danby particularly just now. I heard him say so."

"What did he want him for?" asked Snowle.

"To take charge of the foreign correspondence while he is away," said the porter. "The manager's going away to Paris to-night. I told you it wasn't for nothing he sent for the Continental Bradshaw."

"Going to Paris? What, is there anything special on there?"

"From what I could make out, I should say there was," said Rumbold. "Some of them foreign discount agents playing up their games again no doubt, and the manager is going to look after them himself. There would be a fine chance for you now, if you could speak French, to cut in and take Mr. Danby's place."

"Parlez vous Français," said Mr. Snowle. "'There are many to whom this question is addressed'; for the rest vide advertisement. No, Rummy, the French which I acquired during a fortnight at Boulogne is limited, and I certainly could not undertake to conduct a correspondence in that language."

So the day wore on and the evening came, when the younger gentlemen were released from their toils, and went away, bestowing very little thought upon their missing comrade. But the manager remained long after their departure, sending out for some dinner about five, a thing which he had never been known to do before, and at seven despatching Rumbold to fetch a cab.

When he announced the arrival of the vehicle, the porter intended to take the portmanteau, but was surprised to find that Mr. Heath had it already in his hand.

"No, thank you," he said, checking the movement which Rumbold made to take it from him. "I can carry it very well myself, and I want you to look in the address-book and see where Mr. Danby lives, and tell the cabman to drive there. I should like to learn something of him before going."

When Rumbold came out with the address, he found the manager already seated in the cab, and the portmanteau with him, so that all he had to do was to direct the driver to South Molton-street, and to retire into the bank very much puzzled at all that had taken place.

Mrs. Wilkins, the landlady of Mr. Danby's lodgings, was not best pleased on hearing from her maid-of-all-work, "A man wanted to see her about Mr. Danby, please," but on emerging from the underground regions in which she passed most of her time she was confronted by Mr. Heath, and was at once much impressed by his manner. He asked whether anything had been heard of the missing tenant, and seemed quite distressed when Mrs. Wilkins answered in the negative. He took great pains to make the old lady understand that he was the manager of the bank, and that he had called there because Mr. Danby was so highly thought of by his employers. Finally he took his leave, with the hope that when he returned from Paris, where he said he was going, he should find that Mr. Danby was again safely ensconced in what he was sure must be that very comfortable room.

So to the Charing Cross Station and through the night to Dover, across the Channel, and along the Great Northern road to Paris. Two things only were noticeable in him during the journey, and they were that he never parted with the portmanteau, which he now always carried with the painted name of Studley on it well displayed; and that when he staggered from the boat and put his foot upon French soil, or what stands for it, on the slippery, sea-soaked pier of Calais, and was asked what was his name, he replied without hesitation, "Studley." If he had been called upon to produce his passport, the same name would have been found in that document.

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#### THE NEW PARIS OPERA HOUSE.

THE great theatre which has just been completed in Paris is professedly the most perfect specimen of its kind that exists. The architect, M. Garnier, is a man of genius, with just ideas upon dramatic art, which he has worked out logically. He has, moreover, travelled over the world, studying the best examples in every city. He has thus combined theory and practice; and the result, after years of labour,

is the splendid temple that stands at the top of the Rue de la Paix.

No such monument could be reared by private exertion. In almost all the cities of the continent of Europe, certainly in all the capitals, one theatre at least is the work of the State or the City. Indeed, it seems only in logical fitness that, where the exchange, the church, the public square, the town hall, have been furnished by the community itself, an entertainment of such importance, which engrosses the attention of thousands, should enjoy the same substantial aid. The dignity of the stage is enhanced when we see some handsome pile standing conspicuous and alone, filling the whole side of a square, and we know by instinct that this is THE THEATRE. In how many cities abroad does this welcome object meet the stranger's eye: as at Bordeaux, Marseilles, Munich, where splendid and architectural buildings, adorned with statues and columns, are among the stateliest monuments of the town.

There is something almost fascinating in the study of these temples of intellectual entertainment, and it is not surprising that the principles of their arrangement and construction should have exercised the genius and ingenuity of many. The larger the building, the more complicated becomes the problem of arranging distinct and convenient departments for the different classes of the audience; of contriving separate and convenient approaches, and equal opportunities of seeing and hearing for all. There are, in short, so many elements to be considered, so many interests to be harmoniously conciliated, so much temptation to fall into detail, with such opportunities for genius in the direction of simplicity, that into no class of building does logic enter so largely, or the want of it produce such confusion. A well laid out theatre is a grateful and welcome object; and it may be added that this excellence in every way conduces to the dramatic object for which the theatre is built.

During the imperial days, when Paris was being renewed with reckless magnificence, it was felt that the reconstruction would be incomplete without some superb temple of the drama, which should be conspicuous to all the world. There was to be no limit to either cost or magnificence. Everything was done to secure success. A commission was appointed,

not to receive plans, but to enquire into theatrical and scenic principles, and issue a scheme for the guidance of competitors. Machinists, scene-painters, dramatic authors, were all invited to give their opinions; and finally, after all due deliberation, the plans of M. Garnier were selected. A theatre constructed under such conditions might be fairly supposed to represent all that science and experience has discovered to the present time, and yet it has to be admitted that the result of all this prodigious exertion is a theatre, handsome, indeed, but differing little from other theatres of less pretension. This might seem mortifying, but for its establishing the conclusion that the principles of the stage are of an antique simplicity; that honest study only leads back to the old primitive system which has endured since the days of Euripides. All really great architects have been successful in their theatres, as no shape of building offers finer opportunities for bold and simple arrangement.

The New French Opera House may then fairly be taken to represent the most complete development of modern ideas. The architect visited the leading theatres of Europe, and prepared a sort of "return," based on a series of exhaustive questions addressed to the directors. He thus discovered the weak places, and, by comparison, ascertained all that was most convenient in practice.

The new theatre has unquestionably a somewhat gaudy, meretricious air, in keeping with the other imperial constructions, and, though bulky, wants dignity. It impresses at first with a certain surprise, but with successive visits it becomes less agreeable.

The different parts of the house can be distinguished from the outside, which the architect intended as a "note" of his building: an oblong block in front holding the entrance hall, &c.; a dome in the middle, and signifying the "auditorium"; and a huge temple-like building rising behind and higher than all, and containing the stage, and that vast space above the stage, into which the curtain can be drawn without rolling or folding. This sort of architectural arrangement has a spacious air and looks honest, but the unity of the building is sacrificed. The main element, too, is that vast entrance hall where the spectators are assembled. This is the theatre; the rest—stage, approaches, &c.—are "dependencies." The dome, therefore, should be the chief conspicuous object, whilst the

having so vast a chamber over the stage is inartistic, and even, for purposes of stage machinery, seems almost unnecessary, as all the changes might be effected from below. But high as is this construction above the dome, which it dwarfs, it would have been still higher but for an architectural artifice, the dome itself being a false one, and the real dome many feet below. Thus it would seem that the older shape of theatres—the larger oblong block, with a coned roof and a sort of portico in front—is more expressive, and less likely to lend itself to any fantastic result, than the result of M. Garnier's architectural ingenuity.

As one of the very first objects to be considered in designing a place of public amusement, which is intended to contain thousands of spectators, is the provision of ample and convenient means of safe and rapid ingress and egress, the first desideratum in a theatre is that it should be isolated. Too many theatres are built with an anxious regard to considerations of space, with all their entrances huddled together in front, and the audience is thus poured into the house, as it were, through a number of conduits placed side by side. In a grand theatre, standing detached, these matters are much more easily and comfortably arranged, and, by the exercise of good sense, M. Garnier has worked out the important problem admirably. The entrances, it is obvious, should be regulated by some sort of relation to the distinct places inside. It is obvious that the readiest approach to the grand tier would be from the front or façade of the theatre, by means of the grand stair leading straight from the hall to the centre of the bend or horseshoe. As the galleries and upper boxes would have to be reached directly by steeper approaches, these, it is evident, would be best placed at the sides, where, too, would be found the entrances to the pit. But there is yet another difficulty as to the approaches, namely, how to divide the carriage and pedestrian traffic. If both these entrances are in front, there are serious dangers or inconveniences, as any one who has attended the Covent Garden Opera on a crowded night has found. The stream of carriages interrupts the many streams of foot passengers, and this not without peril. These two classes it might seem almost impossible to conciliate; but the division of entrances almost solves the difficulty. Thus the tenants of stalls and grand tier

will arrive in carriages, and be set down in front, while the vast mass of the lower division will come on foot, and make their way to the sides of the building. There is yet an intermediate class, who arrive in hired cabs, and to these M. Garnier allots a distinct entrance at one of the sides, at the expense, it would seem, of his hitherto logical arrangement. The subdivision into hired and private carriage traffic confuses the previous division of entrances into what might be called plebeian and patrician: and it involves the inconvenience that tenants of the stalls or grand tier who have come in a cab must, on going away, make their way from their own door to this special one, where they can alone hope to find their vehicles.

The French custom of "control" by which every one entering the house has to exchange their ticket at a central bureau, is maintained, and in the great hall there will be four of these offices, at each of which four officials will be stationed. This system, though it appears costly and troublesome, is in reality cheap and simple, and once more exhibits the nicely logical instinct of our neighbours in business. The system amounts to this, that not only is there only one barrier for taking the tickets, where the ticket takers sit together, and thus "control" each other, but they themselves are controlled by the vouchers they give in return, and which are retained by the box keepers. In England, fraud is favoured by the false arrangement of a money-taker and a ticket-taker being detailed for each department, who are thus in relation, whereas in France the administration receives the tickets from all alike.

A great feature in a well-built theatre should be the grand staircase. This, of course, belongs to the dress tiers and gala portions of the audience, and should lead directly to the boxes. And certainly the effect of such a grand flight is very striking. But as the floor and stalls in M. Garnier's building are some thirty feet above the level of the street, the grand stair, in the new theatre, had to be divided half way up, so to allow those ascending access to the stall flight. There is an air of compromise in this arrangement and a want of boldness, and it virtually makes two flights instead of one. The whole difficulty arises from the false level of the floor, which is, in fact, placed on the second story. The true arrangement would seem to be that the

floor of the house should be on a level with the street, and that the stairs should lead to the boxes. The truth is that the elaborate subdivision of entrances has led to the adoption of these different levels, and consequently to the multiplication of staircases. Indeed to this cause also must be attributed the disfiguring roof above the stage, for, if the stage itself had been fixed on the ground level, there would have been no necessity for carrying this roof to its present unsightly and inharmonious height.

The interior or *salle* is beautifully proportioned, nearly circular, and giving an idea of vast space. The galleries are of a very solid kind, and by an unusual arrangement, the boxes are placed behind. Thus, each "box" may be said to consist of an exposed "slice" of the gallery, with a little room behind. Like all compromises, this combination enfeebles both elements, but it virtually amounts to the abolition of the box. This is, however, perhaps as well after all, for the encouraging effect on the performers of a house filled to the roof is nearly lost in a theatre that is all pigeon-holes, from which faces languidly peep out. There can be no doubt but that the principle of dramatic effect comprises audiences as well as actors; that the former, by their sympathies and expressed interest, should join in the representation. All the audience here is in the house—the true system—and very different from that of the average theatre, where caverns are hollowed out under the boxes, and where, between the tiers, there are great round absorbing spaces. The *Theatre Français* is almost perfect in this sense, taking into account its size and modest pretensions. From the stage it must appear one amphitheatre of faces, confined, as it were, by slender solid ribbons, the galleries being so shallow, the panel work so narrow, and the occupants put so forward. It may be added, also, that the relation of the stage to the house is simply perfect, its height above the stalls being nicely adjusted. The arch, too, is deep and semi-circular; the painted drapery, though old-fashioned, has a grandeur and solidity that contrasts with the tawdry decorations in other theatres, which, too often, only display themselves instead of giving effect to the stage; and the huge rolling folds of a sombre chocolate drapery, which descend almost to the chord of the arch, throw out, with admirable effect, the figures and scenery below.

The question of what kind the curtain

should be seems simple enough, but should be regulated, like everything else connected with the stage, by logical principles. The old dark-green curtain had a not inappropriate significance, and even mystery. Now gaudy pictures, framed in gold, are almost invariably adopted. These formerly did duty as "drop scenes," which descended between the acts, and were indeed supposed to be no more than scenes let down for the nonce, more grateful to the eye and not so final as the curtain.

But there can be no doubt that the usual temples and vast landscapes of the commonplace act-drop are felt to be inappropriate and out of place, and many devices have been tried to improve upon the conventional arrangement. Curtains of plain material have been tried, but they invariably look poor and mean, even in their best days, while those of genuine velvet or stuff which are in use in some houses are open to the objection of growing "shabby," of showing creases, and of getting worn at the folds and collecting the dust. Again, in a great theatre an amount of material much larger than the space filled has to be employed, so as to cause handsome folds, for otherwise the display would be meagre and poor; and where there is a great amount of material the weight to be lifted becomes enormous, and almost unmanageable.

A painted curtain, then, seems most convenient and least incongruous, the folds not being painted too heavily, and the idea suggested being that of a cloth painted. So does the mellow amber curtain at Covent Garden ascend, though the double folding, which sets in when the curtain is half way up, has a most awkward effect. At the Paris "*Gaieté*" there is a wonderful curtain crowded with figures of all ages and climes, well grouped and painted; yet the effect is bad in exact proportion to the ambition of the effort. As for curtains made of looking-glass and such bizarre attempts, they are mere fantastic tricks, and unworthy of the theatre.

By long-established custom the curtain is let down from the top, but there can be no doubt that, if actual drapery be employed, it should properly fall in graceful folds from each side of the stage. The old green curtain, falling slowly in waves, was certainly effective, and suited the old theatres, but would be wholly out of place where magnificence and glitter reign on both sides of the curtain. Everything

points to the conclusion that the screen interposed between the audience and the stage should be a cloth, richly but soberly painted, in harmony with the front of the house, rather than the back, and in a far more sober key than any of the scenes behind.

The question of lighting is another problem that engages the attention of the architect of a new theatre. Our modern London manager thinks nothing so simple or effective as the sunlight that glares in the roof. In other houses, more old fashioned, chandeliers, following the line of the boxes, are in favour. Yet to these there is the insurmountable objection of inconvenient heat and a kind of interposing glow, as anyone will discover who stoops over the edge of his box. The sunlight is a radically false, coarse, and even detestable mode of illumination. The light thus concentrated is so fierce, that under surfaces are in shadow, and the whole seems laid out in alternate patches of light and darkness. This is not "lighting" in the proper sense of the word.

The audience part of a theatre should be lit like a ball-room or other hall where people in full dress assemble—that is, the light should be diffused, so as to fall with due effect on every part, and show off faces, dresses, and ornaments. The merely furnishing light, pure and simple, is not what is desired. The grand central chandelier, with a mass of light, large instead of intense, is certainly in accordance with the true principle. There is a dignity and beauty in a handsome chandelier, with its glittering crystal drops and elegant design. It must be said, however, that it is open to a very serious objection, which is, that in proportion as it is large and effective, it impedes the view from the galleries. But this is the fault of the arrangement of existing theatres, and the eagerness for profit, through which the frequenters of the galleries are perched away aloft, where they can barely see or hear. If the true principle were applied, of placing the highest gallery no higher than where satisfactory view and hearing of the performance could be secured, it would be found that the chandelier would necessarily be above the line of vision. M. Garnier, indeed, hopes to solve the difficulty by hanging his chandelier in the dome; but this seems an architectural fallacy, as the difficulty is removed by raising the chandelier, and thus preventing it exercising its full function.

Lighting the stage is another difficulty, which has led to endless discussion as to whether the light that illuminates the actor's figure should come from above or below.

In the last century, the stage was lit with great chandeliers, which hung a little in front of the curtain. This, it has been almost vehemently urged, is the true principle; but, as may be imagined, the system is impossible at the present date, where so much glare is required, and where the proscenium is so high. To be effective, the light should be about the same distance from the performers' faces as it is at present; and no amount of ingenuity could contrive this in any other way than by means of the footlights, unless by carrying a screened row of lights across the opening, which would have a strange effect. The truth is, the present system answers well enough, and few, unless reminded of them, would notice the objections to it, viz., casting the shadows upwards, &c.

The French principle, however, of sinking the footlights in a channel, so that they are nearly below the stage, the boards being sloped away in front of them, so as not to interfere with the rays, is a radically false one. The light comes as from an opening in a furnace, and leaves the space above it comparatively unilluminated. The result is, the shadow or darkness on the audience side is too great, and the contrast too strong. Every one sitting in the stalls will have noticed the fierce, unpleasant glare which is cast out of the ground upon the actors as they draw near the orchestra, and which is as opposed to the idea of true lighting as the effect of the "sunlight" is to that of the chandelier. The older system, namely, of lamps, each with its little screen, as can be seen at Covent Garden, is much more satisfactory; as the light reaches the audience through the open spaces between the screens, and is diffused better in front and behind the footlights, and the glare is not nearly so offensive.

The latest French system is to have the jets below the stage reversed. But the whole light furnished is in excess of what is required, which is owing to the necessity for throwing sufficient light on the figures, whether they are away from the orchestra and far up the stage, as well as when they are close to the orchestra. If the light be strong enough in the first instance, it will of course be too strong in

the second; and if sufficient in the second, it will not be sufficient when the actors are removed to a distance.

These, and kindred difficulties, seem inseparable accompaniments of the artificial requirements of the stage, and can no more be altogether got rid of than a theatrical scene can ever be really made like anything in nature, unless the imagination of the spectator largely assists in the process. To say that M. Garnier should not have been able to overcome them altogether, therefore, is merely to say that the designer of the new Paris Opera House is mortal, like the architects of meaner buildings. There is, after all, a limit to what can be done both before and behind the curtain; and, magnificent as it is, we return to our original opinion that the new theatre will not differ in any startling degree from other houses of similar pretensions.

## POPPY.

IN NINE CHAPTERS.

VI.

THAT "Charlie" was a standing offence to the young husband. He protested against being called Max like a man out of a German opera. In his tender moments he would beg Poppy to withdraw the name, but she said she couldn't, she didn't care about the name of Charles since it had been borne by a butler in the Hardwicke household, whose beery propensities had caused him to be ignominiously expelled from further prosecution of his legitimate functions. As to "Charlie," that only meant her Cousin Graham. Max was a delightful name, "and suits you," she said, looking admiringly into the manly face of her husband. She loved him dearly, but she was a little afraid of him; a little bored by his tenderness; a little doubtful of his good opinion; and not a little disposed to assert herself and her family, and her doings and privileges upon every occasion. The thought rankled in her mind that Sir Charles was a little ashamed of her; that he regretted not having thrown the handkerchief to one of those high-bred beauties whereof the fame had penetrated even into the humble Vicarage drawing-room. Country neighbours love "the cackie of the burg," and some of the great ladies who called twice a year at the Vicarage, and asked Poppy and her papa to a croquet party or an archery fête, had dropped a word here and a hint there, and

had expressed their congratulations after a fashion a little too much tintured with surprise to be altogether pleasing to Poppy's sensitive spirit. She was jealous of the thought that anything but simple affection could have brought about their marriage. "He loved me, and I loved him, and so we were married," said Poppy to herself, disposing peremptorily of the matter after her own summary fashion of dealing with things. "All the rest's humbug, and I'm not going to worry myself running after ideas. I hate a fool's errand."

Nevertheless, though she claimed privileges for herself which she would at once have denied her husband, she did now and again feel a little uneasy at Captain Graham's influence on their mutual relationship. To Sir Charles she said she was consoling Graham. He seemed to need a great deal of consolation about a woman he had never loved, her husband thought. "And it would be a capital marriage for him," Poppy went on plaintively, "if it could only be brought to pass. I declare, Max, since we have been so happy ourselves, I feel twice as much for the misfortunes of other people."

Sir Charles made a wry face, and kissed her; and a few minutes after she was riding off on a donkey to Sonnenberg, Captain Graham holding the sunshade over her pretty face, whilst Poppy prattled by the way.

"Max has letters to write," she said, "but he wouldn't let me put off the expedition on that account." She expected a note of admiration at her husband's magnanimity; and she felt rather aggrieved when Graham said, "Depend upon it he's glad of the excuse for a shady cigar. Letters to write is too stereotyped an excuse for anything but polite fiction now-a-days, my dear."

"Max doesn't tell stories."

"Nor do you, when you say 'not at home.'"

"That's quite a different thing."

"All recognised official formulas. Letters to write, a bad headache, not at home. They all mean you are misanthropically inclined for the moment; that's all; and as I'm the gainer, Poppy, I'm not disposed to quarrel with him or split straws with you for the turn events have taken."

But Poppy was not to be mollified by the sugar-plum thrown in for her benefit. "It was very kind of Max," she repeated, sturdily. "And I know he had real

business; I felt horribly selfish for not having stayed at home to help him."

Altogether the expedition was not successful. Some slight shade of remorse made Poppy less bright and less sympathetic than usual; and when, after a long silence, she began for the seventh time since they sat out, "Max says——" Captain Graham felt it behoved him to stop this boredom of quotations from Sir Charles at any price.

"I am Sir Oracle!" hey Poppy? 'And when I speak let no dog bark.' But if a dog don't bark, he bites."

"Charlie!" cried his cousin, all aflame with anger, and in her agitation trying to slip down; "I won't stand it; you are always sneering at my husband; you are always trying to show him in a bad light; you impute motives to him, you insinuate things about him, that are abominable. I know that you are ever so much older than I am, but you have no right to treat me like a little girl now I am married!"

"You'll frighten the donkey," said Captain Graham, coolly. "I never saw you in such a temper before. What's happened to put you out?"

"You!" Poppy whimpered, for she felt quite ashamed of her outbreak, and afraid she had made herself ridiculous.

"I?" Graham repeated. "When I have been plodding like a patient pilgrim by your side. My dear child, you must remember I've loved you since you were as high as the table; and when I am with you I want to have Poppy, not diluted Sir Charles and water."

Poppy made no answer; she hung her head down; Graham talked to the donkey-boy, and whistled during the pauses of the conversation. As they crossed the top of the Kur Garten, at the end of one of the least frequented paths, they saw Sir Charles seated on a bench beside a lady to whom he appeared to be speaking earnestly. The lady hastily drew down her veil as they approached, and rising, disappeared amongst the trees. Sir Charles came towards them with a heightened colour. Captain Graham's and Poppy's eyes met.

"How about the important letters, eh?" asked cousin Charlie.

But Poppy was too indignant to reply.

#### VII.

"A NEAR shave, that!" cousin Charlie exclaimed, taking off his felt hat, and fanning himself as he lay back in the

carriage. "To see the Ariadne, did you say? I declare if I'd known it was so hot, I don't think I'd have come; the end of October, too!"

"I thought you didn't care about heat," Poppy answered snappishly.

She had been snappish with him ever since that day when the veiled lady had risen and walked away from Sir Charles's side in the Kur Garten. And she was doubly uneasy now, being separated from her husband, whom, at the last moment, she had seen struggling with the crowd in company with a lady whose general outlines resembled that of the fair unknown on the bench.

"Sir Charles is taking it pretty coolly at any rate," said Graham, getting up to put his hat into the net-work, and ruffling his curly hair with both hands as he sat down again.

To this Poppy made no reply.

"We shall get to a station soon, I suppose," she said, after a pause; "and then Max will come into our carriage. It's dreadful the way they pen you up in these foreign waiting-rooms."

Meanwhile, poor Sir Charles was thinking, rather ruefully, that it was a hard thing he and his wife could never be alone together now. At the first station he got out and came to the window, looking somewhat doleful still, but with certain glimmerings of consolation in the background, of which he wisely made no sign.

"Won't you come in, Max?" said Poppy, rising to make place for him next the window.

"I? thanks, no; that is, I'm—I'm smoking——"

"Oh! just as you like. But, as every one smokes here, you might as well finish your cigar in our carriage."

Charlie, scenting the matrimonial battle from afar, said, "Ha! ha!" to himself, and felt pleased. He was rather disgusted with Poppy's jealousy. "To think of a girl being spooney on a prig like that!" he said to himself, and was not sorry that she would have to suffer for her freaks of temper as regarded himself.

"There's the bell!" cried Sir Charles, beating a hasty retreat; and he rushed away to his compartment.

"I bet you any odds," Captain Graham said, "that he is whispering sentimental nothings to some soft, young Fräulein, who little guesses that he has a lawful wife not two doors off. Perhaps the wood-nymph who made off the other day when

his legitimate proprietor appeared upon the scene. Eh?"

From that moment Poppy allowed herself to be fooled to the top of her bent. Charlie Graham should not gibe and jeer at her for a patient Grizzel. She would show him she was a woman of spirit, not a poor little fool, pining after her husband. So, when at the next station, Sir Charles came back like a dog who has buried the bone of contention, but must grub it up again, he found Poppy, with a heightened colour, laughing and talking very loudly with the odious "Charlie." This time, Max was not invited to enter, and he felt rather foolish as he stood at the carriage-door.

"Remember, my dear, you are not alone," he said, in a low voice to his wife, as he prepared to climb into his own compartment again. The carriage had filled up now, and the gates of Paradise were closed upon him.

"Oh!" said Poppy, pertly, "as to that, we're as good as alone; the natives don't understand, you know!"

"Hit him hard there," said Cousin Charlie, gleefully, as the train rolled away.

"I beg your pardon?" Poppy replied, freezing into sudden dignity; "the train makes so much noise, I didn't quite understand——"

"Not worth repeating," bawled Captain Graham, affecting to believe her.

"Surely Poppy is a little underbred," Sir Charles was saying to himself. "A flippant woman is a dreadful thing." And he sighed over poor Poppy's chances of success when she would have to run the gauntlet of criticism amongst the women of his "set."

His companion little guessed why he was so silent.

"Perhaps you will take care of my wife," Sir Charles said to Captain Graham, on the platform at Frankfort. "I have to go to my banker's, and one or two odds and ends of business to transact, which would bore Poppy."

Poppy's eyes grew round with wonder. She didn't at all approve of Max's way of disposing of her. "However, if he don't mind, why should I?" she asked herself, indignantly. She flushed up scarlet, and then the tears came into her eyes. "I have forgotten something I wanted to ask him," she said, stopping short, and, leaving Captain Graham on the platform, she went back to her husband. "You are not angry about anything, Max?"

"I? No."

"Then why don't you come, too?"

"I will join you at Bethmanns."

Then Poppy's indignation again got the better of her, and her gentleness fled.

"Very well; but I shan't wait for you," she cried, angrily.

"I will come as soon as I can," Max answered. He regretted that he could not go with her; but her manner made him regret it as little as possible.

Poppy drove off in triumphant spirits; she was very witty about Ariadne, and said every woman ought to have a Naxos. Charlie criticised the meretricious effect of the pink curtain, and again declared that he would rather have looked at the statue through a stereoscope; the heat dissolved a man's enthusiasm he said; and a woman who could ride on a panther, had, no doubt, the whip hand of her husband; the modern woman would not shed crocodile's tears on a tiger's back, and human nature was human nature from Eve in Eden down to the present moment. Then Poppy proposed that they should leave the temple, and go and look at the Juden-gasse.

"But how about our knight of the rueful countenance?" asked Charlie.

"If you mean Max, he has business which will detain him; he didn't expect us to wait," Poppy said, shortly. "Let's go to that famous place for coffee don't you know, where you sit between little screens of wickerwork, and drink it in the public street. They give you splendid ices there; Susan Bridges told me all about it."

"All right," said Captain Graham, and accosting a foot-passenger in hideous German began to ask the way.

"The first turning to the right, and the second to the left," replied the stranger, greatly to Charlie's surprise, addressing him in his own vernacular; "you will then be near the statue of Gutenberg, who, together with his colleagues Faast and Schæffer may be regarded as the greatest benefactors of mankind." And, having characteristically delivered himself of his little item of information, the polite German passed on his way.

"We've had enough statues for to-day, Poppy, don't you think? But how the mischief did the fellow know I was an Englishman? I speak the language like a native."

Poppy made no answer. Her eyes were

fixed in a stare of bewilderment on the much-desired gaol. There were the screens of ivy; there the little coffee tables, trimly decked with dazzling napery; smart waiters were rushing in and out amongst the guests; the sun was shining hotly down upon the street; and there, in one of the charming little retreats, sat Sir Charles with an ice before him, enjoying his solitude à deux. At the same table was the lady with whom he had travelled from Wiesbaden; the wood-nymph, as Charlie had christened her, upon whom they had come in the Kur-Garten; and as Sir Charles caught sight of his wife and Captain Graham staring, transfixed with astonishment at them both, he said a hasty word to the lady, which caused her to drop her veil. It all passed in the twinkling of an eye. In another moment, Poppy, with head erect and distended nostril, had passed by the offending harbour, the skirts of her clothing sweeping Sir Charles in superb contempt, as, without looking to the right or the left, her nose well up in the air, she marched proudly onwards. Captain Graham followed in her train. "That beats cock-fighting!" was his mental comment; "but I always mistrust a prig. Poor dear little Poppy!"

At the corner of the street they stopped and looked into a print shop. It was very hot, they had walked fast, and Poppy was breathless with fatigue and fury. As yet she had not spoken a word. She was glad to lean against the railing and recover herself.

"I say, do you mean to stand that?" said Charlie. "If you do, you're a greater fool than you look."

"What?" Poppy asked, trying to hide her discomfiture, trying to collect her thoughts, trying to gain time.

"What? Well, pressing correspondences, business letters; banker to interview, et cetera, et cetera. That's the Egeria of the fountain, my dear. If I were Mrs. Numa Pompilius I should seek my redress before Sir James Hannen."

"Pray drop your vulgar jokes," Poppy answered, shortly.

"Jokes? I was never farther from joking in my life. However, if you don't mind, Poppy, I'm sure I needn't."

"Of course you needn't. Nor for the matter of that need anybody."

"Philosophy, thy name is Poppy;" cried Charlie, in tragic apostrophe.

"Don't make a fool of yourself," Poppy answered, in a towering rage, "and call that droschky."

"Eisenbahn" was the only word she knew, and rejecting Charlie's offer of interpretation with impatience, she waved him aside, jumped into the vehicle, and shouting the word to the driver, left Charlie standing on the pavement. He took off his hat and bowed low to her.

"They love, they part," said a fat old sentimental German to his wife, who toddled along the pavement, puffing beside him. "Ah! a beautiful thing is youth! Alas! that its joys are so fleeting!"

"Ach Herr Je!" cried the old lady, sighing, "and thou feellest for the pangs they suffer, whilst my infirmities draw no compassion from thee."

"Madame is right," said Charlie in his best manner, "the woes of youth have a remedy; the sufferings of later life can only be lightened by sympathy!"

"Sir, I am delighted," and the stout sentimental German made him a ceremonious bow.

"Besides," Charlie added, "we don't exactly love; we part it is true, but to meet again in half-an-hour. Do not let your tender heart be hurt by our sufferings; they may perhaps chiefly be attributed to temper; to which may be super-added the heat, and the pavement. I cannot absorb so much of your philanthropy under false pretences, agreeable though your sympathy must necessarily be to a man whose feelings are somewhat ruffled."

"Sir, your sentiments do you honour; you are an upright man; allow me," and the brave old gentleman grasped Charlie's hand with effusion. "Du lieber Himmel!" groaned the poor patient lady, who was standing in the gutter during this fine exchange of sentiment, "if they would only do it in the shade!"

After this little episodic flow of soul, Captain Graham began to wonder what he should do with himself for the next two hours. If he followed Poppy, she would turn and rend him. As for that whited sepulchre of a Maxwell, he would not meet him a second earlier than was absolutely necessary.

#### VIII.

"CAPTAIN GRAHAM, a word with you," said Sir Charles, walking into the station.

"Now for it!" said Charlie, "he's going to cringe. Let him! I can excuse a fellow making a fool of himself on the impulse of the moment; but a cold-blooded, pragmatical prig like that's incapable of im-

pulse. He wants me to humbug Poppy, I dare say; I hate your mathematical immorality." And, with a lofty sense of virtue, Charlie stalked leisurely after Maxwell. "He can't bamboozle me! he'll try to blazon it out at first; then he'll whimper; then he'll cringe; then he'll grovel. Let him grovel; he won't get a rise out of me, though he go like the serpent till the end of his days."

It was somewhat of a surprise when Maxwell, turning a calm and unembarrassed front to him, said, "You saw me in the arbour just now?"

"I did."

"I was not alone."

"So I perceived."

"It was unfortunate," Sir Charles continued, calmly. "I would fain have spared Poppy the annoyance; but I will settle everything with her when we are alone together."

"I doubt if you will find Poppy so easily 'settled.'"

"That's my affair," Sir Charles answered, with just the slightest touch of hauteur. "But I have a favour to ask of you. It is that you will allow me to return with my wife alone. Such explanations are always made better tête-à-tête."

Charlie bowed acquiescence.

"There will be only two first-class compartments," Sir Charles continued. "I find they have a proverb here to the effect that only fools, Englishmen, and actresses travel first class——"

"I wish he'd drop the conversational," said Charlie to himself; "it looks bad when a man affects that sort of easy manner."

"So that," Sir Charles continued, "I shall not be robbing you of your privileges by asking you to leave me and my wife together."

"Certainly not," Graham assented. "In the scramble this morning, Poppy and I came down second-class, and afterwards it wasn't worth the bore of moving."

"Just so; one's as good as the other," Sir Charles agreed; "only one is less crowded in the first. We shall see you at dinner, I hope?"

"Thanks," Charlie answered. He was dumb-founded. There had been no grovelling, after all.

"Poppy," Sir Charles said, standing at the waiting-room door, "you had better take my arm. The first bell has rung."

"Are we to go without Charlie?"

"Captain Graham is already on the

platform; I have been speaking to him." And he offered her his arm.

"Thank you; I suppose I can walk into the train without your aid."

She passed him without a look. Sir Charles went forward and opened the carriage door for her.

"I prefer the other compartment."

"It is engaged."

"Then I will go second."

"No, not this evening, Poppy."

"And why not this evening just as well as this morning?"

"Because I have a few words to say to you, my dear."

"I decline to hear your words, Sir Charles, few or many. I prefer travelling with my own relations: I shall put myself under Captain Graham's protection. It has suited you to leave me with him all day; it does not suit me to be left with you now."

"People will hear."

"Let them hear; who cares? For the matter of that, they may hear and see too," Poppy cried. "I refuse to move until Captain Graham's presence guarantees me from insult. I decline to be alone with you. I disbelieve your explanations; I reject them beforehand, unheard."

But Poppy's stubborn will could not resist the railway official who at that moment came along the platform issuing his orders with military precision.

Sir Charles jumped in after her, with a smile on his handsome face. Captain Graham was not visible to the naked eye.

"I wanted to say a few words to you about Graham, my dear," Sir Charles said, leaning across to her, when the train was fairly off.

No; flesh and blood could not stand such barefaced hypocrisy, at least, not Poppy's flesh and blood.

"About Graham?" she cried, passion shaking out the words in a shrill treble. "About Charlie? About him? Let him alone; speak about yourself; or, rather, no! Keep silence. The truth you cannot tell me; I will not listen to lies!"

"Poppy," Sir Charles said, angrily: "you are forgetting yourself; this is unwomanly, irrational rage."

"I am forgetting myself!" Poppy cried, in a tumult of fury; "and pray what have you been doing? It might have been as well if you had remembered me! It's all very well for you to pick holes in Charlie; you've always hated him; it was easy to see that from the first——"

"You will be the first to confess later that I am Graham's best friend."

"And you would have had me cast him off," Poppy continued, not deigning to notice the interruption. "My own cousin; one of my oldest friends. But I wasn't mean enough for that, and I'm glad of it now."

"Poppy, do you love me?" Sir Charles asked, as though in subduing his own temper he might better bring her to her senses.

"No!"

"Do you believe I love you?"

"No!"

"Poppy have you never loved me?"

"No!" Poppy almost shouted; "and now I hate you! I despise you! I wish I had married poor Charlie when he asked me! We might have been poor, but we should have been happy!"

"Then he did ask you?" Sir Charles said with a nervous flush on his face.

"Yes, he did; more than once; and I was a wretched little fool to refuse him. I thought his open manner betrayed a superficial character: I did not know that a cold crust of reserve could conceal a traitor's heart!"

"You have said enough," Sir Charles replied, with a sort of bitter calm. "You had better compose yourself. I have asked Captain Graham to dinner."

Poppy vouchsafed no reply. She turned her back upon her husband and looked out of the window. She would ask her cousin to take her straight off to England. She would go back to her father. Sir Charles's presence was unendurable to her. Brooding on her wrongs, and hatching her plans for vengeance, she remained sullenly silent during the rest of the journey.

#### IX.

As Captain Graham sat down in his corner of the big red velvet carriage, he was dimly aware of a female form at the other corner; but his mind was still full of his cousin, and he sat back and closed his eyes in thought. He could not understand Sir Charles, and he didn't at all like the idea of the marital asperities which were likely to pass during the journey. All the better part of him was enlisted in Poppy's behalf. He saw that she loved her husband in spite of her off-hand flighty manner, and this made him all the more bitter against Sir Charles, and all the tenderer in his thoughts of Poppy.

At this moment the lady rose to open the window.

"Erlauben Sie!" Charlie said in his best German, as he took the strap out of her hand.

"Thank you, Captain Graham."

"By Jove!" Charlie said for once in his life, really surprised, "how the —— I beg your pardon, but who could dream of meeting you here?"

"Not you, evidently," said Mary Steele, smiling sweetly upon him. "Mamma and I have been at Wiesbaden for a week. She is taking the baths."

"But why have we never seen you?"

"You appeared only to have eyes for Lady Maxwell."

"Poor little Poppy! It wasn't a question of eyes," Charlie said. "Sir Charles is a brute."

"Is he? How very strange. He always speaks so highly of you."

"Of me?" Charlie asked. "When has he spoken of me? I'm very much obliged to him, I'm sure; but I can't return the compliment. Not that I have any fault to find as regards myself, but to Poppy his conduct is atrocious. But I didn't know you knew him."

"Oh, yes. I had met him in town before Poppy's engagement, and after that I was once or twice at the Vicarage when he was there. I came upon him quite by chance the other day in the Kur-Garten—the day you and your cousin went to Sonnenberg," Mary Steele said, with her bright shrewd eyes fixed on Charlie's bewildered face.

Mary didn't tell him how Sir Charles had explained to her that Poppy was consoling her cousin for the obduracy with which some fair lady had treated him, and how broken-hearted the poor fellow was.

"And I've been over to Frankfort with my maid to get a dress to-day," Mary Steele went on. "Sir Charles helped us out of a difficulty about the tickets, for we neither of us knew a word of German; and he travelled with me afterwards, your carriage being full."

She did not think it necessary to tell him, either, how she had entreated Sir Charles not to mention Graham's presence should he meet her with her mother. "I've had a dreadful time of it," Mary had said, with a kind of grim humour, "since he proposed to me. You know we're a hard sort of people, and I daresay I'm

just as obstinate as mamma. But it would upset her dreadfully if she were to know he is here, and spoil her cure."

"So you have been obstinate?" Sir Charles said. "Well, why master your obstinacy? Exercise it to some end. Charlie Graham's a capital fellow—not rich; but I'm sure you are not mercenary—and a clever woman like you, Miss Steele, might do anything with Charlie."

"Might I?" Mary said. "But I'm afraid he won't give me the chance of trying. He has been so badly treated."

"Then treat him well," Sir Charles said. "I'll undertake that you shall have the chance. Charlie's not a fellow to bear malice." ("Especially with sixty thousand pounds to soften his feelings," he added mentally.)

"Then," Graham said, "it was you in the grove! it was you in the arbour? And, by Jove, Poppy's nothing to complain of, after all!"

"Why should she complain?" Mary asked. "A girl is not to be pitied who has a good husband."

Given the text, Charlie had an extempore address ready in a moment. He was quite equal to the occasion.

"Then you don't love Poppy?" Mary Steele asked, as a preliminary whistle told them they were nearing their destination.

"Love Poppy?" Charlie Graham repeated, with well-feigned surprise. "Why should I love my neighbour's wife when I can love my own? I've known Poppy since she could crawl; and familiarity always knocks all romance out of a man as regards a girl he has watched through the hobbedehoy stage."

"But she is so pretty."

"Perhaps. 'But if she be not fair to me, what care I how fair she be?' No, Mary, this is the third and last time of asking. If you send me off now, I shan't come back again."

"Well, I suppose it must be," Mary said. After all, Sir Charles was right: her lover was good-looking, good-natured, and a gentleman; and if she were to do battle with her mother, it might as well be to some purpose.

Poppy, still in the sulks, descended from the carriage, and silently mounted a droschky. Sir Charles followed. Half-an-hour afterwards Charlie Graham's beaming face appeared at their sitting-room door.

"May I come in?" he cried. "I have brought a friend."

"How stupid of him!" Poppy thought, "Just when I wanted to be alone." But she rose and moved towards the door.

"Mary!" she cried.

"Yes. Didn't Sir Charles tell you?"

"Poppy wouldn't listen," said Maxwell, coming forward, "so I thought you should tell her yourself."

"You never said a word about Mary; it was about Charlie you began."

"Charlie and Mary are one," said Graham, drawing Mary's hand through his arm.

"Is it true?" Poppy asked incredulously, looking from one to the other.

"True?" Mary repeated, searching about for a metaphor. "Yes, as true as— as—"

"Steel!" said Charlie gallantly, kissing her hand.

## THE BOLD SMUGGLER.

THE bold smuggler has become a tame, vapid, spiritless, unheroic fellow—prosy, dull, unromantic, and commonplace. All the dash has gone out of him. He was once as full of melodrama as the hero of a transpontine theatre: worthy of being ranked with brigands, outlaws, pirates, buccaners, corsairs, filibusters, and contrabandistas. With keen-edged sword and dagger, and a belt bristling with pistols, he was the leader in many an exciting struggle, and was decidedly admired if not trusted by the lovers of romance. But now all is changed. He sneaks about his work, runs away from his contraband stores, and seldom shows fight against the majesty of the law.

We may perchance be better than our fathers and grandfathers; but it is not on this ground that the smuggler has toned down to a very ordinary sort of mortal, a mean trickster instead of a dashing outlaw. We must look to the tax-gatherer as the main agent in bringing about the change. In the days when customs duties were imposed on several hundred different kinds of foreign commodities, the temptation to smuggling was almost irresistible. If a duty-payable article could be brought into this country without paying the impost, it could be sold at a price so low as to attract eager customers, and still yield a very large profit to the smuggler. Conscience was not sensitive

on the matter. It was deemed no great crime to cheat the revenue, especially when people really believed that the import duties were either too heavy, or levied on too large a variety of commodities. Adam Smith said:—"To pretend to have any scruple about buying smuggled goods, though a manifest encouragement to the violation of the revenue laws, and to the perjury which almost always attends it, would in most countries be regarded as one of those pedantic pieces of hypocrisy which, instead of gaining credit with anybody, seems only to expose the person who affects to practise it to the suspicion of being a greater knave than most of his neighbours." Hard words these; yet there is sufficient ground for them. The astute economist and moralist did not fail to point out the evils that result from this low tone of public sentiment:—"By this indulgence of the public, the smuggler is often encouraged to continue a trade which he is thus taught to consider in some measure innocent; and when the severity of the revenue laws is ready to fall upon him, he is frequently disposed to defend with violence what he has been accustomed to regard as his just property."

Before the close of the last century, a committee of the House of Commons investigated the subject of smuggling, and found that it was carried on to an astounding extent. It was computed that thirteen million gallons of French brandy were surreptitiously brought to England in three years; the brandy could be sold on the coast at three shillings a gallon, and yield a sufficient profit: a temptation which the purchasers were not virtuous enough to resist. The tea trade was in those years, and for many a year afterwards, nearly a close monopoly in the hands of the East India Company; but the tax per pound was enormous, and the smugglers defied alike the company and the crown. There were good grounds for believing that, of all the tea imported, less than one-half paid the import duty. The tax-gatherer was cheated on all sides, and often treated with personal violence in addition. The committee had a doleful story to tell the House of Commons:—"It appears to this committee that the illicit practices used in defrauding the revenue have increased in a most alarming degree; that these practices are carried on upon the coasts, and in other parts of the kingdom, with violence and outrage which not only

threaten the destruction of the revenue, but are highly injurious to regular commerce and fair trade, very pernicious to the manners and morals of the people, and an interruption to all good government; and that the public revenue is defrauded" (including the evasion of the exciseman by home manufacturers of many articles) "to an extent of not less than two millions sterling per annum."

To prohibit trade between two or more countries is another mode of encouraging smuggling. In the early part of the present century, the Berlin and Milan decrees were unintentionally potent instruments towards this result. Napoleon, enraged that he could not humble the "nation of shopkeepers," tried to ruin us by putting a stop to our European trade. None of the continental states under his autocratic influence were permitted to sell any of their commodities to the much-disliked but much-envied little island, nor to import any commodities therefrom. Of course this occasioned loss and embarrassment; but the English were as far from being ruined as ever. They commanded the sea, which gave their merchant-ships free access to America, Asia, and Africa; and they contrived to carry on a European trade through the intermedium of such states as had not yet fallen under Napoleon's sway. This was smuggling, no doubt, but a kind of national smuggling which cabinets and parliaments willingly condoned. The Napoleon decrees, instead of annihilating our Continental trade, only threw it into new and exceptional channels. Italian silk, instead of reaching us by the usual route, found its way by almost inexplicable means to Smyrna and to Archangel, from which ports it was brought to England by our unmolested ships; it took a year to reach us by the Smyrna route, and two years *viâ* Archangel. On the other hand, continental consumers of tropical produce, such as sugar, tobacco, coffee, and cotton, had to adopt their own special means of evading the decrees. English ships could convey those commodities to such Continental ports as were not under Napoleon's rule; and then trading ingenuity was brought into exercise, to find routes of transit that might elude the authorities. Some of the commodities were conveyed by English ships to Salonica in the Levant, landed on the Turkish shores, conveyed by horses and mules through Servia and Hungary into Austria, and

then introduced in small packages into various parts of Italy and Germany. Nay, it was known that coffee consumed at Calais, just opposite our coast, had travelled by this extraordinary route, traversing Switzerland and France, after passing through the whole breadth of Turkey and Austria. Of course the prices were enormous, owing to the cost of carriage and the risk of seizure. Loaf sugar, refined in England, was packed in boxes containing two hundredweights each, to be slung on horses or mules employed on the adventurous transit; and, as a consequence of such a mode of trading, the sugar rose in price to six shillings a pound in some parts of the Continent.

The Berlin and Milan decrees were of a political character in their origin or purpose; but the regular smuggler more generally bases his trade on the existence of heavy duties, imposed for revenue purposes or for the protection of home industry. The Spanish contrabandistas, who were in bygone years the heroes of many a romance, flourished because import duties were high. At one time English cargoes, or miscellaneous cargoes in English ships, were landed at Gibraltar on purpose to be smuggled over the frontier into Spain—to the value of a million sterling per annum. As to France, in times long subsequent to the era of the decrees, and when import duties were levied only for the sake of revenue, the land-frontiers were the scene of extraordinary smuggling. Dogs were trained in Belgium on purpose to smuggle goods into France. The animals were of large size, and were trained to carry twenty or twenty-five pounds each; the load consisting of tobacco, sugar, coffee, &c. They were conducted across the frontier in packs from France into Belgium; they were kept all day without food, beaten unmercifully (what a superior being man is!) laden in the evening, and started off. The poor hungry animals made the best of their way to their French homes, usually two or three leagues from the frontier, and were there well fed and kindly treated. In ten years, more than forty thousand of these hard-worked smuggling dogs were destroyed by the French Customs' officers, three francs being given as a bonus for the capture of each. Sometimes a dog would be found laden with nearly fifty pounds' worth of smuggled goods.

English or French, Spanish or Belgian,

it is found to be pretty much the same with all nationalities in this particular; where import duties are very heavy, there will the smuggler make his appearance. "It has been invariably found," says M'Culloch, "that no vigilance on the part of the revenue officers, no severity of punishment, can prevent the smuggling of such commodities as are either prohibited, or loaded with oppressive duties. The smuggler is generally a popular character; and whatever the law may declare on the subject, it is ludicrous to expect that the bulk of society should ever be brought to think that those who furnish them with cheap brandy, geneva, tobacco, &c., are guilty of any very heinous offence. The prohibition of foreign produce, or the imposition of heavy duties on foreign or native produce, does not take away the taste for them. On the contrary, it would seem as if the desire to obtain prohibited or overtaxed articles acquired new strength from the obstacles opposed to its gratification." Nor is this confined to any one class of society, or to persons whose narrow means compel them to economise. "The prohibition of foreign silks, which existed previously to 1826, did not hinder the importation of immense quantities. The vigilance and integrity of the Custom House officers were no match for the ingenuity, daring, and douceurs of the smuggler. At the very moment when the most strenuous efforts were made to effect their exclusion, the silks of France and Hindustan were openly displayed at Almack's, in the drawing rooms of St. James's, or in the House of Commons, in mockery of the impotent legislation by which it was attempted to shut them out."

The present race of taxpayers can hardly realise the multiplicity of imposts that were at one period levied on foreign commodities. Even the most petty and trifling things were included, either to raise revenue or to protect home trades. Asses, caraway comfits, eels, sucking pigs, aquafortis, sausages, bitumen, maccaroni, buttons, nutmegs, medals, camomile, bees-wax, cow-hair, wheel spokes, blacking, willow chips, cream of tartar, books, candlewicks, black puddings, tinfoil, onions, beads, whetstones, singing birds, tar, bladders—nothing was forgotten; each item had its particular tax or duty specified, and each had the sharp eyes of the Custom House officer upon it. Some articles were loaded with a series of duties

one after another, until they were nearly smothered beneath the weight. At one time French paper of the finer kinds, used mostly for prints and drawings, had no fewer than thirteen distinct import duties to bear, the result of an equal number of Acts of Parliament.

Ever since the termination of the great European war in 1815, the tendency of English fiscal legislation has been to lessen the number of different articles on which Customs duties were imposed, and to rely more especially on a few great items. The late Sir Robert Peel swept off more than four hundred items in one year; and yet there were several hundreds still left on the tax-book. The result was important. The Commissioners of Customs reported that "With the reduction of duties, and the removal of all needless and vexatious restrictions, smuggling has greatly diminished, and the public sentiment with regard to it has undergone a very considerable change. The smuggler is no longer an object of general sympathy, as a hero of romance; and people are beginning to awaken to a perception of the fact that his offence is not only a fraud on the revenue but a robbery of the fair trader. Smuggling is now almost entirely confined to tobacco, spirits, and watches." A few significant hints were given to ladies, indicating that smugglers were not all of the rougher sex:—"Lace, silk, and other trifling articles are still occasionally seized on the persons or in the baggage of unprincipled passengers; but all such instances are on the wane. The thoughtless habit, however, of so packing dutiable articles within the folds of ladies' dresses as to answer the purpose, or at least to give the appearance, of fraudulent concealment, still prevails among passengers arriving from abroad, and gives rise to many disagreeable disputes. This practice is the more indefensible, because the very parties who thus dishonourably endeavour to frustrate the purpose of a partial, rapid, and polite search are the loudest and most vehement in their complaints if that search be minute and tedious." Just so.

Owing to these and other causes, Will Watch the Bold Smuggler is dead, or dying; there are only paltry smugglers now, too small to give a dash of poetry to their adventures. There are, it is true, two or three hundred seizures every year, made by the Custom House officers on or near our coasts; but the smugglers do not

show fight; if likely to be detected, they run away. A favourite mode of smuggling consists in packing dutiable articles in the midst of others admitted duty-free, and thereby cheating the revenue under the guise of fair trading—a more cunning but more despicable habit than the hardy "running" of illicit cargoes on the coast.

How many acts of smuggling are perpetrated, no one knows; we are only cognizant of those which are found out—on the principle that

What is hit, is history;  
But what is miss'd, is mystery.

In a recent year, a hundred and thirty pounds of tobacco and cigars were concealed by one of the engineers in a hollow beam in the engine-room of a steamer; the Argus eyes of the Customs' officers ferreted out the secret when the steamer entered port. In another instance, a vessel came over from Stettin in the Baltic, with several casks of camomile flowers among the cargo; in the very midst of the camomile the officers found a hundred and fifty pounds of cigars. A similar mode of illicitly introducing a hundred and thirty pounds of cigars was about the same time adopted in a vessel hailing from Hamburg. Early one morning, nearly twelve hundred pounds of tea were found quietly reposing in a furze-brake in Guernsey, evidently waiting for a favourable opportunity of transit to some part of the English coast, there to take its chance of evading Customs' duty. On another occasion, several cases of glue were found to have more than eleven hundred pounds of cigars snugly embosomed in their midst. One day a coast-guardsmen near Portsmouth saw a boat laden with barrels of snuff drifting about; the quantity was no less than four thousand six hundred pounds; the owners were probably not far off, but did not deem it prudent to come forth and show themselves. A French fishing barque, the *Jeune Henriette*, came into an English port with forty pounds of tobacco concealed among the fish and the tackle. In one instance, six hundred pounds of tobacco were found concealed in some bags of hops, in a vessel coming from Ostend; on conviction, the owner could not or would not pay the duty and fines; so he was put "in durance vile." A cask of potatoes was the hiding-place of another batch of smuggled tobacco. One ingenious rascal outdid most of the others in inventiveness; he concealed four pounds

of Cavendish tobacco inside two loaves of German bread!

Let us give two more instances; and let them be of recent occurrence, as recorded in the last annual Report of the Commissioners of Customs; both occurred a few months ago. "On the top of a bank, rising directly from high water mark in one of the muddy creeks of Southampton Water, stands a wooden hut commanding a full view of it, and surrounded by an ill-cultivated garden. There are houses near, but the hut does not belong to them, and appears to have been built for no obvious purpose. An old smuggler was traced to this hut; and from that time for nearly two months the place was watched with great precaution, until, at midnight on the 23th of May, two men employed by us being on watch, a boat was observed coming from a small vessel about a mile from the shore. The boat, containing four men, stopped opposite the hut, landed one man and some bags, while the remainder of the crew took her some two hundred yards off, hauled her up, and then proceeded to the hut. One of our men was instantly despatched for assistance, while the other remained watching. On his return with three policemen the whole went to the hut, where they found two men on watch outside, and four inside asleep. A horse and cart were also found in waiting, the cart having a false bottom. The six men were secured and sent to the police station; a boat was then procured, the vessel whence the men had come was boarded, and found to be laden with tobacco and spirits. The result was that the vessel, a smack of about fifteen tons, with eighty-five bales of leaf tobacco, six boxes of Cavendish, with some cigars and spirits, was seized, and four of the persons concerned in the transaction convicted of the offence." The other instance was as follows:—"On the arrival of a steam-vessel at one of the north-eastern ports from Hamburg (one of the foreign ports where manufactured tobacco is most readily obtainable at the lowest price), she was rummaged by our officers, i.e. searched in the ordinary way to ascertain whether any goods liable to duty were concealed on board. On spitting the coal in the bunkers, unusual resistance was felt; and on the coals being removed, a discovery was made of bags containing two hundred and forty-four pounds of Cavendish, a hundred and eight pounds of cut tobacco, fourteen pounds of cigars,

with a cask and demi-john containing a small quantity of spirits."

Considerable ingenuity is displayed in such schemes as these; but still the fact is apparent that the Dashing Smuggler, the cut-and-thrust terror of Custom House officials, is a thing of the past, so far as England is concerned.

## A NARROW ESCAPE.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "DENIS DONNE," "NO ALTERNATIVE," &c. &c.

### CHAPTER XLII. "THE TRAIL OF THE SERPENT!"

FRANK is back in town, engaged in the (to him) terrible task of "toning down," Mrs. Constable's feelings about his new engagement. As fast as he assuages one fear, and lays it to rest as it were, another rises up strong, and active, and his work recommences. Worse than all, he is unassisted in his endeavours. He has no one to back him up, and cheer his oft-times fainting spirit. For there is a division in the family camp, and for the time being Mrs. Constable is at openly proclaimed war with her daughter, the successful general who has led Charlotte Grange's forces on to victory. Accordingly, Mrs. Grange has taken her husband and his sister away to her own home, leaving Frank to fight the ignominious battle of self-justification alone.

He is paying a heavy penalty for all his want of purpose, all his weakness of will, all his contemptible inability to stand out against the machinations of the worst of the women who happen to be about him, already. His love of present ease, his intense deeply rooted desire to keep things smooth for himself for the present moment, is taxed to the uttermost now. From the wails of his mother-in-law he can only turn to the withering words of wisdom of his mother, and the cool contentedness with which his sisters regard him as a most pitiful position, and one for even tolerating which they are inclined to highly applaud themselves.

There is still more acid in Gertrude's views as to all things than there is in Marian's, although Gertrude's prospects are golden, gorgeous, grand in their security from all the evils flesh is heir to, when it has not money enough to supply its highest needs. She is constantly mentally contrasting Frank Forest, her brother, the genius out of luck—as far as

his natural selection of women with whom to share his life is concerned—with her lover Clement Graham, the fool who has by some rare chance secured her!

The contrast annoys her more day by day as she dwells upon it, and sours her originally not too sweet temper, and makes her morbidly desirous of finding out flaws in the women Frank has chosen. But Charlotte Grange defies her! not openly, not impertinently, but with a quiet force that there is no withstanding. She is an amiable, plump, placid invader, to all appearances, and those whose territory she has invaded can divine nothing of her set, mercenary purpose, under her sneaking mantle of profoundly candid calm.

To give Charlotte Grange her due, hers is no easy part to play, and she plays it admirably. She is perfectly conscious of the family feeling against her, she is also perfectly conscious that the family feeling is not altogether ungrounded. At the same time she determines to keep perfectly at peace, so long as they may have the power to frustrate any one of her aims. But as soon as she has Frank so securely for her own, that he must seem to take part in her conduct, whatever it may be, she will, with the most delicious candour, allow the family to understand her real opinion of it.

Meantime, she pursues her path unmolested among them all, compelling Mrs. Forest to advise her about her future arrangements for Frank's domestic comfort, and beguiling Gertrude into confidences about her trousseau in a very feminine and pleasing way. She does not force herself upon the Forests, but just shows herself to be amiably gratified when they call upon her—as Frank compels them to do occasionally—and she takes very little notice of the baby, a course of conduct which is eminently pleasing to its father, after his late experiences.

In spite of all the hard bitterness of feeling, which reigns in Gertrude's heart against this woman who is to be her brother's wife, a certain amount of confidence seems to spring up between them. Gertrude is not at all proud of Clement Graham, but she is well satisfied with the position she will be able to attain, with the money which Clement Graham has in his possession. Charlotte openly congratulates Gertrude on this, and Gertrude relaxes some of her vigilant dislike under these congratulations, and so it comes about

that the two brides-elect see a good deal of each other.

Verily there is a skeleton in the closet of every house—a bitter drop at the bottom of the most intoxicatingly successful cup. Clement Graham can give Gertrude a splendid house, and the use of vast wealth, but he cannot give her the safe feeling that he may not at any moment make a fool of himself, and abash her before her relations.

As in the old days, when he spoke to ill-purpose and spoilt Kate Mervyn's life, Clement Graham still invariably intervenes at the wrong time, and interferes with the wrong person.

Just at present his fear is that Charlotte Grange is monopolising too much of the time and attention of his own Gertrude, for Charlotte Grange to be at all a pleasant or acceptable fact to him. Despite his vast stock of self-love and self-complacency, Clement Graham cannot flatter himself that the ill-tempered good-looking young woman who has consented to link her lot with his, likes him in the least, or regards him in the remotest degree. At the same time, she has accustomed him to a certain meed of attention, and he will have it from her now, though it vexes his soul to be obliged to exact it thus—to be compelled to entreat her to “seem, at least before other people, to think a little more of him, than she does of the make of her new dresses, and relative acceptability and worth of her various presents.”

Gradually he develops a snappish antagonism to Charlotte Grange, on the few occasions of family gatherings, which would be “unbearable,” she tells Frank, “if it were not so ridiculous.” He differs with her on every subject that comes under public discussion. He makes taunting allusions to the audacity and forwardness of women who follow men up closely, and finally beguile offers from them, which the men, as a rule, repent themselves of most bitterly, before they can fulfil them. In a word, he rouses all the spirit of revenge which lies concealed in Miss Grange's soul, and makes her resolve upon taking a subtle form of it which will suit her purpose well.

She bears it all with a smiling, amiable patience, that commands a certain amount of admiration even from the Forest family, who (with the exception of Gertrude) dislike her intensely, but who cannot blind themselves to the fact that she is

receiving more ignominious provocation from Clement Graham than a gentlewoman ought to be subjected to at the hands of any man. The petty contradictions, the sneering allusions, the thinly veiled sarcasms, fall around her thickly, but she remains queen of herself, unbowed by them, unresentful of them.

At length, in sheer dismay at his want of success in irritating her, he desists, intending to maintain a sulky reserve and to ignore her utterly. But she will be no more ignored than she will be irritated by him. She creeps nearer to him daily, enveloping him in her influence as quietly and surely, as imperceptibly and fatally, as one is enveloped by the effects of a foul atmosphere.

He soon begins to find himself watchfully anxious for her coming, not in order that he may carp and cavil at her, as heretofore, but that he may listen to her interesting exposition of the enviable fate of a woman who marries a man with a "beautiful home in the charming country;" and who has the prospect of frequent foreign travel before her. Now both these delights will be Gertrude's; but Mr. Clement Graham's discrimination does not tell him that Charlotte is perfectly conscious of the fact. He imagines that she is groping in the dark, and that she has blindly hit upon, as more delightful than any other form of happiness in the world, those very circumstances of wealth with which he will be enabled to endow the happy woman who may become his wife.

It is difficult for the unbiassed few who are watching the game to determine whether or not Gertrude is pleased at the change in her future husband's demeanour towards her brother's future wife. As has been said before, Gertrude is not a good-tempered woman. On the other hand, it must be urged in her favour, that she is neither dishonest, treacherous, nor a sneak. But now, though she must see as plainly, at least, as Marian does, that Charlotte Grange is taking exceptionally subtle trouble to win Clement Graham's liking, at least, if not his love, Gertrude makes no sign. She is, or she feigns to be, perfectly indifferent. She withdraws no single mark of friendship or favour from Charlotte; she exercises no supervision over Charlotte's intercourse with Mr. Graham; she makes no attempt to outvie Miss Grange in the latter's eloquent delineation of the joys of a country place and foreign travel. In short, she either has

the most profound reliance on her own charms, or on Charlotte's honour.

She is not dishonest. Long ago she stated, in reply to some questioning on the part of her sister, that she "did not like Clement Graham, but that she meant to marry him." Now, in reply to some further close questioning on the part of that keenly-affectionate observer, she says, "Don't be alarmed, Marian; it must end as I intend it to end. Whether I'm taking a false step or not, in marrying him, I can't tell yet; but certainly I shall take it."

"You don't quite know Charlotte, any more than I do myself," Marian says; "she is taking incessant, fatiguing pains to please Clement."

"She takes incessant, fatiguing pains to please us all."

"Ah! that's natural; we might influence Frank. Clement is powerless to do that. I wouldn't rely on her desire to please the family at large, or on her honour, too much, if I were you."

"No; but I rely on his constitutional dislike to getting into hot water with any one who can punish him," Gertrude says, coolly. "My dear Marian, don't imagine that I deceive myself about Clement: he's a moral and physical coward; but I shall never expect anything but moral and physical cowardice from him; and so I shall never be disappointed."

It is not an enthusiastic, it is not even a moderately hopeful view to take of her future relations with the man with whom it is her purpose to link her fate. But, then, the Forest girls are not of a specially enthusiastic order, nor are they given to uttering their hopes aloud in the market-places. Marian's sole commentary on her sister's remark is—

"Well, I hope you're right, I suppose you are; I wonder what Frank thinks of the change from discord to harmony between Charlotte and Clement. We're such an amiable family in these latter days, that perhaps he likes it too."

"If he can make up his mind to be jealous of Clement Graham, I can't," Gertrude says; "it's Clement's nature to be either always stupidly surly or savage to people, or servilely pleased with them. As I mean to marry him I must put up with the idiosyncrasy; at any rate I'll never worry myself about it."

The subject drops here, and passes away from the thoughts of both sisters apparently. As for the rest, they do not seem

to n it, and one day it is Charlotte herself who broaches it to Frank.

"I can't congratulate Gertrude on her future lord and master," she says, coming out from a room in which she has been having a lengthy tête-à-tête with the subject of her remarks; "he may be wealthy but he certainly isn't wise."

"I don't like the fellow myself, and never did," Frank says, remembering the part Clement Graham has played in the drama of Kate's life; but that's neither here nor there; Gertrude likes him, I suppose."

"I suppose she does; nothing else but 'liking' would induce her to marry him, I should think?"

"Well, I don't know about that," Frank says, with touching candour as regards his sister's possibly mercenary motives; "Gertrude has always had a keen eye for the main chance; every happiness in life that money, and money alone, can give, will be hers when she marries him, if she only plays her cards properly."

"Money can't give much happiness if there's no love in the case I should think," Charlotte says sweetly; "poor Clement! he's too weak to chain her heart, I fear; do you know, Frank, that for days past he has been trying to make friends with me, evidently thinking that it won't look well to the world if he goes on showing contempt for me simply because I have no money of my own; that is the secret of his dislike to me, I'm sure, and now he tries to conceal it."

"I shouldn't take any notice of the mean-spirited fool if I were you," Frank says, carelessly, and Charlotte infuses still more sweetness and suavity into the tones in which she answers,

"Oh! it's not worth while to bear malice; he can't hurt me. I only mentioned it to you, because I was afraid that you might think that I was vain enough to imagine that his altered manner arose from real liking on his part, but believe me, Frank dear, I know better."

It is strange, at least, if not suspicious, that the very day after this conversation she should be strolling alone with Clement Graham in one of the most secluded avenues in Kensington Gardens.

"I must admit to myself that I am doing wrong in meeting you in this way," she says to him, as he comes up to her eagerly, "but my desire to be with you, and to listen to you, is stronger than my sense of right, stronger than my appreciation of all the advantages I should gain by keeping to my engagement with Frank."

In his fatuous folly he really believes her; how indeed could he distrust such smiling, quiet, sweet, womanly eyes, and manners. He really believes her. He really thinks that she is ignorant of the immense worldly advantages he possesses over Frank Forest, and that she is here, risking her reputation and future comfort for love of himself alone.

"Gertrude either thinks it bad form to be demonstrative, or she has no feeling for me to express," he says, "all the time she has never said as much as you've just said to me, and a fellow gets very tired of it."

"They're a cold-hearted family, I fear," Charlotte Grange says, shaking her head.

"As for Forest, he can't blame us for changing our minds before we married," Clement Graham goes on, "he nearly did it himself two or three times before he married May Constable, I understand; I don't believe you would ever be happy with him."

"I don't believe I should—now," she replies.

"Then don't risk it," he urges, flushing up a little; "there's no need for us to make any fuss or to let it be known" (he grows pale again at the thought of the possible consequences of its being known); "we'll get it over quietly, and start off for Boulogne at once; we'll telegraph the intelligence to them from there, for I don't want to do anything underhand."

"I understand you so thoroughly," she says, and, to do her justice, she does.

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