For the Cause

by

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STANLEY J. WEYMAN

Author of "A Gentleman of France," "The House of the Wolf" "Under the Red Robe" Etc.

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FOR THE CAUSE.

I.

Paris had never seemed to the eye more peaceful than on a certain November evening in the year 1589: and this although many a one within its walls resented the fineness of that night as a mockery, a scoff at the pain of some and the fury of others.

The moonlight fell on roofs and towers, on the bare open space of the Place de Grève and the dark mass of the Louvre, and only here and there pierced, by chance, a narrow lane, to gleam on some foul secret of the kennel. The Seine lay a silvery loop about the He de la Cité--a loop cut on this side and that by the black shadows of the Pont au Change, and the Petit Pont, and broken again westward by the outline of the New Bridge, which was then in building.

The city itself lay in profound quiet in the depth of the shadow. From time to time at one of the gales, or in the lodge of the Châtelet, a sentinel challenged or an officer spoke. But the bell of St. Germain l'Auxerrois, which had rung through hours of the past day was silent. The tumult which had leaped like flame from street to street had subsided. Peaceful men breathed again in their houses, and women, if they still cowered by the hearth, no longer laid trembling fingers on their ears. For a time the red fury was over: and in the narrow channels, where at noon the mob had seethed, scarcely a stray wayfarer could now be found.

A few however were abroad: and of these some who chanced to

be threading the network of streets between the Châtelet and the Louvre, heard behind them the footsteps of a man in great haste, and saw pass them a youth, white-faced and wearing a sword and a student's short cloak and cap--apparently a member of the University. He for his part looked neither to right nor left: saw not one of them, and seemed bent only on getting forward.

He slackened his space however near the corner of the Rue de l'Arbre Sec, where it shoots out of the Rue de Béthisy, and then turning it with a rush, caught his foot in some obstacle, and plunging forward, would have fallen violently, if he had not come against a man, who seemed to be standing still in the shadow of the corner house.

"Hold up!" exclaimed this person, withstanding the shock better than could have been expected. "You should have a pretty mistress, young man, if you go to her at this pace!"

The student did not answer--did not seem to hear. He had staggered against the wall, and still stood propping himself up by it. His face, pale before, was ghastly now, as he glared, apparently horror-struck, at something beyond the speaker. The latter, after muttering angrily, "What the plague do you go dashing about the streets like a Shrove Tuesday ox for?" turned also and glanced behind him.

But not at that to which the student's eyes were directed. The stranger seemed constrained to look first and by preference at the long, low casement of a house nearly opposite them. This window was on the first floor, and projected somewhat over the roadway. There seemed to be no light in the room; but the moonlight reached it, and showed a woman's head bent on the sill--a girl's head, if one might judge from its wealth of hair. One white wrist gleamed amid

this, but her face was hidden on her arms. In the whole scene--in the casement open at this inclement time, in the girl's attitude of abandonment, there was something which stirred the nerves. It was only after a long look that the stranger averted his eyes, and cast a casual glance at a queer, dark object, which a few paces away swung above the street, dimly outlined against the sky. It was that which had fascinated his companion.

"Umph!" he ejaculated in the tone of a man who should say "Is that all?" And he turned to the other again. "You seem taken aback, young man!" he said. "Surely that is no such strange sight in Paris nowadays. What with Leaguers hanging Politiques, and Politiques hanging Leaguers, and both burning Huguenots, I thought a dead man was no longer a bogey to frighten children with!"

"Hush, sir, in Heaven's name!" exclaimed the young man, shuddering at his words. "He was my father!"

The stranger whistled. "He was your father, was he!" he replied more gently. "I dare swear too that he was an honest man, since the Sixteen have done this. There, steady, friend. These are no times for weeping. Be thankful that Le Clerc and his crew have spared your home, and your--your sister. That is rare clemency in these days, and Heaven only knows how long it may last. You wear a sword? Then shed no tears to rust it. Time enough to weep, man, when there is blood to be washed from the blade."

"You speak boldly," said the youth, checking his emotion somewhat, "but had they hung your father before his own door----"

"Good man," said the stranger with a coolness that bordered on the cynical, "he has been dead these twenty years."

"Then your mother?" suggested the student with the feeble

persistence by which weak minds show their consciousness of contact with stronger ones, "you had then----"

"Hung them all as high as Haman!"

"Ay, but suppose there were among them," objected the youth, in a lower tone, while he eyed his companion narrowly, "some of the clergy, you understand?"

"They had swung--though they had all been Popes of Rome," was the blunt answer.

The listener shook his head, and drew off a pace. He scanned the stranger curiously, keeping his back turned to the corpse the while, but failed by that light to make out much one way or the other. Scarcely a moment too was allowed him before the murmur of voices and the clash of weapons at the far end of the street interrupted him. "The watch are coming," he said roughly.

"You are right, and the sooner we are within doors the better," his companion assented.

It was noticeable that throughout their talk which had lasted many minutes no sign of life had appeared in any of the neighboring houses. Scarce a light shone from a window though it was as yet but nine o'clock. The fact was that fear of the Sixteen and of the mob they guided was overpowering Paris--a terror crushing out men's lives. While the provinces of France were divided at this time between two opinions, and half of each as a rule owned the Huguenot Henry the Fourth--now for six months the rightful sovereign--for king, Paris would have none of him. The fierce bigotry of the lower classes, the presence of some thousands of Spanish soldiers, and the ambition and talents of the Guise family combined at once to keep the gates of Paris closed to him, and to overawe such of the respectable citizens

as from religious sympathy in rare cases, and more often out of a desire to see law and order re-established, would fain have adopted his cause. The Politiques, or moderate party, who were indifferent about religion as such, but believed that a strong government could only be formed by a Romanist king, were almost non-existent in Paris. And the events of the past day, the murder of three judges and several lower officials--among them poor M. Portail whose body now decorated the Rue de l'Arbre Sec--had not reassured the municipal mind. No wonder that men put out their lights early, and were loth to go to their windows, when they might see a few feet from the casement the swollen features of a harmless, honest man, but yesterday going to and from his work like other men.

Young Portail strode to the door of the house and knocked hurriedly. As he did so, he looked up with something like a shiver of nervous apprehension at the window above. But the girl neither moved nor spoke, nor betrayed any consciousness of his presence. She might have been dead. It was a young man, about his own age or a little older, who, after reconnoitring him from above, cautiously drew back the door. "Whom have you with you?" he whispered, holding it ajar, and letting the end of a stout club be seen.

"No one," Portail replied in the same cautious tone. And he would have entered without more ado, and closed the door behind him had not his late companion, who had followed him across the street like his shadow, set his foot against it. "Nay, but you are forgetting me," he said good-humoredly.

"Go your way! we have enough to do to protect ourselves," cried Portail brusquely.

"The more need of me," was the careless answer.

The watch were now but a few houses away, and the stranger

seemed determined. He could scarcely be kept out without a disturbance. With an angry oath Felix Portail held the door for him to enter; and closed it softly behind him. Then for a minute or so the three stood silent in the darkness, while with a murmur of voices and clash of weapons, and a ruddy glimmer piercing crack and keyhole, the guard swept by.

"Have you a light?" Felix murmured.

"In the back room," replied the young man who had admitted them. He seemed to be a clerk or confidential servant. "But your sister," he continued, "is distraught. She has sat at the window all day as you see her now--sometimes looking at *it*. Oh Felix, this has been a dreadful day for this house!"

The young Portail assented by a groan. "And Susanne?" he asked.

"Is with Mistress Marie, terrified almost to death, poor child. She has been crouching all day by her, hiding her face in her gown. But where were you?"

"At the Sorbonne," replied Felix in a whisper.

"Ah!" the other exclaimed, something of hidden meaning in his tone. "I would not tell her that, if I were you. I feared it was so. But let us go upstairs."

They went: with more than one stumble by the way. At the head of the staircase the clerk opened a door and preceded them into a low-roofed panelled room, plainly but solidly furnished, and lighted by a small hanging lamp of silver. A round oak table on six curiously turned legs stood in the middle, and on it some food was laid. A high-backed chair, before which a sheep-skin rug was spread, and two or

three stools made up with a great oak chest the main furniture of the room.

The stranger turned from scrutinizing his surroundings, and started. Another door had silently opened; and he saw framed in the doorway and relieved by the lamplight against the darkness of the outer room the face and figure of a tall girl. A moment she stood pointing at them with her hand, her face white--and whiter in seeming by reason of the black hair which fell around it--her eyes dilated, the neck-band of her dark red gown torn open. "A Provençal!" the intruder murmured to himself. "Beautiful and a tigress."

At any rate, for the moment, beside herself. "So you have come at last!" she panted, glaring at Felix with passionate scorn in word and gesture. "Where were you while these slaves of yours did your bidding? At the Sorbonne with the black crows! Thinking out fresh work for them? Or dallying with your Normandy sweetheart?"

"Hush!" he said quailing visibly. "There is a stranger here."

"There have been many strangers here today!" she retorted bitterly. "Hush, you say? Nay, I will not be silent. They may tear me limb from limb, but I will accuse them of this murder before God's throne. Coward! Do you think I will ask mercy from them? Come, look on your work! See what the League have done--your holy League!--while you sat plotting with the black crows!"

She pointed into the dark room behind her, and the movement disclosed a younger girl clinging to her skirts, and weeping silently. "Come here, Susanne," said Felix, who had turned pale and red under the lash of the other's scorn. "Your sister is not herself. You do no good, Marie, staying in there. See, you are both trembling with cold."

"With cold? Then do you warm yourselves! Sit down and eat and drink and be comfortable and forget him! But I will not eat or drink while he hangs there! Shame, Felix Portail! Have you arms and hands, and will you let your father hang before his own door?"

Her voice rang shrilly to the last word; and then an awkward silence fell on the room. The stranger nodded, almost as if he had said, "Bravo!" The two men of the house cast doubtful glances at one another. At length the clerk spoke. "It is impossible, mistress," he said gently. "Were he touched, the mob would wreck the house to-morrow."

"A little bird whispered to me as I came through the streets,"--it was the stranger who spoke--"that Mayenne and his riders would be in town to-morrow. Then it seems to me that our friends of the Sorbonne will not have matters altogether their own way."

The Sorbonne was the Theological College of Paris; at this time the headquarters of the extreme Leaguers and the Sixteen. Mayenne and D'Aumale, the Guise princes, more than once found it necessary to check the excesses of this party.

Marie Portail looked at the last speaker. He sat on the edge of the chest, carelessly swinging one knee over the other; a man of middle height, rather tall than short, with well bronzed cheeks, a forehead broad and white, and an aquiline nose. He wore a beard and moustaches, and his chin jutted out. His eyes were keen, but good-humored. Though spare he had broad shoulders, and an iron-hilted sword propped against his thigh seemed made for use rather than show. The upper part of his dress was of brown cloth, the lower of leather. A weather-stained cloak which he had taken off lay on the chest beside him.

"You are a man!" cried Marie fiercely. "But as for these----"

"Stay, mistress!" the clerk broke in "Your brother does but collect himself. If the Duke of Mayenne comes back to-morrow, as our friend here says is likely--and I have heard the same myself--he will keep his men in better order. That is true. And we might risk it if the watch would give us a wide berth."

Felix nodded sullenly. "Shut the door," he said to his sister, the deep gloom on his countenance contrasting with the excitement she betrayed. "There is no need to let the neighbors see us."

This time she obeyed him. Susanne too crept from her skirts, and threw herself on her knees, hiding her face on the chair. "Ay!" said Marie looking down at her with the first expression of tenderness the stranger had noted in her. "Let her weep. Let children weep. But let men work."

"We want a ladder," said the clerk in a low voice. "And the longest we have is full three feet short."

"That is just half a man," remarked he who sat on the chest.

"What do you mean?" asked Felix wonderingly.

"What I said."

"But there is nothing on which we can rest the ladder," urged the clerk.

"Then that is a whole man," quoth the stranger curtly. "Perhaps two. I told you you would have need of me." He looked from one to the other with a smile; a careless, self-contented smile.

"You are a soldier," said Marie suddenly.

"At times," he replied, shrugging his shoulders.

"For which side?"

He shook his head. "For my own," he answered naïvely.

"A soldier of fortune?"

"At your service, mistress; now and ever."

The clerk struck in impatiently. "If we are to do this," he said, "we had better see about it. I will fetch the ladder."

He went out and the other men followed more slowly, leaving Marie still standing gazing into the darkness of the outer room--she had opened the door again--like one in a trance. Some odd trait in the soldier led him, as he passed out, to lay his hand on the hair of the kneeling child with a movement infinitely tender; infinitely at variance with the harsh clatter with which his sword next moment rang against the stairs as he descended.

The three men were going to do that which two certainly, and perhaps all, knew to be perilous. One went to it in gloom, anger as well as sorrow at his heart. One bustled about nervously, and looked often behind him as if to see Marie's pale face at the window. And one strode out as to a ball, glancing up and down the dark lane with an air of enjoyment, which not even the grim nature of his task could suppress. The body was hanging from a bar which crossed the street at a considerable height, serving as a stay between the gables of two opposite houses, of which one was two doors only from the unhappy Portails'. The mob, with a barbarity very common in those days, had hung him on his own threshold.

The street as the three moved up it, seemed empty and still. But it

was impossible to say how long it would remain so. Yet the soldier loitered, staring about him, as one remembering things. "Did not the Admiral live in this neighborhood?" he inquired.

"De Coligny? Yes. Round the corner in the Rue de Béthisy," replied the clerk brusquely. "But see! The ladder will not reach the bar--no, not by four feet."

"Set it against the wall then--thus," said the soldier, and having done it himself he mounted a few steps. But then he seemed to bethink himself. He jumped down again. "No," he exclaimed, peering sharply into the faces of one and the other, "I do not know you. If any one comes, my friends, and you leave the foot of the ladder I shall be taken like a bird on a limed twig. Do you ascend, Monsieur Felix."

The young man drew back. He was not without courage, or experience of rough scenes. But the Louvre was close at hand, almost within earshot on one side, the Châtelet was scarcely farther off on the other; and both swarmed with soldiers and brutal camp-followers. At any moment a troop of them might pass; and should they detect any one interfering with King Mob's handiwork, he would certainly dangle in a very few minutes from some handy lamp-iron. Felix knew this, and stood at gaze. "I do not know you either," he muttered irresolutely, his hand still on the ladder.

A smile of surprising humor played on the soldier's face. "Nay, but you knew *him!*" he retorted, pointing upwards with his hand. "Trust me, young sir," he added significantly, "I am less inclined to mount now than I was before."

The clerk intervened before Felix could resent the insult. "Steady," he said; "I will go up and do it."

"Not so!" Felix rejoined, pushing him aside in turn. And he ran up

the ladder. But near the top he paused, and began to descend again. "I have no knife," he said shamefacedly.

"Pshaw! Let me come!" cried the stranger. "I see you are both good comrades. I trust you. Besides, I am more used to this ladder work than you are, and time is everything."

He ran up as he spoke, and standing on the highest round but one he grasped the bar above his head, and swung himself lightly up, so as to gain a seat on it. With more caution he wormed himself along it until he reached the rope. Fortunately there was a long coil of it about the bar; and warning his companions in a whisper, he carefully, and with such reverence as the time and place allowed, let down the body to them. They received it in their arms; and were loosening the noose from the neck when an outburst of voices and the noise of footsteps at the nearer end of the street surprised them. For an instant the two stood in the gloom, breathless, stricken, still, confounded. Then with a single impulse they lifted the body between them, and huddled blindly to the door. It opened at their touch, they stumbled in, and it fell to behind them. The foremost of the party outside had been within ten paces of them. A narrow escape!

Yet they had escaped. But what next? What of their companion? The moment the door shut behind them they would have rushed out again, ay, to certain death, so strongly had the soldier's trust appealed to their confidence. But they had the body in their arms; and by the time it was laid on the stairs, a score of men had passed. The opportunity was over. They could do nothing but listen. "Heaven help him!" fell from the clerk's quivering lips. Pulling the door ajar, they stood, looking each moment to hear a challenge, a shot, the clash of swords. But no. They did hear the party halt under the gallows, and pass some brutal jest, and go on. And that was all.

They could scarcely believe their ears; no, nor even their eyes,

when a few minutes later the street being now quiet, they passed out, and stood in it shuddering. For there still swung the corpse dimly outlined above them! There! Certainly there! The clerk seized his companion's arm and drew him back. "It was the fiend!" he stammered. "See, your father is still there! It was the fiend who helped us!"

But suddenly the figure they were watching became agitated; another instant and it slid gently to the ground. It was the soldier. "O ye gods!" he cried, bent double with silent laughter. "Saw you ever such a trick? How I longed to kick if it were but my toe at them, and I forbore! Fools that they were! Did man ever see a body hung in its sword? But it was a good trick, eh?" appealing to them with a simple pride in his invention. "I had the rope loose in my hand when they came, and I drew it twice round my neck--and one arm trust me--and swung off gently. It is not every one who would have thought of that, my children."

It was odd. They still shook with fear, and he with laughter. He did not seem to give a thought to the danger he had escaped. Pride in his readiness and a keen sense of the humorous side of the incident entirely possessed him. At the very door of the house he still chuckled from time to time; muttering between the ebullitions, "Ah, I must tell Diane! Diane will be pleased!"

Once inside, however, he acted with more delicacy than might have been expected. He stood aside while the other two carried the body upstairs; and himself waited patiently in the bare room below, which showed signs of occasional use as a stable. Here the clerk Adrian presently found him, and murmured some apology. Mistress Marie, he said, had fainted.

"A matter which afflicts you, my friend," the soldier replied with a

grimace, "about as much as your master's death. Pooh, man, do not look fierce! Good luck to you. Only if--but this is no house for gallantry to-night--I had spruced myself, you had had to look to your ewe lamb!"

The clerk turned pale and red by turns. This man seemed to read his thoughts as if he had indeed been the fiend. "What do you wish?" he stammered.

"Only shelter until the early morning when the streets are most quiet; and a direction to the Rue des Lombards."

"The Rue des Lombards?"

"Yes, why not?" But though the soldier still smiled, the lines of his mouth hardened suddenly. "Why not to the Rue des Lombards?"

"I know no reason why you should not be going there," replied the clerk boldly. "It was only that the street is near; and a friend of my late master's lives in it."

"His name?"

The clerk started; the question was put so abruptly, and in a tone so imperious. "Nicholas Toussaint," he answered involuntarily.

"Ay?" replied the other, raising his hand to his chin meditatively and glancing at Adrian with a look that for all the world reminded him of an old print of the eleventh Louis, which hung in a room at the Hôtel de Ville. "Your master, young man, was of the moderate party--a Politique?"

"He was."

"A good man and a Catholic? one who loved France? A Leaguer

only in name?" he continued with vividness.

"Yes, that is so."

"But his son? He is a Leaguer out and out--one who would rise to fortune on the flood tide of the mob? A Sorbonnist? The priests have got hold of him? He would do to others as they have done to his father? A friend of Le Clerc and Boucher?"

Adrian nodded reluctantly. This strange man confounded and yet fascinated him: this man so reckless and gay one moment, so wary the next: exchanging in an instant the hail of a boon companion for the tone of a noble.

"And is your young master also a friend of this Nicholas Toussaint?" was the next question.

"No," said Adrian, "he has been forbidden the house. M. Toussaint does not approve of his opinions."

"Ha! That is so, is it," rejoined the stranger with his former gayety. "And now enough: where will you lodge me until morning?"

"If my closet will serve you," Felix answered with a hesitation he would not have felt a few minutes before, "it is at your will. I will bring some food there at once, and will let you out if you please at five." And Adrian added some simple directions, by following which his guest might reach the Rue des Lombards without difficulty.

An hour later if the thoughts of those who lay sleepless under that roof could have been traced, some strange contrasts would have appeared. Was Felix Portail thinking of his dead father, or of his sweetheart in the Rue des Lombards, or of his schemes of ambition? Was he blaming the crew of whom until to-day he had been one, or

sullenly cursing those factious Huguenots as the root of the mischief? Was Adrian thinking of his kind master, or of his master's daughter? Was the guest dreaming of his narrow escape? or revolving plans beside which Felix's were but the schemes of a rat in a drain? Perhaps Marie alone--for Susanne slept a child's sleep of exhaustion--had her thoughts fixed on him, who so few hours before had been the centre of the household.

But such is life in troubled times. Pleasure and pain come mingled together, and men snatch the former even from the midst of the latter with a trembling joy; knowing that if they wait to go a pleasuring until the sky be clear, they may wait until nightfall.

When Adrian called his guest at cock-crow the latter rose briskly and followed him down to the door. "Well, young sir," he said on the threshold, as he wrapped his cloak round him and took his sheathed sword in his hand, "I am obliged to you. When I can do you a service, I will."

"You can do me one now," replied the clerk bluntly, "It is ill work having to do with strangers in these days. You can tell me who you are, and to which side you belong."

"Which side? I have told you--my own. And for the rest," continued the soldier, "I will give you a hint." He brought his lips near the other's ear, and whispered, "Kiss Marie--for me!"

The clerk looked up aflame with anger, but the other was already gone striding down the street. Yet Adrian received an answer to his question. For as the stranger disappeared in the gloom, he broke out with an audacity that took the listener's breath away into a well-known air,

"Hau! Hau! Papegots!
Faites place aux Huguenots!"

and trilled it as if he had been in the streets of Rochelle.

"Death!" exclaimed the clerk, getting back into the house, and barring the door, "I thought so. He is a Huguenot. But if he takes his neck out of Paris unstretched, he will have the fiend's own luck, and the Béarnais' to boot!"

II.

When the clerk went upstairs, again, he heard voices in the back room. Felix and Marie were in consultation. The girl was a different being this morning. The fire and fury of the night had sunk to a still misery: and even to her it seemed over dangerous to stay in the house and confront the rage of the mob. Mayenne might not after all return yet: and in that case the Sixteen would assuredly wreak their spite on all, however young or helpless, who might have had to do with the removal of the body. "You must seek shelter with some friend," Felix proposed, "before the city is astir. I can go to the University. I shall be safe there."

"Could you not take us with you?" Marie suggested meekly.

He shook his head, his face flushing. It was hard to confess that he had power to destroy, but none to protect. "You had better go to Nicholas Toussaint's," he said. "He will take you in, though he will have nothing to do with me."

Marie assented with a sigh, and rose to make ready. Some few valuables were hidden or secured, some clothes taken; and then the little party of four passed out into the street, leaving but one solemn tenant in their home. The cold light of a November morning gave to the lane an air even in accustomed eyes of squalor and misery. The kennel running down the middle was choked with nastiness, while here and there the upper stories leaned forward so far as to obscure the light.

The fugitives regarded these things little after the first shivering glance, but hurried on their road; Felix with his sword, and Adrian with his club marching on either side of the girls. A skulking dog got out of their way. The song of a belated reveller made them shrink under an arch. But they fell in with nothing more formidable until they came to the high wooden gates of the courtyard in front of Nicholas Toussaint's house.

To arouse him or his servants, however, without disturbing the neighborhood was another matter. There was no bell; only a heavy iron clapper. Adrian tried this cautiously, with little hope of being heard. But to his joy the hollow sound had scarcely ceased when footsteps were heard crossing the court, and a small trap in one of the gates was opened. An elderly man with high cheek bones and curly gray hair looked out. His eyes lighting on the girls lost their harshness. "Marie Portail!" he exclaimed. "Ah! poor thing, I pity you. I have heard all. I only returned to the city last night or I should have been with you. And Adrian?"

"We have come," said the young man respectfully, "to beg shelter for Mistress Marie and her sister. It is no longer safe for them to remain in the Rue de l'Arbre Sec."

"I can well believe it," cried Toussaint vigorously. "I do not know

where we are safe nowadays. But there," he added in a different tone, "no doubt the Sixteen are acting for the best."

"You will take them in then?" said Adrian, with gratitude.

But to his astonishment the citizen shook his head, while an awkward embarrassment twisted his features. "It is impossible!" he said reluctantly.

Adrian doubted if he had heard aright. Nicholas Toussaint was known for a bold man; one whom the Sixteen disliked, and even suspected of Huguenot leanings, but had not yet dared to attack. He was a dealer in Norman horses, and this both led him to employ many men, reckless daring fellows, and made him in some degree necessary to the army. Adrian had never doubted that he would shelter the daughter of his old friend; and his surprise on receiving this rebuff was extreme.

"But, Monsieur Toussaint--" he urged--and his face reddened with generous warmth as he stood forward. "My master is dead! Foully murdered! He lies who says otherwise, though he be of the Sixteen! My mistress has few friends now to protect her, and those of small power. Will you send her and the child from your door?"

"Hush, Adrian," cried the girl, lifting her head proudly, yet laying her hand on the clerk's sleeve with a tender touch of acknowledgment that brought the blood in redoubled force to his cheeks. "Do not press our friend overmuch. If he will not take us in from the streets, be sure he has some good reason to offer."

But Toussaint was dumb. Shame--a shame augmented tenfold by the clerk's fearlessness--was so clearly written on his face, that Adrian uttered none of the reproaches which hung on his lips. It was Felix who came forward, and said contemptuously, "So you have

grown strangely cautious of a sudden, M. Toussaint?"

"Ha! I thought you were there, or thereabouts!" replied the horse-dealer, regaining his composure at once, and eyeing him with strong disfavor.

"But Felix and I," interposed Adrian eagerly, "will fend for ourselves."

Toussaint shook his head. "It is impossible," he said surlily.

"Then hear me!" cried Felix with excitement. "You do not deceive me. It is not because of your daughter that you have forbidden me the house, and will not now protect my sister! It is because we shall learn too much. You have those under your roof, whom the crows shall pick yet! You, I will spare for Madeline's sake; but your spies I will string up, every one of them by----" and he swore a frightful oath such as the Romanists used.

Toussaint's face betrayed both fear and anger. For an instant he seemed to hesitate. Then exclaiming "Begone, parricide! You would have killed your own father!" he slammed the trap-door, and was heard retreating up the yard with a clatter, which sufficiently indicated his uneasiness.

The four looked at one another. Daylight had fully come. The noise of the altercation had drawn more than one sleepy face to neighboring casements. In a short time the streets would be alive with people, and even a delay of a few minutes might bring immediate danger. They thought of this; and moved away slowly and reluctantly, Susanne clinging to Adrian's arm, while Felix strode ahead scowling. When they had placed, however, a hundred yards or so between themselves and Toussaint's gates, they stopped, a chill sense of desolation upon most of them. Whither were they to go? Felix urged

curtly that they should seek other friends. But Marie declined. If Nicholas Toussaint dared not take them in, no other of their friends would. She had given up hope, poor girl, and longed only to get back to their home, and the still form, which it now seemed to her she should never have deserted.

They were standing discussing this when a cry caused them to turn. A girl was running hatless along the street towards them; a girl tall and plump of figure in a dark blue robe, with a creamy slightly freckled face, a glory of wavy golden hair about it, and great gray eyes that could laugh and cry at once, even as they were doing now. "Oh, Marie," she exclaimed taking her in her arms; "my poor little one! Come back! You are to come back at once!" Then disengaging herself, with a blushing cheek and more reserve she allowed Felix to embrace her. But though that young gentleman made full use of his permission, his face did not clear. "Your father has just turned my sister from his door, as he turned me a month ago," he said bitterly.

Poor girl, she quailed; looking at him with a tender upward glance meant for him only. "Hush!" she begged him. "Do not speak so of him. And he has sent to fetch them back again. He says he cannot keep them himself, but if they will come in and rest he will see them safely disposed of later. Will not that do?"

"Excellently, Miss Madeline," cried Adrian gratefully. "And we thank your father a thousand times."

"Nay but--" she said slyly--"that permission does not extend to you,"

"What matter?" he said stoutly.

"What matter if Marie be safe you mean," she replied demurely. "Well, I would I had so gallant a--clerk," with a glance at her own

handsome lover. "But come, my father is waiting at the gate for us." Yet notwithstanding that she urged haste, she and Felix were the last to turn. When she at length ran after the others her cheeks betrayed her.

"I can see what you have been doing, girl," her father cried angrily, meeting her just within the door. "For shame, hussy! Go to your room, and take your friends with you." And he aimed a light blow at her, which she easily evaded.

"They will need breakfast," she persisted bravely. She had seen her lover, and though the interview might have had its drawbacks--best known to herself--she cared little for a blow in comparison with that.

"They will take it in your room," he retorted. "Come, pack, girl! I will talk to you presently," he added, with meaning.

The Portails drew her away. To them her room was a haven of rest, where they felt safe, and could pour out their grief, and let her pity and indignation soothe them. The horror of the last twenty-four hours fell from them. They seemed to themselves to be outcasts no longer.

In the afternoon Toussaint reappeared. "On with your hoods," he cried briskly, his good humor re-established. "I and half a dozen stout lads will see you to a place where you can lie snug for a week."

Marie asked timidly about her father's funeral. "I will see to it, little one," he answered. "I will let the curate of St. Germain know. He will do what is seemly--if the mob let him," he added to himself.

"But father," cried Madeline, "where are you going to take them?"

"To Philip Boyer's."

"What!" cried the girl in much surprise. "His house is small and Philip and his wife are old and feeble."

"True," answered Portail. "But his hutch is under the Duchess's roof. There is a touch of *our great man* about Madame. Mayenne the crowd neither overmuch love, nor much fear. He will die in his bed. But with his sister it is a word and a blow. And the Sixteen will not touch aught that is under her roof."

The Duchess de Montpensier was the sister of Henry Duke of Guise, Henry the Scarred, *Our great man*, as the Parisians loved to call him. He had been assassinated in the antechamber of Henry of Valois just a twelvemonth before this time; and she had become the soul of the League, having more of the headstrong nature which had made him popular, than had either of his brothers, Mayenne or D'Aumale.

"I see," said Madeline, kissing the girls, "you are right, father."

"Impertinent baggage!" he cried. "To your prayers and your needle. And see that while we are away you keep close, and do not venture into the courtyard."

She was not a nervous girl, but the bare, roomy house seemed lonely after the party had set out. She wandered to the kitchen where the two old women-servants were preparing, with the aid of a turnspit, the early supper; and learned here that only old Simon, the lame ostler, was left in the stables, which stood on either side of the courtyard. This was not reassuring news: the more as Madeline knew her father might not return for another hour. She took refuge at last in the long eating-room on the first floor; which ran the full depth of the house, and had one window looking to the back as well as several

facing the courtyard. Here she opened the door of the stove, and let the cheery glow play about her.

But presently she grew tired of this, and moved to the rearward window. It looked upon a narrow lane, and a dead wall. Still, there was a chance of seeing some one pass, some stranger; whereas the windows which looked on the empty courtyard were no windows at all--to Madeline.

The girl had not long looked out before her pale complexion, which the fire had scarcely warmed, grew hot. She started, and looked into the room behind her nervously: then looked out again. She had seen standing in a nook of the wall opposite her, a figure she knew well. It was that of her lover, and he seemed to be watching the house. Timidly she waved her hand to him, and he, after looking up and down the lane, advanced to the window. He could do this safely, for it was the only window in the Toussaints' house which looked that way.

"Are you alone?" he asked softly, looking up at her.

She nodded.

"And my sisters?" he continued.

"Have gone to Philip Boyer's. He lives in one of the cottages on the left of the Duchess's yard."

"Ah! And you? Where is your father, Madeline?" he murmured.

"He has gone to take them. I am quite alone; and two minutes ago I was melancholy," she added, with a smile that should have made him happy.

"I want to talk to you," he replied gravely. "May I get up if I can, Madeline?"

She shook her head, which of course meant no. And she said, "It is impossible." But she still smiled.

There was a pipe which ran up the wall a couple of feet or so on one side of the casement. Before she well understood his purpose, or that he was in earnest he had gripped this and was halfway up to the window.

"Oh, do take care," she cried. "Do not come, Felix. My father will be so angry!" Woman-like she repented now, when it was too late. But still he came on, and when his hand was stretched out to grasp the sill, all her fear was only lest he should fall. She seized his wrist, and helped him in. Then she drew back. "You should not have done it, Felix," she said severely.

"But I wanted to see you so much, Madeline," he urged, "and the glimpse I had of you this morning was nothing."

"Well then, you may come to the stove and warm yourself, sir. Oh! how cold your poor hands are, my boy! But you must not stay."

But stolen moments are sweet and apt to be long drawn out. She had a great deal to say, and he had a great deal, it seemed, to ask--so much to ask indeed, that gradually a dim sense that he was thinking of other things than herself--of her father and the ways of the house, and what guests they had, came over her.

It chilled her to the heart. She drew away from him, and said, suddenly, "Oh, Felix!" and looked at him.

Nothing more. But he understood her and colored; and tried to

ask, but asked awkwardly, "What is the matter, dearest?"

"I know what you are thinking of," she said with grave sorrow, "Oh! it is too bad! It is base of you, cruel! You would use even me whom you love to ruin my friends!"

"Hush!" he answered, letting his gloomy passion have vent for the moment, "they are not your friends, Madeline. See what they have done for me. It is they, or the troubles they have set on foot, that have killed my father!" And he swore solemnly--carried away by his mistaken resentment--never again to spare a Huguenot save her father and one other.

She trembled and tried to close her ears. Her father had told her a hundred times that she could not be happy with a husband divided from her by a gulf so impassable. She had said to him that it was too late. She knew it. She had given Felix her heart and she was a woman. She could not take it back, though she knew that nothing but unhappiness could come of it.

"God forgive you!" she moaned in that moment of strained insight; and sank in her chair as though she would weep.

He fell on his knees by her with a hundred words of endearment, for he had conquered himself again. And she let him soothe her. She had never loved him more than now, when she knew the price she must pay for him. She closed her eyes--for the moment--to that terrible future, and he was holding her in his arms, when without warning a heavy footstep rang on the stairs by the door.

They sprang apart. If even then he had had presence of mind, he might have reached the window. But he hesitated, looking in her startled eyes. "Is it your father?" he whispered.

She shook her head. "He cannot have returned. We should have heard the gates opened. There is no one in the house," she murmured faintly.

But still the footsteps came on: and stopped at the door. Felix looked round in despair. Close beside him, and just behind the stove was the door of a closet. He took two strides, and before he or she had thought of the consequences, was within it. Softly he drew the door to again; and she sank terrified on a chair, as the door of the room opened.

He who came in was a man of thirty-five, a stranger to her. A man with a projecting chin. His keen gray eyes wore at the moment of his entrance an impatient expression, but when he caught sight of her, this passed away. He came across the floor smiling. "Pardon me," he said--but said it as if no pardon were needed, "I found the stables insupportably dull. I set out on a voyage of discovery. I have found my America!" And he bowed in a style which puzzled the frightened girl.

"You want to see my father?"' she said tremulously. "He----"

"Has gone to the Duchess's. I know it. And very ill-natured it was of him to leave me in the stable, instead of intrusting me to your care, mistress. La Nouë," he continued, "is in the stable still, asleep on a bundle of hay, and a pretty commotion there will be when he finds I have stolen away!"

Laughing with an easy carelessness that struck the citizen's daughter with fresh astonishment, the stranger drew up the big armchair, which was commonly held sacred to M. Toussaint's use, and threw himself into it; lazily disposing his booted feet in the glow which poured from the stove, and looking across at his companion with open and somewhat bold admiration in his eyes. At another time she might have been offended: or she might not. Women are

variable. Now her fears lest Felix should be discovered dulled her apprehension.

Yet the name of La Nouë had caught her ear. She knew it well, as all France and the Low Countries knew it in those days, for the name of the boldest and staunchest warrior on the Huguenot side.

"La Nouë?" she murmured, misty suspicions beginning to take form in her mind.

"Yes, pretty one," replied he laughing. "La Nouë and no other. Does Bras-de-fer pass for an ogre here in Paris that you tremble so at his name? Let me----"

But whatever the proposition he was going to offer, it came to nothing. The dull clash of the gates outside warned both of them that Nicholas Toussaint and his party had returned. A moment later a hasty tread sounded on the stairs; and an elderly man wearing a cloak burst in upon them.

His eyes swept the room while his hand still held the door, and it was clear that what he saw did not please him. He came forward stiffly, his brows knitted. But he said nothing; seeming uncertain and embarrassed.

"See!" the first comer said, looking quietly up at him, but not offering to move. "Now what do you think of your ogre? And by the rood, he looks fierce enough to eat babes! There, old friend," he continued speaking to the elder man in a different tone, "spare your lecture. This is Toussaint's daughter, and as staunch I will warrant as her father."

The old noble--he had but one arm she saw--still looked at her with disfavor. "Girls have sweethearts, sire," he said shrewdly.

For a moment the room seemed to go round with her. Though something more of reproach and playful defence passed between the two men, she did not hear it. The consciousness that her lover was listening to every word and that from this moment La Nouë's life was in his hands, numbed her brain. She sat helpless, hardly aware that half a dozen men were entering, her father one of them. When a lamp was called for--it was growing dark--she did not stir: and Toussaint, not seeing her, fetched it himself.

But by the time he came back she had partly recovered herself. She noted that he locked the door carefully behind him. When the lamp was set on the table, and its light fell on the harsh features of the men, a ray passed between them, and struck her pale face. Her father saw her.

"By heaven!" he cried furiously. "What does the wench here?" No one answered; but all turned and looked at her where she cowered back against the stove. "Go, girl!" Toussaint cried, beside himself with passion. "Begone! and presently I will----"

"Nay, stop!" interposed La Nouë. "Your daughter knows too much. We cannot let her go thus."

"Knows too much? How?" and the citizen tossed his head like a bull balked in his charge.

"His majesty----"

"Nay, let his majesty speak for himself--for once," said the man with the gray eyes--and even in her terror and confusion Madeline saw that all turned to him with a single movement. "Mistress Toussaint did but chat with La Nouë and myself, during her father's absence. But she knows us; or one of us. If any be to blame it is I. Let

her stay. I will answer for her fidelity."

"Nay, but she is a woman, sire," some one objected.

"Ay, she is, good Poulain," and he turned to the speaker with a singularly bright smile. "So we are safe, for there is no woman in France would betray Henry of Bourbon!"

A laugh went round. Some one mentioned the Duchess.

"True!" said Henry, for Henry it was, he whom the Leaguers called the Béarnais and the Politiques the King of Navarre, but whom later generations have crowned as the first of French kings--Henry the Great. "True! I had forgotten her. I must beware of her gold scissors. We have two crowns already, and want not another of her making. But come, let us to business without ceremony. Be seated, gentlemen; and while we consider whether our plans hold good, Mistress Toussaint--" he paused to look kindly at the terrified girl--"will play the sentry for us."

Madeline's presence within a few feet of their council-board was soon forgotten by the eager men sitting about it. And in a sense she forgot them. She heard, it is true, their hopes and plans, the chief a scheme to surprise Paris by introducing men hidden in carts piled with hay. She heard how Henry and La Nouë had entered, and who had brought them in, and how it was proposed to smuggle them out again; and many details of men and means and horses; who were loyal and who disaffected, and who might be bought over, and at what price. She even took note of the manner of each speaker as he leaned forward, and brought his face within the circle of light, marking who were known to her before, substantial citizens these, constant at mass and market, and who were strangers; men fiercer-looking, thinner, haughtier, more restless, with the stamp of constant peril at the corners of their eyes, and swords some inches longer than their

neighbors'.

She saw and heard this and reasoned dully on it. But all the time her mind was paralyzed by a dreadful sense of some great evil awaiting her, something with which she must presently come face to face, though her faculties had not grasped it yet. Men's lives! Ah, yes, men's lives! The girl had been bred in secret as a Huguenot. She had been taught to revere the great men of the religion, and not the weakness of the cause, not even her lover's influence had sapped her loyalty to it.

Presently there was a stir about the table. The men rose. "Then that arrangement meets your views, sire," said La Nouë.

"Perfectly. I sleep to-night at my good friend Mazeau's," the king answered, "and leave to-morrow about noon by St. Martin's gate. Yes, let that stand."

He did not see--none of them saw--how the girl in the shadow by the stove started; nor did they mark how the last trace of color fled from her cheeks. Madeline was face to face with her fate, and knew that her own hand must work it out. The men were separating. Henry bade farewell to one and another, until only three or four beside Toussaint and La Nouë remained with him. Then he prepared himself to go, and girt on his sword, talking earnestly the while. Still engaged in low converse with one of the strangers, he walked slowly lighted by his host to the door, forgetting to take leave of the girl. In another minute he and they would have disappeared in the passage, when a hoarse cry escaped from Madeline's lips.

It was little more than a gasp, but it was enough for men whose nerves were strained. All--at the moment they had their backs to her, their faces to the king--turned swiftly. "Ha!" cried Henry at once, "I had forgotten my manners. I was leaving my most faithful sentry without a

word of thanks, or a keepsake by which to remember Henry of France."

She had risen, and was supporting herself--but she swayed as she stood--by the arm of the chair. Never had her lover been so dear to her. As the king approached, the light fell on her face, on her agonized eyes, and he stopped short. "Toussaint!" he cried sharply. "Your daughter is ill. Look at her!" But it was noticeable that he laid his hand on his sword.

"Stay!" she cried, the word ringing shrilly through the room. "You are betrayed! There is some one--there--who has heard--all! Oh, sire, mercy! mercy!"

As the last words passed the girl's writhing lips she clutched at her throat: seemed to fight a moment for breath: then with a stifled shriek fell senseless to the ground.

A second's silence. Then a whistling sound as half a dozen swords were snatched from the scabbards. The veteran La Nouë sprang to the door: others ran to the windows and stood before them. Only Henry--after a swift glance at Toussaint, who pale and astonished, leaned over his daughter--stood still, his fingers on his hilt. Another second of suspense, and before any one spoke, the cupboard door swung open, and Felix Portail, pale to the lips, stood before them.

"What do you here?" cried Henry, restraining by a gesture those who would have flung themselves upon the spy.

"I came to see her," Felix said. He was quite calm, but a perspiration cold as death stood on his brow, and his distended eyes wandered from one to another. "You surprised me. Toussaint knows that I was her sweetheart," he murmured.

"Ay, wretched man, to see her! And for what else?" replied Henry, his eyes, as a rule, so kindly, bent on the other in a gaze fixed and relentless.

A sudden visible quiver--as it were the agony of death--shot through Portail's frame. He opened his mouth, but for a while no sound came. His eyes sought the nearest sword with horrid intentness. He gasped, "Kill me at once, before she--before----"

He never finished the sentence. With an oath the nearest Huguenot lunged at his breast, and fell back, foiled by a blow from the King's hand. "Back!" cried Henry, his eyes flashing as another sprang forward, and would have done the work. "Will you trench on the King's justice in his presence? Sheath your swords, all save the Sieur de la Nouë, and the gentlemen who guard the windows!"

"He must die!" cried several voices, as the men still pressed forward viciously.

"Think, sire! Think what you do," cried La Nouë himself, warning in his voice. "He has the life of every man here in his hand? And they are your men, risking all for the cause."

"True," replied Henry, smiling; "but I ask no man to run a risk I will not take myself."

A murmur of dissatisfaction burst forth. Several drew their swords again. "I have a wife and child!" cried one recklessly, bringing his point to the thrust. "He dies!"

"He does not die!" exclaimed the King, his voice so ringing through the room that all fell back once more; fell back not so much because it was the King who spoke as in obedience to the voice

which two months before had rallied the flying squadrons at Arques, and years before had rung out hour after hour and day after day above the long street fight of Cahors. "He does not die!" repeated Henry, looking from one to another, with his chin thrust out, "I say it. I! And there are no traitors here!"

"Your majesty," said La Nouë after a moment's pause, "commands our lives."

"Thanks, Francis," Henry replied instantly changing his tone. "And now hear me, gentlemen. Think you that it was a light thing in this girl to give up her lover? She might have let us go to our doom, and we none the wiser! Would you take her gift and make her no requital? That were not royal. And now for you, sir"--he turned to Felix who was leaning half-fainting against the wall--"hearken to me. You shall go free. I, who this morning played the son to your dead father, give you your life for your sweetheart's sake. For her sake be true. You shall go out alive and safe into the streets of Paris, which five minutes ago you little thought to see again. Go! And if you please, betray us, and be damned! Only remember that if you give up your king and these gentlemen who have trusted you, your name shall go down the centuries--and stand for treachery!"

He spoke the last words with such scorn that a murmur of applause broke out even among those stern men. He took instant advantage of it. "Now go!" he said hurriedly. "You can take the girl there with you. She has but fainted. A kiss will bring her to life. Go, and be silent."

The man took up his burden and went, trembling; still unable to speak. But no hand was now raised to stop him.

When he had disappeared La Nouë turned to the king. "You will not now sleep at Mazeau's, sire?"

Henry rubbed his chin. "Yes; let the plan stand," he answered. "If he betray one, he shall betray all."

"But this is madness," urged La Nouë.

The king shook his head, and smiling clapped the veteran on the shoulder. "Not so," he said. "The man is no traitor: I say it. And you have never met with a longer head than Henry's."

"Never," assented La Nouë bluntly, "save when there is a woman in it!"

The curtain falls. The men have lived and are dead. La Nouë, the Huguenot Bayard, now exist only in a dusty memoir and a page of Motley. Madame de Montpensier is forgotten; all of her, save her golden scissors. Mayenne, D'Aumale, a verse preserves their names. Only Henry--the "good king" as generations of French peasants called him--remains a living figure: his strength and weakness, his sins and virtues, as well known, as thoroughly appreciated by thousands now as in the days of his life.

Therefore we cannot hope to learn much of the fortunes of people so insignificant--save for that moment when the fate of a nation hung on their breath--as the Portails and Toussaints. We do know that Felix proved worthy. For though the attack on Paris on the ninth of November, 1589, failed, it did not fail through treachery. And we know that he married Madeline, and that Adrian won Marie: but no more. Unless certain Portals now living in the north of Ireland, whose ancestors came over at the time of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, are their descendants. And certainly it is curious that in this family the eldest son invariably bears the name of Henry, and the

second of Felix.

KING PEPIN AND SWEET CLIVE.

Upon arriving at the middle of the Close the Dean stopped. He had been walking briskly, his chin from very custom a little tilted, but his eyes beaming with condescension and general good-will, while an indulgent smile playing about the lower part of his face relieved for the time its massive character. His walking-stick was swinging to and fro in a loose grasp, his feet trod the pavement of the precincts with the step of an owner, he felt the warmth of the sun, the balminess of the spring air dimly, and somewhere at the back of his mind he was conscious of a vacant bishopric, and of his being the husband of one wife. In fine, he presented the appearance of a contented, placid, unruffled dignitary, until he reached the middle of the Close.

But there, alas! the ferule of his stick came to the ground with a mighty thud; the sweetness and light faded from his eyes as they rested upon Mr. Swainson's plot; the condescension and good-will became conspicuous only by their absence. The Dean was undisguisedly angry; he disliked opposition as much as lesser men, and met with it more rarely. For Bicester is old-fashioned, and loves the Church and State, but especially the former, and looks up to principalities and powers, and even now execrates the memory of a recreant Bicestrian, otherwise reputable, on account of a terrible mistake he made. It was at a public dinner. "I remember," said this misguided man, "going in my young days to the old and beautiful cathedral of this city. (Great applause.) I was only a child then, and my head hardly reached above the top of the seat, but I remember I thought the Dean the greatest of living men. (Whirlwinds of applause.) Well (smiling) perhaps I don't think quite that now." (Dead silence.)

And so dull at bottom may even a man be whose name is not unknown in half the capitals of Europe, that this degenerate fellow never could guess why the friends of his youth from that moment turned their backs upon him.

Such is the faith of Bicester, but even in Bicester there are heretics. To say that the Dean rarely met with opposition, is to say that he rarely met with Mr. Swainson, and that he seldom saw Mr. Swainson's plot. As a rule, when he crossed the Close he averted his eyes by a happy impulse of custom, for he did not like Mr. Swainson, and as for the latter's plot, it was *anathema maranatha* to him. The Dean was tall, Mr. Swainson was taller; the Dean was stubborn, Mr. Swainson was obstinate; so there arose between them the antagonism that is born of similarity. On the other hand the Dean was stout and Mr. Swainson a scarecrow; the Dean was comely and clerical, but not over-rich, Mr. Swainson was pallid, lantern-jawed, wealthy, and a lawyer, and hence the dislike born of difference. Moreover, years ago Mr. Swainson had been Mayor of Bicester, when there was a little dispute between the Chapter and the Bishop, and he showed so much energy upon the one side as to earn the nickname of the "Mayor of the Palace." Finally Mr. Swainson delighted in opposition as a cat in milk, and cared to have a good reason for his antagonism no more than puss in the dairy about a sixty years' title to the cream-pan.

But a sixty years' title to his plot was the very thing which Mr. Swainson did claim to have. Exactly opposite his house--his father's and grandfather's house, too--in which, said his enemies, they had lived and grown fat upon cathedral patronage, lay this debatable land. His front windows commanded it, and on such a morning as this he loved to stand upon his doorstep and gaze at it with the air of a dog watching the spot where his bone is buried. But if Mr. Swainson was right, that was just what was not buried there; there were no

bones there. True, the smoothly shorn surface of the little patch was divided from the green turf around the cathedral only by a slight iron railing, but, said Mr. Swainson, ponderously seizing upon his opponent's weapon and using it with telling effect, it was of another sort altogether: of a very different nature indeed. It had never been consecrated, and close as it was to the sacred pile, being in fact separated from it on two sides but by a yard of sunk fence, it did not belong to it, it was not of it, quoth he; it was private property, the property of Erasmus John Swainson, and the appanage of his substantial red-brick house just across the Close.

And no one could refute him, though several tried their best, to his huge delight. It cannot now be exactly computed by how many years the discovery of his rights prolonged his life--not certainly by some. His liver demanded activity, namely, a quarrel, and what a coil this was! If he had been given the choice of opponents, he would probably have preferred the Dean and Chapter, they were so substantial, wealthy, and all but formidable. And such a thorn in the side of those comfortable personages as these rights of his were like to be he could hardly have imagined in his most sanguine dreams, or hoped for in his happiest moments.

It was great fun stating his claim, flouting it in their faces, displaying it through the city, brandishing it in season and out of season; but when it came to making a hole in the smooth turf hitherto so sacred, and setting up an unsightly post, and affixing to it a board with "Trespassers will be prosecuted. E. J. Swainson," the fun became furious. So did the Dean, so did the Chapter, so did every sidesman and verger. Bicester was torn in pieces by the contending parties, but Mr. Swainson was firm. The only concession that could be wrung from him was the removal of the obnoxious board. Instead of it he placed a neat iron railing round his property, enclosing just thirty feet by fifteen. Such was the *status in quo* on this morning, and

with it the Dean had for some time been obliged to rest content.

And yet, sooth to say, the greatest pleasure of the very reverend gentleman's life was gone with this accession to the roundness and fulness of Mr. Swainson's. No more with the thorough satisfaction of hitherto could he conduct the American traveller through the ancient crypt, or dilate upon the beauty of the quaint gargoyles to the Marquis of Bicester's visitors. No; indeed that railed-in spot was a plague-spot to him, ever itching, an eyesore even when invisible, a thing to be evaded and dodged and given the slip, as a Dean who is a Dean should scorn to evade anything mortal. He winced at the mere thought that the inquisitive sight-seer might touch upon it might, probe the matter with questions. He hurried him past it with averted finger and voluble tongue, nor recovered his air of kindly condescension, or polished ease (as the case might be), until he was safe within his own hall. Only in moments of forgetfulness could the Dean now walk in his own Close of Bicester with the easy grace of old times.

But on this particular morning the sunshine was so pleasant, the wind so balmy, that he walked halfway across the Close as if the river of Lethe flowed fathoms deep over Mr. Swainson's plot; then it chanced that his eyes in a heedless moment rested upon it; and he saw that a man was at work in the tiny enclosure, and he paused. The Dean knew Mr. Swainson by this time, and did not trust him. What was this? By the man's side lay a small heap of grayish-white things, and he was holding a short-handled mallet, and was using it deftly to drive one of the grayish-white things into the ground. From him the Dean's eyes travelled to a couple of parti-colored sticks, one at each end of the plot. What was this? A horror so terrible that the Dean stood still, and that remarkable change came over him which we have described.

Great men rise to the occasion. It was only a moment he thus

stood and looked. Then he turned and walked rapidly back to a house he had just passed. A tall thin man was standing upon the steps, with the ghost of a smile upon his face. For a moment the Dean could only stammer. It was such a dreadful outrage.

"Is that," he said at last, "is that there, sir, being done by your authority?" With a shaking finger he pointed to Mr. Swainson's plot. The tall man in a leisurely manner settled a pair of eyeglasses upon his nose and looked in the direction indicated. "Ah, I see what you mean," he said at last with delicious coolness. "Certainly, Mr. Dean, certainly!"

"Are you aware, sir, what it is?" gasped the clergyman; "it is sacrilege!"

"Pooh, nothing of the kind, I assure you, my dear sir. It's croquet!"

The tone was one of explanation, and there was such an air of frankness, of putting an end to an unfounded error, that the veins upon the Dean's temples swelled and his face grew, if possible, redder than before.

"I won't stay to bandy words with you----"

"Bandy!" cried the tall man, intensely amused. "Ha, ha, ha! you thought it was hocky! Bandy! Oh, no, you play it with hoops and a mallet. Drive the balls through--so!"

And to the intense delight of the Close people, nine-tenths of whom were at their windows, Mr. Swainson executed an ungainly kind of gambade upon the steps. "Disgusting," the Dean called it afterwards, when talking to sympathetic ears. Now he merely put it away from him with a wave of the hand.

"I will not discuss it now, Mr. Swainson. If your own feelings of decency and of what is right and proper do not forbid this--this ribald profanity--I can call it nothing else, sir--I have but one word to add. The Chapter shall prevent it."

"The Chapter!" replied the other in a tone of singular contempt, which changed to savageness as he continued, "You are well read in history, Mr. Dean, they tell me. Doubtless you remember what happened when the puissant king Canute bade the tide come no further. I am the tide, and you and the Chapter sit in the chair of Canute."

The Dean, it must be confessed, was a little taken aback by this terrible defiance. He was amazed. The two glared at one another, and the clergyman was the first to give way; baffled and disconcerted, yet still swelling with rage, he strode towards the deanery. His antagonist followed him with his eyes, then looked more airily than ever at his plot and the progress being made there, considered the weather with his chin at the decanal angle, and with a flirt of his long coat-tails went into the house, a happy man and the owner of a vastly improved appetite.

But the Dean had more to go through yet. At the door of his garden he ran in his haste against some one coming out. Ordinarily, great man as he was, he was also a gentleman. But this was too much. That, when the father had insulted him, the son should almost prostrate him on his own threshold, was intolerable--at any rate at a moment when he was smarting with the sense of unacknowledged defeat.

"Good-morning, Mr. Dean," said the young fellow, raising his hat with an evident desire to please that was the very antipodes of his sire's manner--only the Dean was in no mood to discriminate--"I have just been having a very pleasant game of croquet."

It is greatly to be regretted, but here a short hiatus in the narrative occurs. The minor canons, than whom no men are more wanting in reverence, say that the Dean's answer consisted of two words, one of them very pithy, very full of meaning, but in the mouth of a Dean, however choleric, impossible--perfectly impossible. Accounting this as a gloss, and the original reading not being forthcoming, we are driven to conjecture that the Dean's answer expressed mild disapprobation of the game of croquet. Certain it is that young Swainson, surprised doubtless at so novel and original a sentiment, only said,

"I beg your pardon."

"Hem! I mean to say that I do not approve of this. I will come to the point. I must ask you to discontinue your visits at my house." The young man stared as if he thought the excited divine had gone mad; the Deanery was almost a home to him. "Your father," the Dean went on more coherently, "has taken a step so unseemly, so--so indecent, has used language so insulting to me, sir, that I cannot, at any rate at present, receive you here."

Young Swainson was a gentleman, and moreover, for a very good reason hereinafter appearing, the Dean failed to anger him. He raised his hat as respectfully as before, bowed slightly in token of acquiescence, and went on his way sorrowfully.

He had a singularly pleasant smile, this young gentleman, though this was not the time for displaying it. Mrs. Dean had once pronounced him a pippin grafted on a crab-stock, and thereafter in certain circles he was known as King Pepin. He was tall and straight and open-eyed, with faults enough, but of a generous youthful kind, easily overlooked and more easily forgiven. Doubtless Mr. Swainson would have had his son more practical, cool-headed, and precise;

but the shoot did not grow in the same way as the parent tree. Old Swainson would not have been happy without an enemy, nor young Swainson as happy with one; and if, as the former often said, the latter's worst enemy was himself, he was likely to have a tolerably prosperous life.

In a space of time inconceivably small the doings of the grim old lawyer and the Dean's remonstrance were all over Bicester. Nay, fast as the stone had rolled, it had gathered moss. It was gravely asserted by people who rapidly grew to be eyewitnesses, that Mr. Swainson had danced a hornpipe in the middle of his plot, snapping his fingers at the Dean the while the latter prodded him as well as he could over the railings with his umbrella; and that only the arrival of Mr. Swainson's son put an end to this disgraceful exhibition.

Neither side wasted time. The Dean, the Canon in residence, and the Præcentor, an active young fellow, consulted their legal adviser, and talked largely of ejectment, title, and seisin. Mr. Swainson, having nine points of the law in his favor, and as well acquainted with the tenth as his opponents' legal adviser, devoted himself to the lighter pursuit of the mallet and hoop. In a state of felicity undreamt of before, he played, or affected to play, croquet, his right hand against his left, the former giving the latter two hoops and a cage. He played with a cage and a bell; it was more cheerful, not to say noisy.

Of course all Bicester found occasion to pass through the Close and see this great sight, while every window in the precincts was raised, that the denizens thereof might hear the tap, tap of the sacrilegious mallet. The Cathedral lawyer, urged to take some step, and well knowing the strength of the enemy's position, was fairly nonplussed. But while he pondered, with a certain grim amusement, over Mr. Swainson's crotchet, which did not present itself to his legal mind in so dreadful a light as it did to the mind clerical, some

unknown person took action, and made it war to the knife.

"Who did it?" Bicester asked loudly when it awoke one morning, to find Mr. Swainson in a state of mind which seemed imperatively to call for a padded room and a strait waistcoat. During the night some one had thrown down the iron railing, taken up and broken his hoops, crushed his bell, and snapped his pegs; all this in the neatest possible manner, and with no damage to the turf. War to the knife indeed! Mr. Swainson, like the famous Widdrington, would have fought upon his stumps on such a provocation.

He expressed his opinion very hotly that this was the work of "that arrogant priest," and he should smart for it. A clergyman in this kind of context becomes a priest. This is common knowledge.

The Dean said, if hints were to go for anything, that it was a more or less direct interposition of Providence.

Young Swainson said nothing.

The vergers followed his example, but smiled a good deal.

The Dean's lawyer said it was a very foolish act, whoever did it.

Mrs. Dean said she should like to give the man who did it five shillings. Perhaps her inclination mastered her.

The Dean's daughter sighed.

And Bicester said everything except what young Swainson said.

I have not mentioned the Dean's daughter before. It is the popular belief that she was christened Sweet Clive Buxton, and if people are mistaken in this, and the name "Sweet" does not appear upon the highly favored register, what of that? It is but one proof the more of

the utter and tremendous want of foresight of godfathers and godmothers. They send the future lounger in St. James's into the world handicapped with the name of Joseph or Zachary, and dub the country curate Tom or Jerry. No matter; Clive Buxton, whatever her name, could be nothing but sweet. She was not tall nor yet short; she was just as tall and just as short as she should have been, with a well-rounded figure and grave carriage of the head. Her hair was wavy and brown, and sometimes it strayed over a white brow, on which a frown was so great a stranger that its right of entry was barred by the Statute of Limitations. There were a few freckles, etherealized dimples, about her well-shaped nose. But these charms grew upon one gradually; at first her suitors were only conscious of her great gray wide-open eyes, so kind and frank and trustful, and so wise withal, that they filled every young man upon whom she turned them with a certainty of her purity and goodness and lovableness, and sent him away with a frantic desire to make her his wife without loss of time. With all this, she overflowed with fun and happiness--except when she sighed--and she was just nineteen. Such was Sweet Clive Buxton then. If her picture were painted to-day, there would be this difference: she is older and more beautiful.

To return to our plot. Bicester watched with bated breath to see what Mr. Swainson would do. No culprit was forthcoming, and it seemed as if the day was going against him. He made no sign; only the broken hoops, the cage and battered bell, so lately the instruments and insignia of triumph, were cleared away and, at the ex-mayor's strenuous request, taken in charge by the police. Even the iron railing was removed. The excitement in the Close rose high. Once more the Cathedral vicinage was undefined by lay appropriation, but the Dean knew Mr. Swainson too well to rejoice. The ground was cleared, it is true, but only, as he well foresaw, that it might be used for some mysterious operations, of which the end and aim only--his own annoyance--were clear to him, and not the means.

What would Mr. Swainson do?

The strange unnatural calm lasted several days. The Cathedral dignitaries moved about in fear and trembling. At length one night the dwellers in the Close were aroused by a peculiar hammering. It was frequent, deep, and ominous, and came from the direction of Mr. Swainson's plot. To the nervous it seemed as the knocking of nails into an untimely coffin; to the guilty--and this was very near the Cathedral--like the noise of a rising scaffold; to the brave and those with clear consciences, such as Clive Buxton, it more nearly resembled the knocking a hoarding together. And indeed that was the very thing it was, and around Mr. Swainson's plot.

But what a hoarding! When the light of day discovered it to people's eyes, the Dean's fearful anticipations seemed slight to him, as the boy's vision who has dreamed he is about to be flogged in jail, and awakes to find his father standing over him with a strap. It was so unsightly, so gaunt, so unpainted, so terrible; the very stones of the Cathedral seemed to blush a deeper red at discovering it, and the oldest houses to turn a darker purple. Had the Dean possessed the hundred tongues of Fame (which in Bicester possessed many more) and the five hundred fingers of Briareus he could not hope to prevent the Marquis's visitors asking questions about *that*, or to divert the attention of the least curious American. He recognized the truth at a glance, and formed his plan. Many generals have formed it before; it was--retreat. He sent out his butler to borrow a continental Bradshaw from the club, and shut himself up in his study. The truly great mind is never overwhelmed.

The vergers alone inspected the monster unmoved. They eyed it with glances not only of curiosity, but of appreciative intelligence. Not so, however, later in the day. Then Mr. Swainson appeared, leading by a strong chain a brindled bull-dog, of the most ferocious

description and about sixty pounds weight. The animal contemplated the nearest verger with much satisfaction, and licked his chops: it might be at some grateful memory. The verger, who was in a small way a student of natural history, pronounced it however a lick of anticipation, and appeared not a little disconcerted. Mr. Swainson entered with the dog by a small door at the corner, and came out again without him. The other vergers then left.

Their coming and going was nothing to Mr. Swainson. It was enough for him that he stood there the cynosure of every eye in the Close; even Mrs. Dean was watching him from a distant garret window. In slow and measured fashion he walked to the steps of his own house, and, taking from them a board he had previously placed there, returned to the entrance of his plot, now enclosed to the height of about ten feet by this terrible hoarding. Above the door he carefully hung the board and drew back a few feet to take in the effect. Mrs. Dean sent down hastily for her opera-glasses, but really there was no need of them. The legend in huge black letters on a white ground ran thus: "No Admittance! Beware of the Dog!!!" A smile of content crept slowly over Mr. Swainson's face, and he said aloud,

"Trump that card, Mr. Dean, if you can."

As he turned--Mrs. Dean saw it distinctly and declared herself ready to swear to it in any court of justice--he snapped his fingers at the Deanery. And the dog howled!

It was the first of many howls, for he was a dog of great width of chest; and not even the surgeon of an insurance company, if he had lived twenty-four hours in Bicester Close, would have found fault with his lungs. Why he howled during the night, for it was not the time of full moon, became the burning question of each morning. That he joined in the Cathedral services with a zest and discrimination which rendered the organ almost superfluous, and drove the organist to the

verge of resignation, was only to be expected. There was nothing strange in that, nor in his rivalry of the Præcentor's best notes, whose voice was considered very fine in the Litany. The voluntary, Tiger made his own; and of the sermon he expressed disapproval in so marked a manner that it was hard to say which swelled more with rage, the Dean within or the dog without. Their rage was equally impotent.

Things went so far that the Dean publicly wrung his hands at the breakfast-table. "You could not hear the benediction this morning! And I was in good voice too, my dear!" he wailed, with tears in his eyes.

"You should appeal to the Marquis," suggested his wife. It must be explained that the Marquis in Bicester ranks next to and little beneath Providence. But the Dean shook his head. He put no faith in the power even of the Marquis to handle Mr. Swainson. "I will lay it before the Bishop, my dear," he said humbly. And then, indeed, Mrs. Dean knew that the iron had entered into his soul, and that the hand of the Mayor of the Palace was very heavy upon him; and her good, wifely heart grew so hot that she felt she could have no more patience with her daughter.

For Clive's sympathies were no longer to be trusted. She was not the Sweet Clive of a month ago, but a sadder and more sedate young person, who had a troublesome and annoying way of defending the absent foe, and of sighing in dark corners, that was more than provoking. Duty demanded that she should be an ocean, into which her father and mother might pour the streams of their indignation and meet with a sympathizing floodtide, and lo! this unfeeling girl declined to make herself useful in that way, and instead sent forth a "bore" of light jesting that made little of the enemy's enormities and a trifle of his outrages. More, she showed herself for

the first time disobedient; she altogether refused to promise not to speak to King Pepin if opportunity should serve, and, clever girl as she was, laughed her father out of insisting upon it, and kissed her mother into being a not unwilling ally. A wise woman was her mother and clear-sighted; she saw that Clive had a spirit, but no longer a heart of her own. Yet at such a time as this, when her husband was wringing his hands, Clive's insensibility to the family grievances tried Mrs. Dean sorely. It was hard that the Canon's sleepless night, the Præcentor's peevishness, the singing man's influenza, and all the countless counts of the indictment against Mr. Swainson, should fail to awaken in the young lady's mind a tithe of the indignation shared by every other person at the Deanery, from the Dean himself to the scullery maid. But then love is blind; for which most of us may thank Heaven.

Day after day went by and the hoarding still reared its gaunt height, and the unclean beast of the Hebrews still made night hideous, and the day a time for the expression of strong feelings. At length the Dean met his legal adviser in the Close--ay, and within a few feet of the obnoxious erection; he kept his back to it with ridiculous care, while they talked.

"We have come to something like a settlement at last," said the lawyer briskly;--"confusion take the dog! I can hardly hear myself speak.--We are to meet at the Chapter House at five, Mr. Dean, if that will suit you: Mr. Swainson, the Bishop, Canon Rowcliffe, and myself. I think he is inclined to be reasonable at last."

The Dean shook his head gloomily.

"Ah, you will see it turn out better than you expect. Let me whisper something to you. There is an action commenced against him for shutting up a road across one of his farms at Middleton, and it will be fought stoutly. One suit at a time will be sufficient to satisfy even Mr.

Swainson."

"You don't say so? This is good news!" cried the Dean, with unmistakable pleasure. "Certainly, I will be there."

"And--I am sure I need not hint at it--you will be ready to meet Mr. Swainson halfway?"

The Dean looked gloomy again. But at this moment a long loud howl, more frenzied, more fiendish than any which had preceded it, seemed to proclaim that the dog knew his reign was menaced, and, like Sardanapalus, was determined to go out right royally. It was more than the Dean could stand. With an involuntary motion of his hands to his ears, he nodded and fled with unseemly haste to a place less exposed, where he could in a seemly and decanal manner relieve his feelings.

The best-laid plans even of lawyers will go astray, and when they do so, the havoc is generally of a singularly wide-spread description. The meeting in the chapter-house proved stormy from the first. Whether it was that the writ in the right-of-way case had not yet reached Mr. Swainson, and so he clung to his only split-straw, or that the Dean was soured by want of sleep, or that the Bishop was not thorough enough--whatever was the cause, the spirit of compromise was absent, and the discussion across the chapter-house table threatened to make matters worse and not better. Whether the Dean first called Mr. Swainson's enclosure the "toadstool of a night," or Mr. Swainson took the initiative by styling the Dean the "mushroom of a day" (the Dean was not of old family), was a question afterwards much and hotly debated in Bicester circles. Be that as it may, the high powers at length rose from the table in dudgeon and much confusion.

There was behind the Dean at the end of the chapter-house a

large window. It looked directly down upon what he, in the course of the discussion, had more than once termed "The Profanation," and since the eventful day of Mr. Swainson's match at croquet it had been, by the Dean's order, kept shuttered, to the intent that, when occupied in the chapterhouse, the Profanation might not be directly before his eyes. On this occasion the shutter was still closed; it may be that this phenomenon had weakened Mr. Swainson's not over-robust resolves on the side of amity.

The Dean was a choleric man. As the party rose, he stepped to this shutter and flung it back. He turned to the others and said excitedly--

"Look, sir; look, my Lord! Is that a sight becoming the threshold of a cathedral? Is that a thing to be endured on consecrated ground?"

They stepped towards the window, a wide low-browed Tudor one, and looked out. The Dean himself stood aside, grasping the shutter with a hand that shook with passion. He could see the others' faces. He expected little show of shame or contrition on that of Mr. Swainson, but he did wish to bring this hideous thing home to the Bishop, who had not been as thorough in the matter as he should have been. Still, as a bishop, he could not see that thing there in its horrid reality and be unmoved!

No, he certainly could not. Slowly, and as if reluctantly, his lordship's face changed; it broke into a smile that broadened and rippled wider and wider, second by second, as he looked. His color deepened until he became almost purple! And Mr. Swainson? His face was the picture of horror: there could not be a doubt of that. Confusion and astonishment were stereotyped on every feature. The Dean could not believe his own eyes. He turned in perplexity to the lawyer, who was peeping between the others' heads. His shoulders were shaking and his face was puckered with laughter.

The Bishop stepped back. "Really, gentlemen, I think it is hardly fair of us to play the spy. This is no place for us." He was a kindly man; there never was a more popular bishop in Bicester, and never will be.

At this the Canon and the lawyer lost all control over themselves, and their laughter, if not loud, was deep. The Dean was immensely puzzled, confused, perplexed, wholly angry. He did at last what he should have done at first, instead of striking an attitude with that shutter in his hand. He looked through the window himself. It was dusty, and he was somewhat near-sighted, but at length he saw; and this was what he saw.

In the further corner of the ugly enclosure, a couple of lovers billing and cooing; about and around them Mr. Swainson's big dog performing uncouth gambols. Bad enough this; but it was not all. The unsuspicious couple were Frank Swainson and--the Dean's daughter. Frank's arm was round her, and as the Dean looked, he stooped and kissed her, and Clive gazed with her brave eyes full of love into his and scarcely blushed.

When the Dean turned round he was alone.

Was it very wrong of them? There was nowhere else, since this miserable fracas began, where, away from others' eyes, they could steal a kiss. But into Mr. Swainson's plot no window, save a shuttered one, could look; the door, too, was close to one of the side doors of the cathedral, and you could pop in and out again unseen, and as for the big dog, Frank and Tiger were great friends. So if it was very wrong, it was very easy and very nice, and---*faciles descensus Averni*.

For one hour the Dean remained shut up in his study. At the end

of that time he put on his hat and walked across the Close. He knocked at Mr. Swainson's door, and, upon its being opened, went in, and did not come out again for an hour and five minutes by Mrs. Canon Rowcliffe's watch. I have not the slightest idea of what passed there. More than two thousand different and distinct accounts of the interview were current next day in Bicester, but no one, and I have examined them all with care, seems to me to account for the undoubted results:--Imprimis, the disappearance next day from Mr. Swainson's plot of the famous hoarding, which was not even replaced by the old iron railing. Secondly, the marriage six weeks later of King Pepin and Sweet Clive.

THE DEANERY BALL.

On a certain May afternoon, when the air was so soft and the sun so brilliant that Mrs. Vrater, the wife of the Canon in residence at Gleicester, was inclined to think the world more pleasant than it should be, she was surprised by an invitation which promptly restored the due equilibrium. In her own words, it took her breath away. Despite some slight forewarnings, or things which should have served as such, she could hardly believe her eyes. Yet there it was before her in black and white, and Italian penmanship; and, being a woman of character, instead of sitting down and giving way to her natural indignation, she--no, she did not accept the fact; on the contrary, she put on her best bonnet and mantle, and contrived during this simple operation to efface from her mind all consciousness of the existence of the invitation. Thus prepared she left the residence by the back door, and, walking quietly round the Abbot's Square, called at the Deanery. Mrs. Anson was at home. So was the Dean.

"My dear Mrs. Anson the most ridiculous thing!" began the visitor; "really you ought to know of it, though contradiction is quite unnecessary. It carries its own refutation with it. Have you heard what is the absurd report which is abroad in the city?"

"No," answered the Dean's wife, who was sitting in front of a pile of cards and envelopes. Her curiosity was aroused. But the Dean had a miserable foreboding of what was to come, and writhed upon his seat.

"It is asserted that you are going to give a dance at the Deanery!

Ha! ha! ha! I knew that it would amuse you. Fancy a ball at the Deanery of all places!" And Mrs. Vrater laughed with so fair a show of airy enjoyment that the Dean plunged his head into a newspaper, and wished he possessed the self-deceptive powers of the ostrich. This was terrible! What could have induced him to give his consent? As for Mrs. Anson, she dropped the envelope she was folding, and prepared for battle.

"Dear Mrs. Vrater, why should you think it so absurd?" she asked, smiling sweetly, but with color a little heightened.

"At the Deanery? Why, your position, dear Mrs. Anson, and--and--how can you ask? It would have been quite a Church scandal. You would be having the Præcentor hunting next. *He* would not stick at it," with vicious emphasis. "But I knew that you never dreamt of such a thing."

"Then I fear that you are not among the prophets, for we really propose to venture upon it. As for a Church scandal, Mrs. Vrater, the Dean is the best judge of that."

Whereat the Dean groaned, poor man. Mrs. Vrater regarded him, he regarded himself, as a renegade; but he showed none of a renegade's enthusiasm on his new side.

"You do intend to have a dance!" cried the Canon's wife, with well-affected surprise, considering the circumstances.

"We do indeed. Just a quiet evening for the young people, though we shall hope to see you, dear Mrs. Vrater. Times are changed since we were young," she added sweetly, "and we cannot stand still, however much we may try."

If Mrs. Vrater had a weakness, it was a love for a style of dress

which, though severe, was in a degree youthful. Her bonnet while Mrs. Anson spoke seemed to attract and fix that lady's eye. It must be confessed that at Mrs. Vrater's age it was a youthful bonnet. However, she did not appear to heed this, but rose and took her departure with a shocked expression of countenance. She had given the poor Dean, her recreant ally, a very wretched ten minutes; otherwise she had not been successful. When Greek meets Greek neither is wont to get much satisfaction. She said no more there; but she hastened to pay some other friendly calls.

The manner in which the Dean came to give his consent must be told at some length. There is a small house in a quiet corner of the Abbot's Square at Gleicester, which stands back a few yards from the general line of frontage. It is not alone in this respect. The Deanery on the opposite side of the Square, and the Præcentor's house--we beg his pardon, the Præcentory--in the far corner also shrink from the public gaze. But then there is, and very properly, the retirement of exclusiveness. In the small house in question such self-effacement must have a different origin; perhaps in the modesty of conscious insignificance, along with a due sense of the important neighborhood in which No. 13 blooms like a violet almost unseen. For Abbot's Square is virtually the Close of Gleicester--at any rate, there is no other--while No. 13 is little more than a two-storied cottage with a tiled roof, and outside shutters painted green, and a green door with a brass knocker. The path from the wicket-gate to the unpretending porch has been known to be gay with patterns now rather indistinct, composed of the humble oyster-shell; and the occupants have varied from a bachelor organist, or an artist painting the mediæval, to the Dean's favorite verger.

Such was the little house in the Abbot's Square; but Gleicester, sleepy old Gleicester, arose one morning to find a rare tit-bit of news served up with its breakfast. Mr. and the Hon. Mrs. Curzon-Bowlby, a

fashionable couple bent on retrenchment, had taken No. 13 for the summer. They brought with them a letter of introduction from the Marquis of Gleicester, and owing to that, and something perhaps to the three letters which distinguished Mrs. Curzon-Bowlby's card from the pasteboards of the common throng, they were received by the Deanery people with enthusiasm, at the residence with open arms. The most select of coteries threw wide its doors to the tenants of No. 13. The Dean might be seen of a morning strolling in the little garden, and his wife's carriage of an afternoon taking up and setting down in front of the green shutters. The Archdeacon and the Præcentor, nay, the very minor canons followed the Dean's lead. And Gleicester, seeing these things, opened its eyes--its mouth was always open--and awoke to the fact that the little house had risen in the world to a very giddy height indeed.

But the position which under these unforeseen circumstances No. 13 might assume was hardly to be understood by the lay portion of the city. The Abbot's Square and its doings were subjects of great interest to them, as to people well brought up they would be; but with a few exceptions, such as Sir Titus Wort, the brewer, and General Jones, C. B., and Dr. Tobin. These people gazed on that Olympus from afar. Possibly they called there and were called upon in return; but that was all. Their knowledge of the inner politics of the Square was not intimate.

They knew that the Dean's wife (Regina Jones) was a pleasant and pleasure-loving lady; but they had no idea that she was the leader of an organized party of pleasure, whose tenets were water-parties and lawn-tennis, who pinned their faith to the clerical quadrille (only square dances as yet), who supported the Præcentor, the author of that secular but charming song, "Love me to-day," and who upheld theatricals, and threatened to patronize the City Theatre itself; a party who drove their opponents, headed by the Dean and Mrs.

Vrater, and that grim clergyman the Archdeacon, to the verge of distraction; who were dubbed by the minor canons "the Epicureans," and finally whose heart and soul, even as Mrs. Dean was their head and front, was to be discovered in Canon Vrater.

The Canon deserves to be more particularly described. He was a man of handsome presence and mature age, pink-faced and white-haired, young for his years, and connected, though not so closely as Mrs. Curzon-Bowlby, with the nobility. Perfectly adapted to shine in society, he prided himself with good reason upon his polished manners, which united in a very just degree the most gracious suavity with the blandest dignity. They were so fine, indeed, as to be almost unfit for home use. He made it a rule never to differ from a woman, his wife (and antipodes) excepted, and seldom with a man. As he also invariably granted a request if the petitioner were well dressed and the matter *in future*, he was surely not to be blamed if his performances failed to keep pace with his promises. In fine, a most pleasant, agreeable gentleman, whom it was impossible to dislike to his face.

Yet I think the Archdeacon, a "new man," to whom the aristocratic Canon's popularity was wormwood, did dislike him. Certainly the Dean did not; he was a liberal-minded man in the main, but he had some old-fashioned ideas, and a great sense of his own position and its proprieties, and so perforce he found himself arrayed against his wife's party along with Mrs. Vrater and the Archdeacon.

Such was the state of things in the Abbot's Square when No. 13 received its new tenants. Now the Epicureans and now their opponents would gain some slight advantage. The vergers and beadles arrayed themselves upon one side or the other, and by the solemnity or levity of their carriage, the twinkle in the eye or the far-off, absent gaze, made known their views. The first lay clerk, a man

qualified to talk with his enemies in the gate, gave monthly dances; the leading tenor assisted at scientific demonstrations.

But of what weight were such adherents beside the new-comers at No. 13? Which party would they join? If appearances might be trusted there could be little doubt. Mr. Curzon-Bowlby was a tall, long-faced man, with a dark beard and moustache. His appearance was genteel, not to say aristocratic--but fatuous. He walked with an upright carriage and dressed correctly--indeed, with taste: beyond that, being a man of few words, he seemed a man of no character. His wife was unlike him in everything, save that she too dressed to perfection. A lively little blonde, blue-eyed and bewitching, with a lovely pink-and-white complexion, and a thick fringe of fair hair, she positively effervesced with life and innocent gayety. She sparkled and bubbled like champagne; she flitted to and fro all day long like a butterfly in the sunshine. She charmed the Dean: the Canon declared her perfection. And though she was hardly the person (*minus* the three letters before mentioned) to fascinate his wife, she disarmed even Mrs. Vrater. And yet, whether the little woman of the world had, with all her apparent impulsiveness, a great store of tact, or that she was slow to comprehend the position, and was puzzled at finding the Dean arrayed against his wife, and Mrs. Vrater opposed to the Canon, she certainly dallied with her choice. Upon being invited to attend the science classes at the residence, she faltered and hesitated, and rather pleaded for time than declined. Mrs. Vrater, excellent woman, was pleasantly surprised; and determining to try again, went home with a light heart and good courage.

But this was before the little lady learned that the clerical quadrille--the party of progress, as has been hinted, wisely ignored the existence of round dances--was the burning question of the time.

"Good gracious! Mrs. Anson," she cried, clapping her little hands,

and her blue eyes wide with amazement over this discovery, "do you mean to say that none of your clergy dance? that they never dance at all?"

The Dean's wife shook her head, and shrugged her shoulders contemptuously. She was a little out of temper this afternoon. Why was she not the wife of a cavalry colonel?

"Not even the Canon? Oh, I am sure Canon Vrater does.--Now, don't you?"

For the Canon, too, was in the little drawing-room. Small as the house was, our impoverished fashionables had not furnished all of it; but this room was a triumph of taste, in a quiet and inexpensive way. A man and a maid whom they brought to Gleicester with them made up the household. So there was an empty room or two.

"No, Mrs. Curzon-Bowlby," he said; "if I danced I should be tripping indeed, in Gleicester opinion."

"You don't! well, I am surprised. Now confess, Canon, when did you dance last? So long ago that you have forgotten the steps? Years and years ago?" The old gentleman reddened, and fidgeted a little. "Canon, did you ever"--the little woman glanced roguishly round the room, and brought out the last word with a tragic accent positively fascinating, "did you ever--waltz?"

"Well," he answered guardedly, with an eye to his friend Mrs. Anson, who was mightily amused, "I have waltzed."

"Something like this, was it not?" She went to the piano and played a few bars of a dreamy, old-fashioned German dance; played it as it should be played. The Canon's wholesome pink face grew pinker, and he began to sway a little as he sat.

She turned swiftly round upon the music-stool. "Don't you feel at times a desire to do something naughty, Canon--just because it is naughty?"

He nodded.

"And don't you think," continued the fair casuist, with a delicious air of wisdom, "that when it is not very naughty, only a little bad, you know, you should sometimes indulge yourself, as a sort of safety-valve?"

He smiled, of course, a gentle dissent. But at the same time he muttered something which sounded like "desipere in loco."

"Mrs. Anson, you play a waltz, I know?"

She acknowledged the impeachment with none of the Canon's modesty.

"You are so kind, I am sure you will oblige me for five minutes. The Canon is going to try his steps with me in the next room. How lucky it is empty, and quite a good floor, I declare.--Now, Canon Vrater, you are far too gallant to refuse?"

He laughed, but Mrs. Anson entered thoroughly into the fun, took off her gloves, and sitting down at the piano played the same dreamy air. In vain the old gentleman pleasantly protested; he was swept away, so to speak, by the little woman's vivacity. How it came about, whether there was some magic in the air, or in Mrs. Curzon-Bowlby's eyes, the Canon was never able to make quite clear to himself, and far less to Mrs. Vrater, but in two minutes he was revolving round the room in stately measure, an expression of anxious enjoyment on his handsome old face as he carefully counted his steps, such as would have diverted the eye of the charmed bystander even from the arch

mischief that rippled over his fair partner's features. Had there been any bystander to witness the scene, that is.

"Hem!"

It was very loud and full of meaning, and came from the open window. The Canon's arm fell from the lady's waist as if she had suddenly turned into the spiky maiden of Nuremberg. Mrs. Dean stopped playing with equal suddenness, and an exclamation of annoyance. Mrs. Curzon-Bowlby, thus deserted in the middle of the room, dropped the prettiest of "cheeses," and broke into a merry peal of unaffected laughter. It was the Dean. Coming up the oyster-shell path, there was no choice for him but to witness the *dénouement* through the green-shuttered window. He was shocked; perhaps of the four he was the most embarrassed, though the Canon looked, for him, very foolish. But nothing could stand against Mrs. Curzon-Bowlby's gayety. She laughed so long, so innocently, and with such pure enjoyment of the situation, that one by one they joined her. The Dean attempted to be a little sarcastic, but the laugh took all sting from his satire; and the Canon, when he had once recovered his presence of mind, and his breath, parried the raillery with his usual polished ease.

So Mrs. Curzon-Bowlby's freak ended in no more serious result than her own conversion into the staunchest of Epicureans, a very goddess of pleasure; and in familiarizing the Dean's mind with the idea of the Terpischorean innovation, until the proposition of a dance at the Deanery--yes, at the Deanery itself--was mooted to his decanal ears. Of course he rejected it, but still he survived the shock, and the project had been brought within the range of practical politics. Its novelty faded from his mind, and its impropriety ceased to strike him. He had never told Mrs. Vrater of her husband's afternoon waltz, and this reticence divided them. Mrs. Curzon-Bowlby exerted all her wiles;

she gave him no peace. The plan was mooted again and again; he wavered, remonstrated, argued, and finally (thanks chiefly to No. 13), in a moment of good-natured weakness, when the fear of Mrs. Vrater was not before his eyes, succumbed. Be sure his wife and her allies left him no *locos pœnitentice*. Never was triumph greater. Within the week the minor canons had their invitations stuck in their mirrors, and rejoiced in their liberty. And Mrs. Vrater made a certain call upon Mrs. Anson, of which the reader knows.

But Mrs. Dean's pleasure was not unclouded. There were spots upon the sun. The Dean was not always so tractable, and the Deanery house was not large, and the garden positively small. True, a gateway and a descent of two or three steps led from the latter into the picturesque cloisters, which had lately been cleaned and repaired, and the sight of this suggested a brilliant idea to flighty Mrs. Curzon-Bowlby. She lost no time in communicating it to Mrs. Anson, who received it at first with some doubt. Her friend, however, painted it in such pleasant hues, and set it in so many brilliant lights, that later she too became enamored of the project, and boldly proceeded to carry it into execution.

The Dean stumbled upon this magnificent plan; in so many words, stumbled upon it, in a rather unfortunate way. He was taking his wonted morning stroll in the garden two or three days before the 24th, the date fixed for the now famous dance. His thoughts were not upon it at the moment: it was a bright sunny day, and the balmy life-inspiring air had expelled the regret which it must be confessed was the Dean's normal frame of mind as to his ill-considered acquiescence. He was not thinking of what the Bishop would say, or what the city would say, or, worst of all, what Mrs. Vrater had said. He turned a corner of the summerhouse a few yards from the steps which we have mentioned as leading to the cloisters, and as he did so with the free gait of a man walking in his own garden--bump!--he

brought his right knee violently against the edge of some object, a packing-case, a half-opened packing-case which was lying there, where, so far as the Dean could see, it had no earthly business. The packing-case edge was sharp, the blow a forcible one. For a moment the Dean hopped about, moaning to himself and embracing his shin. The spring air lost all its virtue on the instant, and his regret for his moral weakness returned with added and local poignancy. For he had not a doubt that the offending box had something to do with the 24th. As he tenderly rubbed his leg he regarded the box with no friendly eyes. To schoolboys and policemen, and the tag-rag and bobtail, a sharp blow on the shin may not be much; but stout and dignified clerics above the rank of a ritualistic vicar are, to say the least of it, not accustomed to the thing at all.

"What the--ahem--what in heaven's name may this be?" he exclaimed with irritation. Resentment adding vigor to his curiosity, he gingerly removed the covering from the case, which appeared to be full of parti-colored paper globes of all shapes and sizes. They were symmetrically arranged; they might have been tiny fire-balloons. But the Dean's mind reverted to infernal machines, the smart of his shin suggesting his line of thought. He put on his glasses in some trepidation, and looking more closely made out the objects to be--Chinese lanterns.

The sound of a hasty step upon the gravel made him turn. It was Mrs. Anson, looking a little perturbed--by her hurry, perhaps. Her husband lifted one of the lanterns from the case with the end of his stick, and contemplated it with a good deal of contempt.

"My dear," he said, "what in the name of goodness are these foolish things for?"

"Well, you know the house is not very large," she began, "and the supper will occupy the dining-room and breakfast-room--it would be a

pity to cramp the supper, my dear, when we have such beautiful plate, and so few chances of showing it--and conservatory we have none so----"

"Yes, yes, my dear, true," broke in the Dean impatiently; "but what of these? what of these?" He raised the poor lantern anew.

"Well, we thought it would be nice to--to light the cloisters with these lanterns, and so form a conservatory of a kind. Now that the cloisters are cleaned and restored they will look so pretty, and the people can walk there between the dances. I thought it would be an excellent arrangement, and--and save us pulling your study about."

There was an awful pause. The lantern, held at arm's length on the ferrule of the Dean's stick, shook like an aspen leaf.

"You thought--it would be nice--to light the cloisters--with Chinese lanterns! The cloisters of Gleicester Cathedral, Mrs. Anson! Good heavens!"

No mere words can express the tone of amazed disapprobation, of horror, disgust, and wrath combined, in which the Dean, whose face was purple with the same emotions, spoke these words. He dashed the lantern to the ground, and set one foot upon it in a manner not unworthy of St. George--the Chinese lantern being a natural symbol of the dragon.

"It would be rank sacrilege; sacrilege, Mrs. Anson. Never let me hear of it again. I am shocked that you should have proposed such a thing; and I see now what I feared before, that I was very wrong in giving my consent to a frivolity unbecoming our position. You cannot touch pitch and not be defiled. But I never dreamt it would come to this. Let me hear no more of it, I beg."

The Dean, as he walked away after these decisive words, felt very sore--and not only about the knee, to do him justice. He repeated over and over again to himself the proverb about touching pitch. Until the last few days, no one had cherished his position more highly. And now his very wife was so far demoralized as to have suggested things dreadful to him and subversive of it. He had given way to the Canon and that little witch at No. 13, and this was the first result. What a peck of troubles, he said to himself, this wretched dance was bringing upon him! He was sick of it, sick to death of it, he told himself. So sick, indeed, that when he was out of his wife's hearing he groaned aloud with a great sense of self-pity, and almost brought himself in his disgust to believe that Mrs. Vrater would have been a more fit and sympathetic helpmeet for him.

And Mrs. Dean was bitterly disappointed. She had set her heart upon the cloisters scheme, and in most things she had been wont to enjoy her own way. Mrs. Curzon-Bowlby had depicted it in such gorgeous hues, and portrayed so movingly the guests' admiration and surprise--and envy. Oaklea Castle, the seat of the Marquis of Gleicester, with its spacious and costly conservatories and fineries, could present no more picturesque or charming scene than would be afforded by the many-arched cloisters brilliantly lighted and decorated, and filled with handsome dresses and pretty faces still aglow with the music's enthusiasm. Mrs. Anson had pictured it all. But she was a wise woman, and a comparatively old married woman, and she recognized that the matter was not one for argument. Not even to the Canon, her ally, did she confide her chagrin, being after her husband's outburst a little dubious of the light in which the project might present itself to him.

Only into Mrs. Curzon-Bowlby's bosom did she pour her sorrow without reserve. That lady made a delicious *moue* after her fashion on hearing of the Dean's indignation, but she seemed almost as

disappointed as Mrs. Anson herself. "And he actually forbade you, dear?" she asked, with her blue eyes full of pity and wondering surprise.

"Well, he told me never to let him hear of it again."

"Oh!" answered the little woman thoughtfully, and was silent for a time. When she recovered herself she changed the subject, and soon coaxed and petted her friend into a good humor.

Still this was a large spot on the sun of Mrs. Anson's triumph. And yet another, a mere speck indeed in comparison, and very endurable, appeared at the last moment, the very day before the 24th. The Dean was summoned to London; was summoned so privately, so peremptorily, and so importantly, that the thought of what might come of the journey (there was a new bishopric in act of being formed) almost reconciled his wife to his absence; and this the more when she had effectually disposed of his suggestion that the party should be indefinitely postponed. The Dean was not persistent in pushing his proposal; the harm, he felt, was already done. And besides, being himself away, he would now be freed from some personal embarrassment. It must go on; if he went up it would signify little. So he started for London very cheerfully, all Gleicester knowing of his errand, and the porters at the station spying a phantom apron at his girdle.

When the evening, marked in the minor canons' rubric with so red a letter, arrived, the excitement in the Abbot's Square rose to a great height.

Vague rumors of some surprise in store for the guests, which should surpass the novelty of the dance, were abroad. Strange workmen of reticent manners had passed in and out, and mysterious packages and bundles, as self-contained as their bearers, had been

seen to enter the Deanery gates. A jealous awning, which altered the normal appearance of the garden as seen from the second-floor windows of the Square, hid the exact nature of the alteration, and served only to whet the keen curiosity of the Gleicester public. Mrs. Curzon-Bowlby, from No. 13, ran to and fro, smiling with a charming air of effervescent reserve, which raised Mrs. Anson's older friends to an aggravated pitch of curiosity. The Square knew not what to expect. Conjecture was--in more senses than one, as the event proved--abroad.

For no one had in the least foreseen the spectacle that met their eyes upon their arrival. Certainly not the Bishop, though he betrayed no surprise; good cheery man, he was every inch a bishop, and therefore by tradition a great-hearted, liberal-minded gentleman. Certainly not Sir Titus Wort, nor General Jones, much less the Archdeacon. No, nor even the minor canons; their anticipations, keen as long abstinence from such enjoyments could make them, had yet fallen far short of the scene presented to their gaze upon entering the Deanery garden.

Even Canon Vrater--at home, it was rumored, in courts; he had certainly once lunched at Windsor--stood in almost speechless wonder by the garden steps.

"It is very beautiful!" he said simply, gazing with all his eyes down the arched vista formed by the tree-like pillars of the cloisters; the brilliant light of many lanterns picked out every leaf of their delicate carving and fretted broidery, and made of their fair whiteness a glittering background for the dark-hued dresses of the promenaders beneath. It was indeed more like fairy-land than a part of the cathedral precincts. Those who traversed it every day looked round and wondered where they were.

"It is very beautiful!" That was all. And he said it so gravely that

Mrs. Anson's spirits, elevated by the open admiration of the bulk of her guests, would have fallen rapidly had she not at that moment met the arch glance of Mrs. Curzon-Bowlby. That lady, a very mistress of the revels, was flitting here and there and everywhere, witching the world of Gleicester with noble womanhood.

Nor was the sight less of a surprise to the Canon's wife. But Mrs. Vrater, as was to be expected, had more to say upon the subject. She had taken possession of the youngest and most timid of the minor canons, and even he was lifted a little above himself by the scene and a chance smile shot in his direction by the mistress of No. 13. Still he was not sufficiently intoxicated to venture to disagree with the resident Canon's lady.

"I never thought I should live to see this or anything like it!" she said, with a groan of grimmest disapprobation.

"No, indeed," he assented, "nor did I." But it is doubtful if he meant quite the same thing as the lady.

"This will not be the end of it, Mr. Smallgunn," said Cassandra, nodding her head in so gloomy a manner that it recalled nothing so much as a hearse-plume.

"Not a bit of it," he answered briskly. But again it is a matter of some uncertainty whether the two wits--supposing that so irreverent an expression may be applied to Mrs. Vrater's wit--jumped together. He not improbably in his mind's eye saw a succession of such evenings strewn like flowers in the minor canons' path; and this was not at all Mrs. Vrater's view. She felt that there was a lack of sympathy between them, and left him for the Archdeacon, with whom she conferred in a corner, glowering the while at the triumphant Epicureans, who strutted up and down the carpeted cloisters, and flirted their fans, and spread their feathers like peacocks in the

sunshine.

And there were moments when Mrs. Dean felt as proud as a peacock; but then there were other times when she felt quite the reverse. True, she fully intended strenuously to perform, so far as in her lay, her husband's order, "never to let him hear of it again," quite heartily and sincerely; that amount of justice must be done her; she intended to obey him in this, only she doubted of her success. And being in the main a good woman, with some amount of love and reverence for her husband, there were moments in the evening when she turned quite cold with fear, and wondered who or what on earth could have induced her to do it. But her guests saw nothing of this; nor did it occur to them, whatever might be their private views, that their hostess had the smallest doubt of the propriety of her picturesque arrangement--her guests generally, that is. There was one exception--the gay, laughing, sail-with-the-wind little lady from No. 13.

But she did not form one of the group around Mrs. Anson during the last dance before supper. It was a waltz, and it had but just commenced, the rhythmical strains had but just penetrated to their nook within the cloisters, when suddenly, with some degree of abruptness, the music stopped. They, not knowing their hostess's train of thought, were surprised to see her turn pale and half rise. She paused in the middle of a sentence, and could not disguise the fact that she was listening. The others became silent also, and listened as people will. The dancing had ceased, and there was some commotion in the house, that was clear. There were loud voices, and the sound of hurrying to and fro, and of people calling and answering; and finally, while they were yet looking at one another with eyes half fearful, half assuring, there came quite a rush of people from the house in the direction of the cloisters. Mrs. Anson rose, as did the others. She alone had no doubt of what it meant. The Dean had

come back--the Dean had come back! The matter could not be disguised; she was caught literally *flagrante delicto*, the cloisters one blaze of light from end to end. How would he take it? She peered at the approaching group to try and distinguish his burly form and mark the aspect of his face. But though it was hardly dark in the little strip of garden which separated them from the house, she could not see him; and as they came nearer she could hear several voices, if it was not her imagination playing her tricks, naming him in tones of condolence and pity. Then another and, as she was afterwards thankful to remember, a far more painful idea came into her mind, and she stepped forward with a buzzing in her ears.

"What is it, James? The Dean?" with a catch in her voice.

"Well, ma'am, yes. I'm very sorry, ma'am. There's been a----"

"An accident? Speak, quick! what is it?" she cried, her hand to her side.

"No, ma'am, but a burglary; and the Dean, who has just come, says----"

"The Dean, James, will speak for himself," said her husband, who had followed the group at a more leisurely pace, taking in the aspect of affairs as he came. He had heard the latter part of her words, and been softened, perhaps, by the look upon her face. "You have plenty of light here, my dear," with a glance at the illumination, in which annoyance and contempt were finely mingled; "but I fear that will not enable our guests to eat their supper in the absence of plate. Every spoon and fork has been stolen; a feat rendered, I expect, much more easy by this injudicious plan of yours."

Which was all the public punishment she received at his hands. But his news was sufficient. Mrs. Dean remembered her magnificent

silver-gilt épergne and salver to match--never more to be anything but a memory to her--and fainted.

Mrs. Vrater, too, remembered that épergne. It was the finest piece in the Dean's collection, and the Dean's plate was famous through the county. She remembered it, and felt that her triumph could hardly have been more complete; the shafts of Nemesis could hardly have been driven into a more fitting crevice in her adversary's armor. This was what had come of the clergy dancing, of the Dean's weakness, and Mrs. Anson's secular frivolity and friendships! Mrs. Vrater looked round, her with a great sense of the wisdom of Providence, and ejaculated, "This is precisely what I foresaw!"

"Then it is a pity you did not inform the police," answered her husband, tartly.

But his lady shook her head. In the triumph of the moment she could afford to leave such a gibe unanswered. The Archdeacon was condoling with the Dean in terms almost cordial, and certainly sincere; but Mrs. Vrater was made of sterner stuff, and was not one to lose the sweetness of victory by indulging a foolish sympathy for the vanquished. She would annihilate all her enemies at one blow, and looked round upon the excited group surrounding Mrs. Anson to see that no one of that lady's faction was lacking to her triumph.

What was this? Surely she was here! The prime mover, the instigator of this folly, should have been in closest attendance upon her dear friend? But no.

"Where is Mrs. Curzon-Bowlby?" Mrs. Vrater asked rather sharply, what with surprise, and what with some pardonable disappointment.

"I believe," said the Dean, turning from his wife, who was slowly

reviving--"I believe that the Hon. Mrs. Curzon-Bowlby is in the Mediterranean."

"In the Mediterranean? why, she was here an hour ago." The man's head was turned by the loss of his cherished plate.

"No, not Mrs. Curzon-Bowlby, as I learned before I left London. Some one so calling herself was, though she too is probably far away in the up train by this time, and her plunder with her. To her and her confederates we are indebted for this loss." The Dean may be excused if he spoke a little bitterly.

"Good Lord!" cried the Canon, dropping the glass of water he was holding.

"I felt sure of it!" cried his wife, in a tone of deep conviction.

As the party entered the house, which was in huge disorder, full of guests collecting their wraps and calling for their carriages, of imperative policemen and frightened servants, the Dean drew back. He returned alone to the cloisters, and very carefully with his own hands extinguished all the lamps. As the faint moonlight regained its lost ascendency, falling in a silver sheet pale and pure upon the central grass-plot, and dimly playing round the carven pillars, the Dean closed the gate and heaved a sigh of relief.

And so ended the Dean's ball, the triumph as brief as disastrous of the Gleicester Epicureans. The dreams of the minor canons have not become facts. They may play lawn-tennis, may attend water-parties and amateur theatricals--nay, may play cards for such stakes as they can afford, but the dance is tabooed. The Dean is Dean still, and is still looking hopefully--what Dean is not?--to the immediate future to make him a bishop. And Mrs. Dean is still Mrs. Dean, but not quite the Mrs. Dean she was. As for No. 13, its day of prosperity also

closed with that night. It relapsed into its old condition of modest insignificance, nor ever recalled the fact that a reverend canon had waltzed within its walls. The green shutters and oyster-shells are no longer considered an anomaly, for they adorn the residence of a master mason.

One more episode of that evening remains to be told. The Canon and his wife walked home together, and if he said little she left little to be said. Upon entering the dining-room the Canon sat down wearily. The servant, surprised to see them return so early, brought in the lamp. The Canon looked, rubbed his eyes, and looked again.

"Mary," he said, "where is--don't be alarmed, my dear; Mary has no doubt put it upstairs for safety--where is my great silver tankard? Ah, yes; and the goblets, too, where are they?"

"If you please, ma'am," said Mary glibly, answering rather Mrs. Vrater's agonized look than the Canon's question--"if you please, ma'am, the Hon. Mrs. Curzon-Bowlby called after you left, and said she'd run in to borrow them for the Deanery claret-cup, as they'd be short of silver."

THE PROFESSOR AND THE HARPY.

Mother Church, who in bygone ages sheltered all the learning of the land beneath her broad wings, and who, even after this monopoly had passed away from her, continued to provide for learners and learned in a munificent fashion, has in these latter times been sadly shorn of wealth and patronage by the relentless march of progress and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. Yet there is balm in Gilead. Here and there a sinecure has been suffered to remain for the benefit of those whose work is not altogether of the tangible kind so dear to the nineteenth century; here and there a Reverend Jack Horner, putting his thumb into the diminished pie of Church preferment, can pull out a plum, and, sitting down under the shadow of some gray cathedral tower, can draw soothing deductions after the manner of his juvenile prototype. A bishopric may no longer be a post of dignified ease, archdeacons may be men doomed to perpetual hurry and worry, wealthy pluralists may have become an extinct class, but a Canon of Lichbury Cathedral is still a personage whose comfortable dwelling and comfortable income are rather the acknowledgment of past distinction than the equivalent of any present labor. Not, of course, that the Dean and Chapter of Lichbury are a body of worn-out pensioners. It is by no means in that light that they are accustomed to regard themselves; nor, indeed, are they so regarded by any, except the ignorant and irreverent. If repose and competence have been bestowed upon them, it is not only because they have already enriched the world with the results of literary research, but that they may have more leisure to continue doing so. Some of them have

achieved renown as authors of theological treatises, others are deeply versed in classical lore; while some, like Canon Stanwick, hold university professorships.

The latter divine was understood to owe his canonry (which had been conferred upon him at a comparatively early age) to that celebrated work, "The Life and Times of the Emperor Julian," in which an interesting character and an interesting period of history had been so exhaustively and impartially treated of as to leave no room for further exploration of the same ground. Whether, as his admirers declared, the Professor had surpassed Gibbon as triumphantly in the handling of his subject as Gibbon surpassed Voltaire and other earlier writers, and whether in the course of his well-weighed observations he had made out as good a case for the church which he represented as was possible and desirable, are questions which need not be discussed here. One consequence, at all events, of his accomplished task had been to place him in the front rank of living historians, and another had been his appointment to a vacant stall in Lichbury Cathedral.

This last reward of merit should have been especially grateful to him, for he was a bachelor of retired habits, whose life had been spent among his books, and to whom life had little left to offer in the way of attractions save increased opportunities for study; and, in fact, he was, as a general thing, very well satisfied with his lot. Nevertheless, as he paced up and down his smooth lawn one morning in August, he was in a less contented frame of mind than usual. The whispering of the summer breeze in the old elms, the cawing of the rooks, the occasional deliberate ding-dong of the cathedral clock far overhead, checking off the slumberous quarters and half-hours--all these familiar sounds had failed to produce upon him that sense of calm which is so conducive of thought; he had been compelled to lay aside the opening chapter of his new work, "The

Rise of the Papacy," and to take to walking to and fro in the garden, with his hands behind his back and his gray head sunk beneath shoulders which were somewhat prematurely bowed.

The truth was that the Professor, like other professors, had once been young, and that the days of his youth had been vividly and unexpectedly brought back to him the night before. This is always a disturbing thing to happen to a man; and what made it particularly so in Canon Stanwick's case was that his youth had been marked by a trouble which he had taken terribly to heart at the time of its occurrence. To be jilted is no such rare experience, and to get over it with great rapidity is the ordinary lot of the jilted one; but some few strangely constituted mortals there are who never get over it, and of these Canon Stanwick happened to be one. Certainly, at the age of fifty-five he had long ceased to think with any bitterness of the shallow-hearted Julia to whom he had become engaged immediately after taking orders, and who had thrown him over in favor of a man of much greater wealth and higher position; he had, indeed, ceased to think about her at all. But not the less was it her conduct which had shaped the course of his life. By it he had been driven into deep study, into an Oxford professorship, and finally into a canonry; by it also he had been driven out of society, and especially out of female society, for which the treachery of one member of the sex had imbued him with a strong repugnance. At Oxford, where he had resided up to the time of his recent preferment, the ladies had quite given him up. It had been understood there that he did not care for the relaxation of dinner-parties and tea-parties; and it was a somewhat singular coincidence that, having from a sense of duty consented to break through his long-standing rule and dine with the Dean of Lichbury, he should have found himself seated opposite to his old love, whom, by another odd coincidence, he had wooed, won, and lost in that very neighborhood so long before.

This chance meeting had upset the worthy man a good deal. In the gray-haired but vivacious Mrs. Annesley who had claimed acquaintance with him across the table, he had scarcely recognized the heroine of his buried romance, nor had he either the wish or the power to resuscitate the tender feelings with which he had once regarded her; but the sight of her had stirred up old memories within him, and these had haunted him through the night, had prevented the Papacy from rising satisfactorily in the morning, and finally, as aforesaid, had sent him out into the open air, a prey to vague regrets.

So that elderly lady was Julia Annesley! And she had grown-up sons and daughters, about whom she talked a great deal; and her husband was dead--the husband for whom she had never cared, and whom she made little pretence of regretting. To all appearance, she regretted nothing. Why should she, when she had all that a woman could wish to have? Perhaps, thought the Professor, it might be a better thing to be the father of sons and daughters, when one was growing old, than to be the author of an unrivalled monograph on the merits and demerits of Julian the Apostate. To be sure, there was no reason why one shouldn't be both. And then he fell to wondering whether that ambition which had been the chief cause of Julia's infidelity could have been satisfied with such fame and social standing as an historian, a professor, and a canon may lay claim to. Only, if he had married Julia, he would probably have begun and ended as a country parson. He smiled at himself for indulging in such nonsensical fancies at his time of life; but he went on dreaming all the same until he was startled by the opening of a gate which connected his house with the Precincts.

Somebody strode with a brisk, ringing step up the brick pathway to the front door, singing loudly,--

"I loved her, *and* she might have been

The happiest *in* the land;
But she fancied a foreigner who played the clarinet
In the middle of a Ger-man band."

Then came a vigorous pull at the bell, followed by subdued whistling of the air of this apposite but vulgar ditty. It was not after so indecorous a fashion that the Professor's visitors were wont to approach him, and he could not resist the temptation to steal softly across the turf past the library windows and see who might be the author of all this disturbance. His curiosity was rewarded by a full-length view of a handsome, merry-looking young fellow in undress cavalry uniform, who himself happened to be peeping round the corner at that moment, and who at once advanced, saying: "Oh, how do you do? Canon Stanwick isn't it? My mother asked me to leave this note for you as I passed--Mrs. Annesley, you know. She says you and she are old friends."

"I am much obliged to you, sir," said the Professor in his grave voice, taking the note. "Pray come in."

"Can't, thanks," answered the other; "I must be off to barracks. See you this afternoon on the cricket-ground though, I hope. We've got a great match on--garrison against the county. We shall be awfully licked of course; but everybody will be up there, and it's something to do. Very glad to see you if you'll come to our tent. You'll find my mother there; the note's to tell you all about it. Good-bye for the present."

And with that this unceremonious young man clanked away, leaving the Professor, who had not looked on at a cricket match for a matter of thirty years, much amused. The note ran as follows:

Deanery, Lichbury: Thursday.

"DEAR CANON STANWICK,--I hope, if you are disengaged this afternoon, you will join our party on the cricket-ground, and give me the opportunity, which I sought in vain last night, of having a little talk with you. I am obliged to leave to-morrow morning, and I am so very anxious to have a few words with you before I go *about my son*, who is quartered here. Do come, and

"Believe me most sincerely yours,

"JULIA ANNESLEY."

"Oh, by all means," said the Professor, who had a solitary man's habit of thinking aloud. "I shall feel rather like a fish out of water among all those people; but never mind, I'll go. Only I can't think why you should want to talk to me about your son."

Perhaps the Professor was still a little in the dark as to this point, even after a long interview with Mrs. Annesley; though he certainly could not complain of any want of candor upon the lady's part. The Lichbury cricket-ground is justly celebrated both for its extent and for the beauty of its situation, and the numerous matches of which it is the scene during the summer season are always well attended. The Professor made his way through a double line of carriages and drags, feeling and looking very much like a man who has suddenly emerged from a dark room upon a crowded thoroughfare. The confused din raised by a large concourse of people, mingled with the strains of the military band which was in attendance, and the shouts

of eager partisans of garrison or county, bewildered him; and it was only after repeated inquiries that he succeeded in reaching the entrance of the cavalry tent, where he stood for a minute blinking in the sunshine, and trying with shortsighted eyes to distinguish among the assemblage of gayly dressed ladies seated there the one of whom he was in search. But if he did not see her, she very soon saw him, and came forward, holding out a tiny pair of beautifully gloved hands.

"*How* good of you to come!" she exclaimed. "Suppose we take a turn round the ground; then we can talk quietly."

She was a bright, alert little woman, her gray hair, which was drawn straight up from her forehead, contrasting oddly with her still youthful complexion, and giving her somewhat of the appearance of an eighteenth-century *marquise*. The Professor was not quite sure whether he ought to offer her his arm or not, but finally deciding that this was unnecessary, made a grab at his shapeless felt hat, and muttered, "Delighted, I'm sure." He was a little embarrassed in the presence of his former love, whose first words showed that she, for her part, had no such foolish feeling.

"Is it not strange that we should meet again at Lichbury after all these years?" she began. "I have often thought of you, and often felt sorry." She paused and sighed. "One does not expect men to take things so seriously--generally, you know, it is the men who forget, and the women who suffer; but I suppose you are different. And I have spoilt your life!"

The Professor smiled. He was thinking that most people would hardly describe his life as having been a spoilt one; he was thinking, too, that the Julia who had caused him so much mental anguish in years gone by was quite another person from the complacent little

lady who was trying to make apologies for her. He rather wished she would drop the subject; but he said nothing, and Mrs. Annesley resumed:

"You ought to hate me--I quite feel that; but doesn't some clever person say somewhere that we never hate those who have injured us, only those whom we have injured? I have injured you dreadfully; but for all that, I want to make friends--and to ask a favor of you into the bargain." She concluded her sentence with a little laugh and a side glance from eyes which had done much execution in their day.

"I am sure I shall be very glad if I can serve you in any way," said the Professor simply; "and I think we may very well agree to let bygones be bygones. It was something about your son, you said?"

"Ah, yes, poor fellow!" sighed Mrs. Annesley; "I can't tell you how anxious and distressed I am about him. He is quartered here with his regiment, the 27th Lancers, and he absolutely refuses to leave the service, though, as of course you know, he succeeded to a very large property when he came of age."

"He is still very young," remarked the Professor. "I should think another year or two of soldiering would do him no harm."

"But it is absurd for a man with three large country houses to live in barracks. I want him to marry and settle down. I want him--only this is strictly between ourselves--to marry Violet Cecil. She is such a charming girl, and so pretty--don't you think so?"

"Is she?" asked the Professor. "I scarcely know her."

"But you and Mr. Cecil were always such great friends, I thought."

"We had not met for many years until I came down here, and I

have only seen Miss Cecil once. I did not notice her particularly."

"How funny of you! But I remember that you were never very observant. Well, I was going to tell you about poor Bob--oh! there he is. I should like so much to introduce him to you."

"He introduced himself to me this morning," observed the Professor, smiling.

"Oh, did he? Well, I could not introduce him *now*, at any rate," said Mrs. Annesley, meaningly.

The Professor adjusted his glasses, and following the direction of her gaze, made out his visitor of the morning, who had exchanged his uniform for a suit of cricketing flannels, and who was pacing along by the side of a tall, fine-looking woman with dark hair. The young man wore a downcast look, and his evident unwillingness to raise his eyes seemed to show that he was conscious of his mother's vicinity.

"Oh, I see!" said the Professor, with a perspicacity which did him credit.

"Yes; isn't it dreadful? What any man can find to admire in such a woman I can't conceive."

"She is handsome and--very well dressed," hazarded the Professor, after another survey of the lady's retreating form.

"Well dressed!" ejaculated Mrs. Annesley, throwing up her hands. "If you can say that, you would say anything. Pale blue satin and imitation lace--good gracious! But of course you don't understand these things."

"Certainly," the Professor agreed, "I am no judge of such matters.

But who is this lady?"

"Ah, who indeed? That is exactly what nobody knows. She is a Mrs. Harrington--at least, that is what she calls herself; and I believe she is one of those dreadful harpies who follow regiments about all over the world and ruin poor young men--or rather, rich young men. She is not exactly disreputable, I am told; I only wish she were!--No, I didn't mean that--I forgot you were a clergyman. I beg your pardon, I'm sure."

"Don't mind me," said the Professor. "And so you are afraid that she will marry your son?"

"I can't bear to say so; but it does look terribly like it, and I am so powerless. I have no influence over Bob, and it is impossible for me to remain down here; I have all my other children to look after, you know. Of course it would never do to breathe a word to the Cecils; otherwise they might be able to save him, for I am sure he is really fond of Violet. It struck me that perhaps you might give me a helping hand."

"I will most gladly, if I can," replied the Professor; "but I confess I don't at present see what I can do."

"I am sure you could influence him in a quiet way; and then you might try to throw him as much as possible with the Cecils. You will have plenty of opportunities of doing that, if you look for them. And perhaps you would be very kind and write me a line every now and then to tell me how matters are going."

The Professor shook his head and said he feared Mrs. Annesley was leaning upon a broken reed. Nevertheless, he promised to do his best; and promises with him always meant a good deal. For the sake of old days he was willing to do Mrs. Annesley a kindness; for

the young man's own sake he would gladly have disappointed the harpy; finally, he thought he would be rendering no small service to his friend Cecil, if he could bring about a marriage between the daughter of that not very wealthy country gentleman and one of the richest bachelors in England. The only question was how to set about achieving so desirable a result. He debated this problem for some time after Mrs. Annesley had been called away from his side by other acquaintances, and he was still standing with his hands behind his back, frowning meditatively, when Mr. Cecil, a fresh-colored squire, who lived within a few miles of Lichbury, caught sight of him and greeted him warmly.

"Hollo, Stanwick! who'd have thought of seeing you on the cricket-ground? This is an unexpected honor for the club."

"I didn't come here to look at the cricket; I came to see a very old friend of yours and mine--Mrs. Annesley," the Professor explained.

"Ah, to be sure! How time does go on! Do you remember what a pretty girl she was, and how desperately in love we all were with her? You were as hard hit as any of us, if I recollect rightly. In fact, I believe she was engaged to you in a sort of a way, wasn't she?"

"In a sort of a way--yes."

"And then she threw you over because she wanted to be rich and fashionable and all that. Well, well! she has had her reward. Have you seen her often since those days?"

"Never until yesterday."

"You don't say so! You can hardly have recognized one another, did you? Both you and she have got on in life and got on in the world since you parted. Julia is a leader of society, and mixes freely with

duchesses, which satisfies her soul; and you are one of the celebrities of the day. It now only remains for me to get a prize for my pig, and then we shall all three have reached the highest distinctions attainable in our respective walks in life."

"Yes, yes," murmured the Professor dreamily; and presently he quoted in an undertone, "What shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue!"

"I'll be hanged if anybody shall call my pig a shadow!" returned Mr. Cecil, laughing, as he walked away. And then the Professor strolled slowly back to the quiet Precincts and "The Rise of the Papacy."

II.

A Man may be a learned historian and a dignitary of the Church, and yet retain a good deal of that diffidence which is more becoming than common among his juniors. Canon Stanwick, for one, carried modesty almost to the dimensions of a vice. He was very shy of young men; he did not know what to say to them; he felt convinced--possibly not without reason--that they must find him an old bore; and how to ingratiate himself with a dashing young cavalry officer was a puzzle beyond the compass of his imagination to solve. However, he had pledged his word that he would do this, and accordingly, on the day after the cricket match, he asked a few friends to dinner, and invited Mr. Annesley to join the party.

The young man came, and made himself so agreeable to the old ladies and gentlemen whom he met that they were delighted with him,

and allowed him to monopolize the lion's share of the conversation. Which thing they would assuredly not have permitted in the case of any ordinary lancer or hussar; for in Lichbury the Church is disposed to look a trifle askance at the Army, and to stand upon its dignity with the representatives of the latter, who are overmuch given to riot and unseemly pranks. But about this particular lancer there was a perfect simplicity of thought and language which, combined with a touch of military swagger, was quite irresistible; and so it came to pass that Canon Stanwick's first dinner party proved the merriest that had been given in the Precincts for many a long day. As for the Professor, he began to feel a *quasi*-fatherly interest in the son of his former flame, and when the rest of the guests had departed, ventured to detain him.

"Do you ever--er--smoke a cigar before going to bed?" he asked hesitatingly.

"I should be precious sorry to go to bed *without* smoking a cigar," answered the other, laughing.

"Oh," said the Professor. "Well, I have formed the same habit myself, and if you had nothing better to do, and cared to keep me company for half an hour in my study, I could offer you a tolerably good cigar, I think; and--and I believe you'll find some soda-water and brandy on the table."

So presently this oddly matched pair were seated opposite to one another in the spacious room which served its present owner as library and study, the busts of Roman emperors and Greek philosophers looking down upon them from above the bookcases with an air of grave surprise. The Professor was a little timid and awkward at first, but the younger man soon set him at his ease, and when he had received a good deal of amusing information about the inhabitants of Lichbury and its neighborhood, he thought he might feel

his way towards the subject which he was determined to broach.

"I know very few people in these parts," he remarked; "I have not been here long, and am generally much occupied. But I have a long-standing acquaintance with the Cecils, who I think are also friends of yours."

"Oh, rather!" responded the young man heartily. "Known them all my life. Awfully jolly people--awfully good old chap, old Cecil. And Mrs. Cecil--she's awfully jolly too."

Bob Annesley's vocabulary of adjectives made up in emphasis what it lacked in variety.

"And Miss Cecil?" the Professor said. "I have only been fortunate enough to meet her once, but I am told that she is a singularly beautiful and charming young lady."

This leading observation elicited a somewhat less cordial assent from Bob, who murmured, "There's no question about that," and looked rather grave for a few seconds.

"I was thinking," went on the wily Professor, "that I should very much like to see more of her, her father having been such an intimate friend of mine in former years; but I hesitate to ask young people into my dull house unless I can provide some sort of amusement for them. Do you think there would be room for a lawn-tennis court in the garden?"

"Oh, Lord bless your soul, yes!" answered the young man, rising to the fly most satisfactorily; "heaps of room. I'll tell you what: if you'd like me to mark out the court for you, I'll do it to-morrow with the greatest of pleasure, and I could make up a four any day that suited you and Miss Cecil."

"I should be very much obliged to you. Let me see; you would want another lady, wouldn't you?" said the Professor, with some fear that his accommodating guest might offer to bring Mrs. Harrington.

He was relieved to find that no such indiscretion was contemplated. The young man said there were the Dean's daughters, or failing them, there was Mrs. Green, the wife of one of his brother officers, who was a first-rate player and a friend of the Cecils. He could easily get her and her husband to come, and he was sure the Professor would like them.

So far, so good. There would apparently be no difficulty in bringing the young people together; and as for the harpy, perhaps the moment had hardly yet come for declaring war upon her. In the course of the few following days the Professor tried to find out more about this mysterious lady; but the canons knew nothing of her, and the canons' wives sniffed and said that she was a person whom nobody visited, although, upon being pressed, they admitted that there was nothing definite against her. Possibly, after all, she might prove less formidable than Mrs. Annesley had supposed, and the Professor was confirmed in this hope by the evident admiration with which Bob regarded Miss Cecil. That young lady willingly consented to drink tea and play tennis in the Precincts, and closer inspection showed that her personal attractions had been in no way exaggerated. Not only did she possess a quantity of golden-brown hair, and eyes of the darkest blue, shaded by long curved lashes, but her features, complexion, and figure were all perfect, and she had an enchanting smile. If any young man could prefer the vulgar charms of a Mrs. Harrington to these, he must be a very extraordinary young man indeed; and the Professor, watching the tennis-players from his cane arm-chair in the shade, smiled as he thought to himself that Bob Annesley had none of the outward and visible signs of an extraordinary young man. Furthermore, he noticed that Annesley and

Miss Cecil remained partners throughout; and though this might be a trivial basis upon which to build conclusions, there was surely some significance in the fact that after each game these two sauntered away together, leaving Captain and Mrs. Green to entertain their host with polite conversation.

When play was over for the day, a renewal of the contest at an early date was agreed upon, and after three such meetings the Professor felt justified in despatching a consolatory note to Mrs. Annesley. "I really think you may make your mind quite easy," he wrote, "I have had your boy and Cecil's girl playing tennis in my garden several times; and even so inexperienced a looker-on as myself cannot fail to perceive that if ever two people were in love with each other, they are. The 'harpy' I have not yet met, nor am I likely to do so; but Captain Green of your son's regiment tells me that she is what is called a *garrison hack*--a term not known to me, but which I take to mean broadly that she is ready to flirt with all, and is consequently dangerous to none."

The folly of generalization was one to which the Professor was fully alive in dealing with matters of historical interest; and had the question before him been of that kind, he would have been the first to point out that, though this lady might not be dangerous *qua* garrison hack, there was no sure ground for assuming that she was not dangerous *qua* Mrs. Harrington. Mrs. Annesley's grateful reply to his letter did not reach him before he had begun to repent of his haste in communicating with her.

It was upon the occasion of an afternoon party, given by the officers of the 27th Lancers, that Canon Stanwick was privileged to make Mrs. Harrington's acquaintance. Had he been left to consult his own inclinations, he would not have been present at this entertainment; but the Cecils, who had driven in from the country to

attend it, invited themselves to luncheon with him, and then carried him away by main force, alleging that it would do him good to see more of his neighbors. As a matter of fact, however, he was not benefited in this particular way, for the cathedral dignitaries seldom showed themselves at the barracks, and he searched the mess-room and ante-room in vain for any familiar face. He remained beside the Cecils, and presently accompanied them to the lawn in front of the building, where some younger members of the assemblage were playing tennis. Then it was that he became aware of Mrs. Harrington, attended by young Annesley, and was able to scrutinize her a little more nearly than he had done on the cricket-ground. She was a tall, striking-looking woman, not in her first youth. No doubt she was rather over-dressed, and the Professor noticed that she was more anxious to appear at her ease than successful in doing so. He noticed, besides, that the other ladies fought shy of her, and that his friend Bob, who stood by her side, looked anything but happy.

After a time the couple drew near to the spot where the Cecil family were seated, and from the expression of despair visible upon the young man's face, and the mixture of triumph and defiance exhibited by the lady, it was easy to guess what was going to happen next. The Professor, from living so much alone, had got out of the habit of repressing his emotions; and when he realized that this daring woman had demanded an introduction to Mrs. Cecil, he gave vent to a loud, abrupt chuckle, which caused everybody to turn round and look at him and overwhelm him with consequent confusion. Thus he missed the actual formality which had moved him to mirth by anticipation; but he recovered himself in time to see that it had taken place, that Mr. and Miss Cecil were looking grave and annoyed, and that Mrs. Cecil had assumed that stony demeanor with which she was wont to cow the presumptuous.

Mrs. Cecil was not a lady with whom it was advisable to take

liberties. A great liberty had been taken with her now, and, while holding in reserve the punishment of the chief offender, she made things very uncomfortable for his accomplice. Having bowed to Mrs. Harrington, she became absorbed in some distant object of interest, and failed to hear the bland remarks addressed to her by her new acquaintance. A deep silence had fallen upon the surrounding group. Mrs. Cecil was still seated; the other lady was standing in front of her chair, and the Professor, looking on from the background, thought to himself that, if he were in Mrs. Harrington's shoes, he would run away.

But it was Bob Annesley, and not Mrs. Harrington, who adopted that pusillanimous course. That intrepid woman remained firm, and, with a determined smile upon her pale face, forced Mrs. Cecil to speak to her.

"I asked Mr. Annesley to introduce me to you," she was saying, "because I think we ought to know each other, being both of us so intimate with him."

"Oh, I didn't know," replied Mrs. Cecil coldly. Perhaps she would have liked to say that she was not so very intimate with Mr. Annesley; but when one has a daughter whom one is naturally anxious to marry well, one is apt to be debarred from indiscriminate retorts. After a pause, she asked, without removing her eyes from the distant view, "Are you staying any time at Lichbury, Mrs.--er--?"

"Harrington," replied the other. "Well, I don't quite know. It will depend a good deal upon the regiment. I always like to be where the 27th are."

"*Really!*" exclaimed Mrs. Cecil; and the amount of astonishment, contempt, and disgust which she managed to condense into that one word was quite an achievement in its way.

"Oh, yes," Mrs. Harrington went on cheerfully, "I follow the drum. My object is to get as much fun out of life as possible, and I don't know any better way of doing that than living in a garrison town."

"Violet," said Mrs. Cecil, "I think I see some vacant places on the other side of the lawn. We will go over and sit there." And so saying, she arose and swept majestically away, leaving Mrs. Harrington surrounded by a number of silent persons who appeared anxious to stare her out of countenance while at the same time resolutely ignoring her.

The poor woman's position was really a cruel one, and signs that she felt it to be so were not wanting. She flushed for a moment, then turned pale again, and stood, not unlike a hunted animal, while those merciless ladies enjoyed her discomfiture. The Professor, who knew what agony he himself would have suffered under such treatment, could not help being very sorry for her. So sincere was his compassion, and so strongly did he disapprove of the base practice of hitting those who are down, that he was moved at last to do an unusually bold thing. He advanced abruptly to the side of the unfortunate pariah, upsetting a chair on his passage, and said in a nervous, hesitating way, "What a beautiful afternoon, is it not?"

Mrs. Harrington turned a pair of astonished and rather angry eyes upon him. Most likely, at the first moment, she took this queer-looking cleric for an emissary of the enemy; but a glance at his face must have reassured her, for a quick change of expression came over her own, and the Professor was rewarded by a singularly pleasant smile, and a word or two spoken without any of that harshness of intonation which had been noticeable in Mrs. Harrington's voice a few minutes before. Having thus entered his little protest against bullying, he would gladly have retired from so conspicuous a position, but he was a man who was wholly unable to extricate himself from any position,

conspicuous or other, without help, and so he went on conversing with Mrs. Harrington for a matter of five minutes, at the end of which time he mentally qualified her as a very intelligent and agreeable person. "I wonder," thought he, "why she chose to speak in such an objectionable manner just now." And then, with his unlucky habit of thinking aloud, he said musingly, "I suppose she wanted to shock Mrs. Cecil. Well, I can't blame her."

Mrs. Harrington laughed. "You are quite right," she observed; "that was what I wanted to do. But you ought to blame me, for it was not at all worth while to shock Mrs. Cecil, and I brought her rudeness upon myself."

The Professor, in great distress, began to stammer out an apology, which he was not permitted to finish. "There is no need to beg my pardon," Mrs. Harrington interrupted: "you only said what you thought, and it is not often that one has the good fortune to hear any one do that. I wish you would go on. I should like to hear what you think of me, for instance--or rather no; that would not be very interesting. I should prefer hearing what you think of Mrs. Cecil."

"The Cecils are old friends of mine," said the Professor, with a slight accent of reproof.

"Then you need not hesitate to say what you think of them, for one does not, as a rule, think badly of one's friends. I am interested in them on Mr. Annesley's account. He is a great deal at their house, is he not?"

"Yes, I believe so," answered the Professor, stroking his chin pensively. A strong desire to come to the point prompted him to add, with some audacity, "People say that he is likely to become engaged to Miss Cecil, but that may be only an idle report."

Mrs. Harrington's large black eyes had a considerable store of latent fire in them. It flashed out now upon her companion with a suddenness which made him start; but in an instant she had recovered her composure. "It is an idle report," she said quietly. "There is no truth in it."

"Indeed? Is it not a little difficult to speak with certainty upon such points?"

Mrs. Harrington made no verbal reply, but stepping slightly aside, so as to see and be seen by a group of which Miss Cecil was one, and Bob Annesley another, she beckoned to the young man, who responded by an almost imperceptible shake of the head. Thereupon she repeated her signal more peremptorily, and he, with obvious reluctance, obeyed it.

"I want you to see me home," she said as soon as he was within speaking distance.

"Oh, all right," answered Annesley; "but couldn't you wait a little bit?"

"No," returned Mrs. Harrington; "I want to go now. I am tired."

Then, with a gracious bow to her late interlocutor, she moved away, Bob Annesley walking somewhat shamefacedly by her side.

It was thus that the Professor was made aware that Mrs. Harrington was indeed dangerous, though not precisely in the manner which he had ventured to disclaim on her behalf.

III.

Bob Annesley was one of those deservedly popular persons who can be understood at once by the least experienced students of character. Good nature was his dominant quality, and when you had said that he was good-natured, you had said very nearly all that there was to be said about him. The Professor, who had not lived for so many years at Oxford without discovering what is the ordinary destiny of young men thus gifted or afflicted, had no difficulty in casting Bob's horoscope. "That woman has got a hold upon the poor boy, don't you see?" said he, addressing himself to the busts in his library. "He was in love with her once, and he is tired of her now; but he will never have the courage to tell her so. The question, therefore, is, how are his friends to get him out of her clutches?"

But the busts continued to stare straight before them, without making any reply, and the Professor, not being fertile in expedients, could think of no better course of treatment than renewed doses of Miss Cecil and lawn-tennis. He was prepared, if driven to extremities, to make a direct appeal to Mrs. Harrington, for he conceived that her nature had a side which might be appealed to with success; but he shrank from employing so drastic a remedy until all others should have proved unavailing, and he lost no time in endeavoring to arrange another of those meetings which had already produced, or had seemed to produce, a hopeful result.

In this well-meant attempt he was foiled by the recalcitration of both the parties concerned. Mrs. Cecil, desirous though she might be to see her daughter make an unexceptionable match, was not likely to fall into the error of openly pursuing her quarry, and the young lady herself was probably offended by what had taken place at the barracks. However this may be, the Cecils regretted their inability to avail themselves of Canon Stanwick's repeated invitations; while

Bob, if his own account was to be believed, was at this time perpetually on duty. Thus several weeks elapsed during which it was impossible to report progress to Mrs. Annesley, who wrote impatiently, complaining that her son never told her anything, and entreating that she might not be kept needlessly in the dark. Had it not been for these letters, the Professor, whose mind, after all, was occupied with other matters than matchmaking, might have washed his hands of the whole business; but he was reminded by them that he had promised to do his best, and so, when at length he chanced to encounter Mrs. and Miss Cecil and Bob Annesley in the same room, he profited by the opportunity, and engaged the whole three of them to lunch with him before they had time to make excuse.

Every one who has ever tried to set the affairs of his neighbors straight for them must be aware that those who pursue this course lay themselves open not only to ingratitude, but to positive contumely. When, on the day appointed, the Cecils duly made their appearance, and when at the last moment a card was brought from Bob Annesley, on which was scribbled, "Very sorry, can't possibly come to luncheon, but will turn up for tennis afterwards"--when, I say, this untoward incident occurred, the Professor was at once made to feel how blameworthy had been his conduct. Mrs. Cecil was so cross and snappish that a less submissive man would have turned upon her in the first five minutes; and even Violet, whose disposition was naturally sweet, was silent and preoccupied, and made no effort to soften down her mother's uncivil speeches. And what was still worse was that, after luncheon was over, and Captain and Mrs. Green had arrived with their racquets in their hands, that wretched Bob failed to redeem his promise. They waited an hour for him in vain, and then, as it was evident that no set could be made up, the Cecils went away in a huff, while the Professor, quite upset, betook himself to the cathedral, where, being in residence, he had to read the evening lessons, and where in his agitation he made St. Paul say, "Bobs, love

your wives," before he could stop himself.

Passing through the cloisters after the conclusion of the service, he saw dimly a male and a female figure walking before him, and his ears caught the sound of what appeared to be an altercation. By the time that he had got his glasses settled upon his nose, and had approached a little nearer to the disputants, they wheeled round and revealed themselves as no other than Bob and Mrs. Harrington. Both of them started, and Mrs. Harrington, with a bow, turned abruptly and walked away. Bob, looking rather sheepish, stood his ground and began to mumble some apology for having broken his engagement, but the Professor cut him short.

"Annesley," said he, "will you come into my house for a few minutes? I wish to speak to you."

The Professor, albeit of a mild temper, had been a don, and knew how to assume an aspect of sternness when necessary. Bob Annesley, on the other hand, was both by nature and training prone towards obedience. Presently, therefore, the two men were closeted in the Professor's study, where the following dialogue ensued.

"I want to know what you mean by this, Annesley?"

"Mean by what?"

"Why, by making love to two women at the same time. Don't tell me you haven't made love to them: I have seen you. And don't tell me to mind my own business either, because a great deal of this--this trifling has gone on in my garden, and I feel myself in a measure responsible for the consequences. I cannot," continued the Professor, warming with his subject, "allow the hearts of young ladies to be broken within sight of my library windows; and I am bound to tell you, Annesley, that I consider your conduct highly discreditable."

Bob shook his head sorrowfully, but did not offer to defend himself, so the Professor had to go on scolding.

"Were I you, I should be ashamed of such unmanly vacillation. It is very plain that you either do not know your own mind, or that, knowing it, you are afraid to declare it. You will not, I suppose, deny that you have entangled yourself with one lady while you wish to marry the other."

No answer.

"Tell me, at least, one thing: are you, or are you not, in love with Miss Cecil?"

"Oh, come--I say--hang it, you know!" exclaimed Bob; but the Professor, paying no heed to this incoherent remonstrance, repeated his question in a determined manner.

"Very well, then--*yes!*" called out the young man despairingly. "I am in love with her--and I can't marry her. Now I hope you're satisfied."

The Professor said, "Far from it." On the contrary, that bare statement was eminently unsatisfactory, and required explanation. He could well understand that there might be obstacles in the way of a marriage which appeared to be desirable and desired, but let us hear what those obstacles were, and try what could be done towards removing them.

Bob, however, was obdurate, declaring that he couldn't and wouldn't say another word about the matter, except that the obstacles referred to were irremovable. He was the most unfortunate beggar that ever stepped, but talking about it wouldn't make it any better.

"And I don't think you have the least right to blow me up like this," he added, as he rose and made for the door. "You asked me to come here and meet her, and I came. Flesh and blood couldn't resist that. I've kept away for the last three weeks though, as you know, and I shall keep away in future. I dare say you have meant kindly, but you shouldn't be in such a deuce of a hurry to jump to conclusions."

With that he made good his retreat, while the Professor, left to himself, looked up at Marcus Aurelius and murmured sadly, "It doesn't do, you see. The human animal in his lower stages of development must be guided by patience and kindness, and by these means alone."

IV.

Whether in Bob Annesley's case kindness would have proved more effectual than harshness was a question which the Professor was unable to bring to the test of experience; for a few days after the interview just described Mrs. and Miss Cecil left home, and did not return until late in the autumn.

During their absence, of which Mrs. Annesley was duly apprised, the Professor had a respite. He received no more importunate letters, he saw little of the misguided young lancer, and he employed himself agreeably in writing that brilliant chapter upon Pope Boniface VIII. and the bull *Ausculta, fili*, which has since been so justly praised by the critics. Absorbed in these congenial studies, and feeling that, for the time being, it was vastly more important to arrive at the truth with regard to the instructions given by Philippe le Bel to Nogaret

than to unravel any contemporary mystery, the good man almost forgot Mrs. Harrington's existence, and it was not until the month of October, when Captain Green, whom he chanced to meet one day, informed him that she had left Lichbury for some destination unknown, that his interest in her revived, and he began to wonder whether anything could have caused her to relinquish her prey.

Shortly afterwards he caught sight of Bob Annesley, clanking down the High Street in full war-paint and feathers, and crossed the road on purpose to say, "So Mrs. Harrington has gone away, I hear."

"Yes," answered the young man gloomily; "but she is coming back, again."

The Professor passed on. He foresaw that there was going to be trouble, but he did not want to meet it halfway. "Time enough for that when the Cecils come home," thought he as he regained his quiet dwelling, and dived once more into the dark recesses of the thirteenth century.

The Cecils came home early in November; but Bob and Violet met no more in the Precincts, the excuse of lawn-tennis being, indeed, no longer available at that season. That they met elsewhere the Professor had ocular proof, for he saw them several times riding together; moreover, the Dean's wife informed him that everybody said it was to be an engagement. The Professor held his peace, remembering one person who had said with some confidence that it would never be anything of the sort; and when that person reappeared suddenly upon the scene, it seemed clear that the tug of war was at hand. The first intimation of coming unpleasantness which reached the Professor took the form of a visit from Mr. Cecil, who said he wished to have his old friend's candid opinion about young Annesley.

"He has been a good deal up at my place of late; and though of course one is very glad to see him, and all that, one would like to know a little more of him. Mrs. Cecil will have it that he is ambitious of becoming our son-in-law. Well, that may or may not be so, and I don't think it necessary to repeat to her all that I hear in the town about him and Mrs. Harrington; but I may confess to you, Stanwick, that I feel uneasy on Violet's account. What do you think I ought to do?"

"Ask him his intentions," answered the Professor promptly.

"Oh, my dear fellow, I can't possibly do that. I would as soon bring an action for breach of promise against a man as ask him his intentions."

"Yet you want to know them, I suppose?"

"That is quite another thing. One wants to know a great deal that one can't ask about. I want to know who this Mrs. Harrington is, for instance, and what *her* intentions are."

"Well," said the Professor, with a sigh, "I dare say I might be able to help you there. At all events, I'll try."

He perceived that the time had come when he must have recourse to that direct appeal to the harpy which he had contemplated some months before. The necessity was grievous to him; but he faced it like the courageous old gentleman that he was, and having found out Mrs. Harrington's address from the stationer in the market-place, set out to call upon her that same afternoon.

Mrs. Harrington occupied lodgings on the first floor of a small house near the cavalry barracks. The dreary shabbiness of her little drawing-room was accentuated by some of those attempts at decoration with which a woman of scanty means and no taste

commonly surrounds herself. The faded curtains were drawn back through loops of equally faded ribbon; the walls were adorned with a few staring chromo-lithographs; the mantelpiece and the rickety table had borders of blue satin and coffee-colored lace; the back of the piano was swathed in spotted muslin over blue calico, like a toilet-table, and upon it stood a leather screen for photographs, from which various heavily moustached warriors, in and out of uniform, gazed forth vacantly.

These and other details were lost upon the Professor, who only wished to say his say and be gone. He had rehearsed the probable course of the interview beforehand, and was ready with a remark which should at once render the object of his errand unmistakable; but he had omitted to make allowance for the unforeseen, and therefore he was completely thrown out on discovering two long-legged officers seated beside Mrs. Harrington's tea-table.

It is safe to conclude that that lady was a good deal astonished when Canon Stanwick was announced, but she rose to the level of the occasion and introduced him immediately to her other visitors. "Canon Stanwick, Captain White--Mr. Brown. And now let me give you all some tea."

The Professor would have liked to say that he would call again some other time, but felt that he had not the requisite effrontery; so he sat down, took a cup of tea, and wished for the end. He was very awkward and confused, feeling sure that the two officers must be laughing at him; but in this he was mistaken. Those gentlemen, if not remarkable for intellect, had perfectly good manners, and would wait until they reached the barrack square before permitting themselves to burst into that hilarity which the notion of Polly Harrington closeted with a parson must naturally provoke. In the meantime, they did not do much towards lightening the labor of keeping up conversation. This

duty fell chiefly upon Mrs. Harrington, who acquitted herself of it as creditably as any one could have done, and who established a claim upon the Professor's gratitude by talking with as much propriety as if she had been herself a canoness. His preconceived idea was that propriety of language was about the last thing that could be expected from such ladies as Mrs. Harrington when, so to speak, in the regimental circle. Nevertheless, he did not find himself able to second her efforts towards promoting a general feeling of cordiality and the next quarter of an hour passed away very slowly. At length it flashed across Captain White that the old gentleman meant to sit him out, and as soon as he had made this brilliant discovery he rose with great deliberation, pulled down his waistcoat, pulled up his collar, and said he was sorry that he must be going now. Thereupon Mr. Brown went through precisely the same performance, and intimated a similar regret. Mrs. Harrington did not offer to detain them. She accompanied them to the door, talking as she went, kept them for a minute or two on the threshold while she arranged to ride with them to the meet on the following day, and then returned smiling, to hear what Canon Stanwick might have to say for himself.

Now she knew as well as anybody to what she owed the honor of the Professor's visit; but she did not see why she should make his path smooth for him. Therefore she smiled and held her tongue, while he, after some introductory commonplaces, managed to drag Bob Annesley's name, without much rhyme or reason, into the current of his remarks.

"A promising young fellow," he said; "but, like other young fellows, he gives his friends some anxiety at times. His mother, poor thing, is feeling very uneasy about him just now."

"Mothers," observed Mrs. Harrington, "generally do feel uneasy about their sons. That is because they have such a difficulty in

realizing that their sons may be old enough to take care of themselves."

"But they can't take care of themselves," rejoined the Professor eagerly. "At least, *he* can't take care of himself. His position, as no doubt you are aware, differs in some respects from that of his brother officers, and I think that if you or I were in his mother's place, we should wish, as she does, that he should leave the army, live upon his property, and--and make a suitable marriage."

"Yes," said Mrs. Harrington: "and why is his mother uneasy?--because he won't leave the army, or because he won't make a suitable marriage?"

"Well, for both reasons, I believe. I think I mentioned to you some time ago that there was a talk of his marrying Violet Cecil, and I have since ascertained that his own feelings incline him towards a match which would give great satisfaction to all those who are interested in him; but unfortunately it appears that he is hampered by some previous entanglement with--with----"

"With an unsuitable person?" suggested Mrs. Harrington, still smiling.

The Professor paused. He wanted to enlist Mrs. Harrington's sympathies, and to arouse the generosity which he was convinced that she possessed. Under the circumstances, was it politic to begin by telling her that she was unsuitable? However, he reflected very sensibly that there would be no getting on at all unless that much were either said or implied; and he felt, besides, that he was already in so uncomfortable a predicament that nothing could very well make it worse. This gave him courage to reply,--

"I fear we must pronounce her so. All other considerations apart,

the fact that he no longer wishes to make her his wife should be conclusive. He might feel--and I don't say that he ought not to feel--bound in honor to her; but it seems to me that she is equally bound in honor to release him from his engagement."

"Oh, you think she is bound to release him?"

"I do," answered the Professor firmly. "Yes; I may say without any hesitation that that is what I think."

"I am not quite sure that I agree with you," said Mrs. Harrington. "I can't, of course, form any guess as to who the person to whom you allude may be; but let us put an entirely imaginary case, and see how it looks from the lady's point of view. Because, you know, even unsuitable women have their point of view, and some of them might be disposed to think their happiness almost as important as Mrs. Annesley's. Let us take the case of a woman with whom life has gone very hardly--a woman who was married young to a husband who ill-treated her, deserted her, and left her at his death with a mere pittance to live upon. Well, this imaginary woman is not very wise, let us say, although she has no great harm in her. She is fond of amusement, she likes riding, she likes dancing, and we won't disguise that she likes flirting too. She has no near relations; so, instead of taking lodgings in a suburb of London, or hiring a cottage in the depths of the country, as no doubt she ought to do, she attaches herself to a cavalry regiment in which she has friends, and she rides her friends' horses and dances at their balls, and has great fun for a time. Perhaps it serves her right that this way of going on causes her to be cut by all the ladies, wherever she betakes herself; perhaps she doesn't care a straw for that at first, and perhaps she cares a great deal as she grows older. Perhaps she sees no way of escape from a kind of existence which she has learnt to hate, and perhaps that serves her right again. What do you think, Canon

Stanwick?"

The Professor's honesty compelled him to reply, "I should not blame her for seizing any opportunity of escape from it that offered."

"Yet most people would blame her; she would have to make up her mind to that. We are supposing, you know, that Mr. Annesley is the way of escape that offers itself, and when this forlorn woman seizes him ecstatically she must expect his friends and relations to tear their hair and call her bad names. I dare say that would trouble her very little. After knocking about the world for so many years, she wouldn't be over and above sensitive, and she would know perfectly well that, when once she was married and had plenty of money, everybody, including her husband's relations, would be civil enough to her. But now, just as she is exulting in the prospect of peace and plenty, lo and behold! the miserable young man goes and falls in love with somebody else. What is she to do? You, in an off-hand sort of way, answer, 'Oh, let him go free, of course;' but I, on the side of the poor disappointed woman, venture to say that she should be guided by circumstances. Suppose she knew this good-natured Bob Annesley to be a man who couldn't break his heart about anything or anybody if he tried ever so hard? Suppose she knew that she was quite as well able to make him happy as Miss Cecil? Mightn't she in that case be justified in thinking a little bit about her own interests, and holding him to his promise?"

"I can't answer positively," said the Professor, sighing. "Justification must depend entirely upon the standard by which we judge. All I know is, that if such a woman as you describe resolved to sacrifice her worldly prospects she would err upon the safe side."

"Such a woman as I describe would probably differ from you there," observed Mrs. Harrington.

"No!" exclaimed the Professor suddenly, bringing his stick down upon the floor with an emphatic thump. "You may say that, but I don't believe it. I believe her to be a good-hearted and high-minded woman, in spite of all that she may have gone through. I believe that she has a conscience, and I believe that she will end by obeying it, no matter at what cost."

"You must know a great deal about her," said Mrs. Harrington, raising her eyebrows. "Are you not forgetting that she is a purely imaginary person?"

The Professor was about to reply, but what he was going to say will never be known, for at this inopportune juncture the door opened, and who should walk in but Bob Annesley himself! The three persons thus unexpectedly confronted with one another all lost their presence of mind a little, and the Professor could not afterwards have given any coherent account of what happened next, or of how long an interval elapsed before he found himself in the street again; but as he wended his way homewards, he astonished more than one passer-by by calling out in a loud, distinct voice, "She'll let him go! mark my words, sir, she'll let him go!" And when he had reached the privacy of his own study, he added confidentially, "And between ourselves, I'm not by any means sure that she isn't worth a dozen of the other."

V.

It is one thing to make a sudden and enthusiastic profession of faith in a prodigy, and it is quite another to reiterate that profession in cold blood the next morning. The Professor did not find himself able

to accomplish the latter feat. Calmer reflection showed him that he had given Mrs. Harrington credit for the most extreme disinterestedness, not because of any single thing that she had said or done, but simply from an instinctive feeling that her nature was nobler than it appeared to be upon the surface. Now instinctive feelings do not ordinarily commend themselves as a sound foundation for faith or sober philosophers on the shady side of fifty; and the Professor, while maintaining the high opinion which he had formed of the harpy, wished that he had not been interrupted just when he was upon the point of asking her in plain terms whether she intended to marry Bob Annesley or not. It is possible that he might have called again and repaired the omission, had he not at this time found it necessary to consult certain authorities at the British Museum; and when once he was in town a variety of accidents detained him there. After that he had to go down to Oxford, so that, what with one thing and another, it was very nearly a month before he was in Lichbury again.

Almost the first person whom he saw after his return was Bob Annesley, and Bob's round face wore an air of such profound dejection that even a short-sighted and absent-minded man could not help noticing it.

"All well here, I hope?" said the Professor interrogatively. "Have you seen our friends the Cecils lately?"

Bob shook his head. "Never go there now." He added, with something of an effort, "I shall never go there any more; I shall be out of this before long. Sent in my papers last week."

"What!" exclaimed the Professor, rather startled. And then, as they were near his door, "Come in," he said, "and tell me all about it."

The young man obeyed listlessly. "You may as well be told all

about it now," he remarked; "everybody will have to know soon."

The Professor was greatly perturbed, feeling that he had been somehow to blame in absenting himself at a critical time. He did not ask for further explanations, but having preceded his young friend into the library, began at once: "This must not be allowed to go on, Annesley. I am sincerely sorry for Mrs. Harrington, but I can't think it right that two people should be made miserable in order that she may be provided with a large income. I am disappointed in her, I confess. I had hoped--but no matter. Since she won't break with you, you must break with her; and possibly some sort of compensation might be offered in a delicate manner----"

"I can't break with her," interrupted Bob quietly. "We were married three weeks ago."

The Professor's consternation was too great to be expressed in any vehement fashion. He could only murmur under his breath, "Dear, dear! what a sad pity!"

"There was no help for it," said Bob. "I promised her ages ago that I would marry her if her husband died, and I couldn't go back from my word when the time came."

"Her husband!" ejaculated the Professor. "This is worse than I thought. Do I understand you that she has had a husband alive all this time?"

"Well, he died a month or two ago--when she was away in the summer, you know. He had behaved awfully badly to her--deserted her soon after they were married. It was no fault of hers."

"It was certainly a fault of hers to receive another man's addresses while she was still a married woman," said the Professor

severely.

"Oh, well, if you like to call it so; but I suppose I was as much in the wrong as she was. Anyhow, I was bound to her. I told her about--about Violet, you know, but she didn't seem to think that made much difference. So, you see, there was no getting out of it," concluded Bob simply.

"There is no getting out of it now," remarked the Professor, with a rueful face; "and I don't think you have improved matters by getting married in this hole-and-corner way. What was your object in doing that?"

"She thought it would be better," answered the young man indifferently; "and, as far as that goes, I agreed with her. It has saved us a good deal of bother with my people; besides which, I didn't care to let all the fellows in the regiment hear about it before I left."

The Professor groaned. He saw that the only course open to him, or to any of Bob's friends, was to make the best of a bad business; but for the moment he could think of nothing except what a very bad business it was, and after promising to keep the secret until it should be a secret no longer, he allowed the young man to depart without offering him a word of consolation. Why he should have felt moved, some hours later, to walk over to the lodgings which were still occupied by the bride, he would have been puzzled to explain. She could not undo what she had done, nor was there anything to be gained by upbraiding her. Perhaps it was rather a strong feeling of curiosity than anything else that led him to her door.

Having learnt that she was at home and alone, he followed the servant upstairs, and was presently in the shabby little drawing-room so well known to the officers of the 27th. Mrs. Harrington--to call her by the name which she had not yet formally resigned--rose from the

chair in which she had been sitting by the fireside, and turned a curiously altered countenance towards her visitor. The Professor was at once struck by her extreme pallor, and by her air of weary despondency. To look at her, one would have thought that she had just sustained a crushing defeat, instead of having gained a victory.

"You have seen Bob!" she began.

"Ah!" sighed the Professor, speaking out his thoughts without ceremony, "I fear you have made a terrible mistake, both of you."

"Yes," she answered, and said no more, though he waited some time for her to explain herself.

"What made you do it?" he exclaimed at length. "You must have known that you were laying up an endless store of wretchedness for your husband and yourself; and I can hardly believe that you were influenced only by the motives that you mentioned when I was here last."

"There was one motive which I didn't mention," said Mrs. Harrington. "You hardly know enough about me to be amused by it; but I have no doubt that the regiment would consider it an exquisite joke if I were to assert that I had married Bob Annesley because I loved him. And yet it isn't very odd that I should love him. He was crazily in love with me once; he was kind to me when no one else was kind; he treated me like a lady; while other men, who by way of being my friends, were insulting me, more or less directly, every day. Oh, I know what you are saying to yourself. You are saying that if I had really cared for him at all, I should not have married him against his will. But I thought I might reckon without his will--he has so little of it. That has always been Bob's defect; and I don't mind saying so, because it is the only defect that I have ever discovered in him. I believed that I could win him back, and that, when once we were

married, he would forget his fancy for Miss Cecil, as he has forgotten other fancies before. Now that it is too late, I have found out that I was wrong. If I had known three weeks ago as much as I know now, I would have died a thousand times rather than have married him. He hates me, and I am rightly punished for my blindness and obstinacy."

She had spoken quietly at first, then with a good deal of excitement; but now her voice dropped to a whisper as she crouched down over the fire, muttering, "Yes, I am punished--I am punished!"

The Professor frowned. He disliked melodrama, and had no great belief in a repentance which could be evidenced only by words. "Perhaps money and lands may afford you some consolation," he observed rather cruelly.

Mrs. Harrington did not notice the sneer. "Why did you go away and leave me alone with my temptation?" she cried suddenly. "You might have prevented this."

"I cannot flatter myself," answered the Professor coldly, "that my influence with you would have been sufficiently strong for that."

"It was stronger than you think. I liked you; you had been kind to me, and I was ready to listen to you. I have not forgotten how you stood by me that day when Mrs. Cecil turned her back upon me; women in my position don't forget such things. But you went away just when I most needed a friend, and so I allowed myself to be deceived by my vain hopes."

"If any words of mine could have caused you to think twice before you took this irrevocable step," returned the Professor, "I can only regret most sincerely that business should have called me away at so important a moment; but there is little use in discussing what might have been. The only thing for you and your husband to do now is

frankly to accept a situation from which you cannot escape."

"Unless by means of an over-dose of chloral," suggested Mrs. Harrington, with a faint smile.

The Professor got up. "Mrs. Harrington," said he, "you may yet prove yourself an excellent wife and make your husband happy; but you can hardly expect to do this easily or immediately. And if I were you, I would not begin by making speeches which are silly if they are insincere, and wicked if they are not."

Thereupon he left the room without further leave-taking, while she, still bending over the fire, appeared unconscious alike of his rebuke and of his exit. The Professor, as he walked home, felt that he had been very severe, yet not unwarrantably so. "She is a foolish, theatrical woman," he said to himself; "and I strongly suspect that all that exaggerated penitence was assumed for a purpose. Of course her chief object now will be to conciliate her mother-in-law, and she probably imagines that my report of her may carry some weight in that quarter. But she makes a mistake, because I shan't report anything about her--good, bad, or indifferent. No more meddling with other people's business for me!"

VI.

The Professor would undoubtedly have felt confirmed in the harsh judgment which he had passed upon Bob Annesley's wife if he could have seen her at the meet on the following morning. Mrs. Harrington was a finished horsewoman, and never looked to so great advantage as in the saddle. Upon the present occasion she rode a fidgety chestnut mare, the property of Captain White, and the ease with which she managed her rather troublesome mount won her a great deal of admiration from the local members of the hunt. As for the officers of the 27th, they were too well accustomed to Polly Harrington's dexterity to pay her any compliments on that score; but they clustered round her as usual, and smiled amiably at her smart sayings, and told her that she was in rare form that morning. Bob hovered in the background, looking woebegone.

The neighborhood of Lichbury does not bear a very high character among hunting men, blank days being of by no means rare occurrence thereabouts, but there is always a fox at Lingham Gorse, and it was at Lingham Gorse that a fox was found on the particular morning with which we are concerned. The whole crowd got away together, and kept together for the first five minutes, going at racing speed across the short turf of the downs at the foot of which Lichbury stands. On this the northern side, the gradual slopes of these hills form as good and safe galloping ground as any one could wish for; but their southern face is very different, falling away in precipitous chalk quarries and sharp declivities unwelcome to timid riders, and it was after crossing the backbone of the ridge that the field began to scatter right and left, only a few adventurous spirits riding straight ahead and trusting in Providence.

Among these was Mrs. Harrington. She was followed by Annesley and Captain White, the latter of whom was watching her headlong progress a little anxiously, and wishing, perhaps, that his chestnut mare were safe in her stable. It was not, however, any fear on the mare's account that caused him to rein in suddenly and ejaculate "Good God!" About a furlong ahead, a row of posts and rails had come into view, immediately beyond which--as every one who knew the country was well aware--was a chalk cliff some two hundred feet in depth. It seemed incredible that any human being, whether familiar with the country or not, should ride at such a fence, for there was nothing but sky visible upon the other side of it; but Mrs. Harrington was making straight for it now, and it was the discovery that she was doing so that called forth Captain White's exclamation. He raised his hand to his mouth and sent a warning shout after her, and Bob, who saw the danger at the same moment, shouted too; but Mrs. Harrington did not appear to hear either of them, and, indeed, it was already too late for warnings to be of any avail. For an instant horse and rider rose dark against the gray sky, then vanished; and to those who waited there, helpless and horror-struck, it seemed as if some minutes elapsed before the dull crash came which told them that poor Polly Harrington had taken her last leap.

"Awful thing!--most shocking sight I ever saw in my life!" Captain White said, describing the catastrophe, some months afterwards, to an old brother officer. "But she must have been killed like a flash of lightning--there's some comfort in that. And, though I wouldn't say so to any one else, I can't help thinking that the poor woman's death was about the best thing that could have happened. Fancy her having got Bob Annesley to marry her on the sly! Only shows what fools fellows are, eh? You've heard that he's engaged to that pretty Miss Cecil now, haven't you? It isn't given out yet, of course, and I suppose they'll have to let a year go by before they announce it formally; but

everybody knows about it down in these parts."

Probably many less plain-spoken persons than Captain White agreed with him in thinking the unfortunate harpy's death the best thing that could have happened; but it may be hoped that Bob Annesley was not consciously among the number. The suddenness and the ghastly nature of the calamity gave him a shock from which his elastic spirits took a long time to recover; but he began to be more cheerful again after meeting Canon Stanwick, and putting into words a dread which he had not liked to mention to other friends.

"I say," he asked hesitatingly, and keeping his eyes upon the ground, "do you believe--do you believe that--*she did it on purpose?*"

The Professor evaded the question so cleverly that his interrogator quite imagined that he had answered it.

"I do not think," he said gravely, "that we have any right whatever to cast such an aspersion as that upon her memory."

ARCHDEACON HOLDEN'S TRIBULATION.

She was so frail and small that the country squires who came in at the one stopping-place and left the train at the next, and talked of petty sessions and highway-boards in a strong slow way, like men with a tight grasp of a slippery subject, felt fatherly towards her; and so fair that their sons found out new and painful ways of sitting which hid dirty boots, and strange modes of propping their guns which employed hands suddenly gifted with a sense of over-abundance; and so dainty, yet withal bright of eye and lip, that a gentleman who got in one stage from Stirhampton, and knew her, was tormented by his fancy; which pictured her as a sparkling gem in its nest of jeweller's satin. Altogether so frail and fair and dainty was this passenger; and yet in the flush of her young beauty and fearless nature, there was about her so imperious a charm that they all, though they might travel with her but three miles--it was a dreadful train--and exchange with her not three words, became her slaves. And the gentleman who knew her grovelled before her in spirit to an extent unbecoming in a man, much more in a clergyman and a curate.

She was popular, too. For though she parted from him at the door of the carriage, she fell in almost at once with another who knew her. His business, as far as any save chatting with her was apparent, seemed to be about the book-stall. And after she had gone laughing from him, and the servant who met her--and was equally her slave with all the others, though he was more like a bishop and a father of the Church than they promised ever to be--had taken her luggage in

charge, she met yet another, who blushed, and bowed, and smiled, and stammered before her after his kind. With him she was very merry until their roads diverged--if he had any road which was not of the nature of the last one's business. And then she tripped on just as gayly with a very tall acquaintance--they were all of one sex--and after him with another, who took up the walking where his predecessor left off, just for all the world as if she were a royal letter, and they were those old Persian post-runners, who made so little of "parasangs," and whose roads seemed always to be through "Paradises." But this last one brought her to the rectory gates, and--much lamenting--left her.

There was only Granny in the drawing-room when Dorothy ran upstairs. Granny, who was eighty-seven, and with a screen at her back and a wood-fire toasting her old toes, could tell wonderful tales of the great war. Who had heard "Clarissa" read aloud *coram puellis*, and at times shocked a mealy-mouthed generation by pure plain-speaking. She was the Archdeacon's grandmother; but to Dorothy what relation she was, or whether she was any relation, not all Stirhampton could tell--though it spent itself in guessing, and dallied to some extent with a suggestion that she was Dorothy's great-great aunt; not, however, committing itself to this, nor altogether breaking with a rival theory, that they were first cousins three times removed.

Whatever she was, Dorothy hugged her a score of times, and the tiny old lady said, "God bless you, my dear," half as many, and was going on to her full number, when the Archdeacon himself came in. He, too, smiled upon seeing the girl, and smoothed his ruffled brow, and tried to be as if the drawing-room--when he was in it--were all his world. For this was a part of the Archdeacon's system, and he was of note through four dioceses as a man of system. So he patted the girl's hair, and said kindly:

"Well, my dear, I trust you have had a pleasant visit?"

"Oh, charming! and yet I am so glad to be at home again! But, guardian, what is the matter?"

The Archdeacon was vexed and pleased. Vexed that his attempt had not succeeded, and pleased that he could now tell his trouble. "The matter, my dear?" he said, taking a turn up and down the room; "why, I am greatly annoyed and put out. I never knew such a thing happen before."

Granny clasped her hands upon the arms of her chair in sudden excitement. "It isn't overdrawn, George, is it?" she said, nervously.

"Overdrawn!" he replied, cheerfully, "not at all." There had been a time when he was not an archdeacon, or a rector, or even in orders, but only a hard-reading undergraduate, when Granny's banking account had been with great difficulty kept above zero. Then it was her bugbear; now the family fortunes were as solidly substantial as the comfortable red brick rectory itself; but Granny found some difficulty in laying her bogey. "Not at all. Not so bad as that," he said, cheerfully; "but very annoying, nevertheless. I was writing my Sunday evening sermon this afternoon--as I always do, you know, on Friday--when Whiteman came running in to me at five minutes after four, and said there was no one at the church to take the four o'clock service. Of course I had to break off and go. The congregation had to wait fully ten minutes. It is not so much the inroad upon my time, though that is not unimportant, as the lack of system, that I deplore. Maddy and Moser"--they were the married curates, and took charge of the two chapels of ease--"are, of course, engaged elsewhere; but surely one of the other five might have been here. It is a piece of gross carelessness on the part of some one."

Dorothy nodded and looked gravely into the teapot. "And I saw Mr. Gray on my way from the station!" she said.

"Ah, just so. You did not meet any of the others?"

"Yes, I think I did," she replied, with a great show of candor. "Of course I saw Mr. Bigham by the Church Club and Mr. Brune in Wych Street."

"Brune is the culprit, I expect. I do not think it would be Charles Emerson's fault, because he is unwell."

"Unwell!" cried the girl, impulsively. "Indeed, he is quite ill; I never saw any one look so bad."

"Oh! and where may you have seen *him?*" asked the Archdeacon, stopping suddenly in his promenade of the room, and facing her.

Dorothy bit her tongue to punish it. There is nothing so dangerous as a half-confidence. It so often leads, will-he-nill-he, to a whole one. "He got into the train at Bromfield. He had walked out there," she said, meekly. Surprisingly meekly for her.

"Quite so. And may I ask whereabouts you met his brother?"

"Met his brother?"

"Yes, my dear," said the Archdeacon, suavely. "Met his brother, Mr. Philip Emerson?"

"Let me see," murmured Dolly, with a vast pretence of considering, though her little ears were scarlet by this time. "Where did I meet Mr. Philip? Of course, I met him at the station. But however

did you know?" she asked, with the utmost effrontery.

"When one sheep, Dorothy, jumps over a gap, all the flock follow. Four of my curates being so busily engaged meeting my ward, I had little doubt but that the fifth was as well occupied."

Unseen by him, she made a face at Granny, who was understood to say that boys would be boys.

"And sheep, sheep!" retorted the Archdeacon, with sharpness.

"They did not tell me that they had come to meet me," said Dolly, rebelliously. She did not like that proverb--or whatever it was--about sheep.

The Archdeacon frowned. "No," he said, severely, "but I do not doubt that you would have been better pleased with them if they had. Let me speak to you seriously, Dorothy. I cannot--I really cannot--have you distracting these young men in this way. I observed before you left several little matters of this kind--little laxities, and a want of energy and punctuality, on their part that were due, I fear, to your influence."

"Little laxities!" murmured she, "I never heard of such things." But he put her aside with a grand wave of his hand.

"I am not inclined to say it is altogether your fault. You cannot help your looks or your youth, but you can avoid being a hindrance instead of an assistance in the parish. I must not suffer,"--he was working himself into a well-regulated passion--"my arrangements to be disorganized even by you. I will not and I cannot say, were this to go on, what steps it might not be my duty, however painful, to take."

After uttering this tremendous threat the Archdeacon walked

hastily across the room, and, turning, looked to see what effect it had had upon his ward. She was playing with her tea-spoon, tapping petulantly with her foot, reddening, and pouting, and glancing for sympathy at Granny; behaving altogether like a naughty school-girl under reproof. He took another turn, feeling that he did well--thoroughly well, to be angry; and looked again. She had risen, and was leaving the room. He could only see her back. I don't know what it was--perhaps he could not tell himself--in the pose of her little head and her shoulders, or whether it was something quite outside her--which made him step after her, and touch her shoulder gently.

"There, there!" he said, staying her kindly. "My scolding has not been very dreadful, Dorothy. We must be good friends again. Will you please to give me my second cup, and then I will go back and finish--my other sermon."

Granny looked surprised, and Dorothy laughed as brightly as if there were not and never had been in the world such a thing as a tear. For the Archdeacon rarely made a joke, even a little one. Jokes cannot be made upon system, and Archdeacon Holden had found system so good a thing that any pursuit which did not admit of it was apt to be out of favor with him. He was gifted with great powers of organization, and these he had used well, and found sufficient, so that by their means, without being a great preacher or a small controversialist, without inventing a new doctrine, or reviving an old argument, he had risen to preferment. He was little more than thirty when he was presented to the living of Stirhampton; and though the parish was overpopulated and under-churched, he reduced it in ten years to such a condition that it ranked as a model and its rector as a great man, often consulted by the heads of the Church upon parochial matters. Moreover, men talked of him as of one likely to rise higher.

In person he was a tall, well-favored man, in the prime of life, with

hair just beginning to be flecked with gray. He had nothing of the ascetic in his appearance, though his manners were cold and reserved; but he was liberal, and had good nature and good temper, as well as good parts. These qualities, however, the strict formality of his habits, and his rigid adherence to rule, hid in a great measure from all who were not well acquainted with the man.

To Dorothy he had been almost a father; and would perhaps have come to be looked upon entirely in that light, but that he was betrayed from time to time by little things. For instance, what do fathers--ordinary allowance-making, bill-paying fathers--know of their girl's dresses? The smallest chit in the nursery will tell you, nothing. And Carrie and Edie are so persuaded of this that they will flaunt their new seal-skins--which have not been paid for, and are absurdly inconsistent with papa's allowance--under his very nose, without the slightest tremor; and Flo will wear three new dresses in a quarter with as little chance of being prematurely found out in her extravagance, as if they were three new pairs of mittens. But in this respect the Archdeacon was not Dorothy's father. For not only did he observe during the few days which followed his scolding that she had not forgotten it; that she went sadly--or seemed to go sadly--about the house, and shunned his visitors with a pensive air, leaving Mr. Maddy, who was over fifty, and had seven children, to pour out his own tea. Not only did he note this, but when Dorothy appeared at breakfast upon the fourth morning with a demure face and downcast eyes, he marked the novelty of her quaker-like gray dress, with its plain collar and cuffs, as quickly as did Granny.

"That is very becoming, Dorothy," he remarked, pleasantly. He wished to be upon the old footing with her. To tell you the truth, he was tired of that going sadly. The house seemed as soberly dull as when she was away. And of late he had come to think it was rather a dull house. She had been away a good deal.

"Becoming!" cried Dolly, to his surprise, in a piteous voice. "And I had thought that this would do."

"Would do, my dear? What do you mean? So it does. It seems to me to do excellently." He was slightly taken aback.

"But I thought you said it was becoming?" she cried, querulously. "You did, too. I heard it quite plainly."

"Well, my dear, and what more would you wish me to say? It is--it is very becoming."

He tried to speak in a tone at once critical and archidiaconal, such a tone as the palæontologist adopts when he admires a bone of the pliocene mammoth in the case of a rival collector, or as paterfamilias uses when praising--to order--his girl's bonnets. He did not altogether succeed. The ribs of that primitive animal, though they have pretty curves enough, do not preen themselves before a mirror with a little fluttering blush, and bright backward glances, and quick-straying dainty fingers adjusting here and defining there; nor do they form together a picture such as none but paterfamilias himself--no *locum tenens*, for instance--can look on with a perfectly even pulse-beat. The Archdeacon felt that his tone was not quite the tone he had, so to speak, commissioned, and swallowed half a cup of hot coffee at a gulp.

"Oh, dear!" he cried, hastily.

"Oh, dear!" echoed the girl, stamping her foot in a pet. "Then I don't know what to do. I am sure I thought this would please you, and I should not be likely to--to do what you said I did in this. But now I shall not know what to do."

And she ran out of the room, leaving her guardian in a state of

much doubt as to whether she were laughing or crying; and perplexed, too, by uncertainty whether that gray dress sprang from a conscientious endeavor after sedateness, a real desire to improve--for oft the habit doth proclaim the mind--or from a freakish, wicked, contrary, wilful, teasing spirit, such as old Mrs. Fretchett had told him inhabited the bodies of young girls.

Alas! he was soon driven to be of old Mrs. Fretchett's opinions. There was no more sedateness, no more going sadly, after this; nor ever did scolding seem more entirely thrown away than that extempore sermon upon the day of Dolly's return. She was gayer, prettier, more heedless, more flighty than of old. The drawing-room was never free from curates now, whose business might indeed be with the Archdeacon; but by the time he was ready to talk it over, to audit their accounts, or sign their checks, the gentlemen were always upstairs, and--*difficilis descensus Olympi*. There were rumors of disagreements among the black-coated ones. The parish districts--and especially their lady visitors--declared that they were neglected; the rector never got a quiet cup of tea in his own house, nor even a quiet placid moment; for the sounds of young people laughing and, as Mrs. Fretchett called it, "fribbling" upstairs would float down to him working in his study, and then he would pish and pshaw, and move his chair impatiently. And no wonder. It meant that the parish was taking its chance; it meant that his system was breaking down. He knew it did. He told himself he did well to be angry. And he did thoroughly well; but after all it gave him small satisfaction. He began to feel more sore, and think more seriously about the matter every day. He could not have the work of ten years and more undone in this absurd fashion. Some remedy must be found. He might get rid of all the curates in a body, for violent diseases call for violent remedies; but that might not turn out a remedy. Or Dorothy might be--well, not dismissed exactly--but disposed of out of the way in some sort or other. The more Archdeacon Holden thought it over, the more he was

forced to the opinion that his duty lay in this direction. And then something happened which brought matters to a head.

It was on the day of the Grammar School sports, which were held by his permission in the large field at the back of the rectory, where the old town wall, running round two sides of the enclosure, afforded a capital place, of vantage for such spectators as did not wish to enter the ground. It was past five o'clock, and the sports were over. Of course the Archdeacon had attended them; and then he had retired to his study, and was thinking of going upstairs to tea, when a renewal of the shouting in the rear of the house attracted his attention. Wondering what this might be he mounted to the drawing-room, and finding only Granny there, fenced in as usual with her screen, walked to the further window which overlooked the field. The sports, to all appearance, had been resumed, late as it was; for though the ground was almost clear, a crowd was fast collecting upon the wall, and he could make out figures--it was just growing dusk--moving quickly round the ropes, which had not been taken away. One, two, three, four, five black figures moving swiftly in single file.

"I am afraid this won't do. I don't think that this can be allowed," he was beginning, shaking his head slowly, under the impression that the town boys had taken advantage of the place and occasion to get up a little impromptu competition of their own. "I don't think--good heavens!"

Granny awoke upon the instant, the Archdeacon's voice rang out so loud in anger and reprobation. "What is it?" the old lady said, weakly, feeling for her stick. "What is it, my dear? I hope it is not much. You know it is very near quarter day, George, very near, and some money will be paid in then. Dear me, dear me!"

Even in his wrathful astonishment the Archdeacon tried to say gently, "It is not that, Granny. It is nothing of any consequence. I shall

be back in a moment."

And then he ran downstairs. Nothing of any consequence indeed; three steps at a time, and so, bare-headed and his skirts flying behind him, reached the terrace, taking no notice of a couple of maids in the hall, who were looking through a window and giggling, and who fled at his approach. On the terrace, with a charming hood over her head, was Dorothy, looking down into the field, and now laughing and now clapping a pair of little gloved hands in great delight, a white rose on the wall before her. He scarce looked at her, but peered into the dusk. Yes, his eyes had not played him false. The five athletes speeding round the roped circle were his five curates, and none others.

"Isn't it fun?" cried Dorothy at his side, all unconscious of his feelings. "The boys were nothing to them, they look so funny in their long coats. They are walking a mile, and the winner is to have this rose. Don't you think Mr. Bigham is gaining?"

The Archdeacon was speechless. He glared at this mocker, and then at the crowd upon the wall opposite--the cheering, shouting, growing crowd--and breathed hard. Funny! Fun! Had the girl lost all sense of decorum? He would waste no words upon her; but he ran down the steps and strode across the grass as swiftly as his dignity, a little impaired by haste and passion, would permit. Fortunately the competitors were just then at the near side of the circle. But, for that very reason, by the time he approached the ropes, the walkers, who had only eyes for one another and that slender figure on the terrace, had passed the point nearest to him, and were speeding away quite unconscious of their superior's presence. He thought he should cut off the last man, and increased his pace. He called to him and waved his hand. But Mr. Brune, intent upon the business before him, and going steadily like a machine heel and toe, his elbows well in, and his eyes

upon the small of his predecessor's back, neither saw nor heard him. The Archdeacon was excited and provoked. In the heat of the moment he followed, still calling to him; and, being quite fresh, began to overhaul Mr. Brune. He did not hear a louder shout rise from the crowd upon the wall; he did not hear his ward clapping her hands in a perfect ecstasy of delight; he did not--indeed he could not--hear the giggling of the maids at the hall window. But all these people and everybody else thought that he had joined in the "parsons' race." Some, like Dorothy, thought it was very nice "and liberal" of him; and more, like Mrs. Fretchett, who had a fine view from her window, thought it very odd of him. And the faster he pressed on to catch Brune, becoming with every stride more and more angry, the more the crowd upon the wall shouted, and Dolly clapped, and Brune increased his speed, and the maids giggled; until at length the Archdeacon, beginning to suspect that his own position was far from dignified, and a glimmer of the light in which he was being viewed by others dawning upon him, broke into a run, and the crowd into a shout of reprobation of his unfairness; and then at last he laid his hand upon Mr. Brune's shoulder.

"Stop, Mr. Brune," he gasped; "stop! This is most unseemly. Do you hear? Most unseemly! I exceedingly disapprove of this--this disgraceful exhibition. Do you see the people, sir?"

This at last brought Mr. Brune to a standstill. He was a pitiable object as, hot, dishevelled, and panting, his tie awry and his collar rumpled, he stared, dumfounded, into his superior's flushed and indignant face. He tremulously wiped his brow, and by a tremendous effort recovered his eyeglasses from between his shoulders, where they had been swinging rhythmically. He put them on and looked round. Then he became aware of the spectators who had gathered since he and his fellows had, in quite a private way, started on their little frolic, and the affair became apparent to him in its true colors.

For, left to themselves, and unperverted by Dolly and unreasoning rivalry, there were no curates anywhere of more proper ideas than the Archdeacon's. Brune dropped his glasses, quite crushed; but, seeing the necessity for action, revived. He did what the Archdeacon should have done at first. He jumped over the ropes and ran across to stay the others.

Their rector did not wait to speak with them then, but, still frowning, stalked back to the terrace, striving to recover his self-possession upon his way. With but partial success, for as he mounted the steps, "Oh, guardian!" cried a merry laughing voice from above him, "what is the matter? Why did you stop? I am sure you would have beaten them all if you had gone on as well as you started. You walked capitally. And why have they all stopped?"

"Because they have come to their senses," he said, hoarsely, striving vainly to repress his passion. "Have you ever heard of Circe, girl?"

Dolly only stared. This tone at any rate she had never heard before.

"Because my parish is not large enough to contain her foolish rout and their senseless tricks. They were walking for a rose, were they?" he continued, bitterly. What he had said already seemed to have hurt the girl not one whit, only surprised her; and he was terribly exasperated. "I suppose that is but a pretty figure of speech, and stands for yourself. I am surprised you have so much modesty. It is fitting and maidenly in my ward to offer herself as the prize of a public walking match."

Her face turned white in the dusk. "How dare you!" she cried, starting back as if he had struck her. He had hurt her at last, if that was what he wished to do. "How dare you!" she cried, passionately.

But this time there came a quiver in her voice and a catching of her breath, and before he could be ready for this change of front she was gone, and he heard her sobbing bitterly as she passed through the hall. Only the white rose lay where she had flung it.

He went into his study and sat down very miserably, thinking, no doubt, over the state of the parish, and of what Mrs. Fretchett would say, and took no tea that evening. Only at one time or another, before nine o'clock prayers, he saw all the five curates. At dinner he was very silent, looking from time to time curiously at Dolly, who was silent too, attending chiefly to Granny's wants, and avoiding his eyes with a conscious shrinking, new in her and strangely painful to him.

But the Archdeacon had made up his mind, and before twenty-four hours were over had put it before Dorothy. First, however, he had asked her pardon quite formally for what he had said in his haste; and the strange look which pained him had passed from the girl's face, as melts a shadow cast by a cloud that was before the sun, and suddenly, even as we look up, is not. And then he had gone on to speak seriously to her of the state of his parish, touching upon the report of the previous day's doings, which was already abroad, and which Dolly, with some temper and as much justice, set down to Mrs. Fretchett.

"Well, my dear," the Archdeacon answered pleasantly, though in a tone which made her look sharply at him, "she and I are--well, old enough to remember that you are young, and, as Granny says, young folks will be young. Still I am bound to take care that the interests of my parish come first. It must not suffer through any one, even through you. And suffer it does, Dolly; which brings me to the other matter. An opportunity offers--I may say, three opportunities--of solving our difficulty. I have told you that you are too thoughtless for a clergyman's daughter, but I think you would make a good and true clergyman's

wife."

Crash! Dorothy had dropped the paperweight with which she was playing. He let her stoop to pick it up, which she did clumsily, and was long about it, and then he went on. "I have had three proposals for your hand, my dear. I do not know that this *embarras de richesses* is altogether to your credit, but so it is. Three of your fellow-culprits of yesterday, Philip Emerson, Mr. Bigham, and Mr. Brune are anxious to press their suits. They all have some means, and are young men of whom, notwithstanding that little affair, I can approve."

She was drawing outlines on her work-table with one white forefinger. "I don't think I want to marry either of them," she murmured with much indifference, considering the effect of an imaginary landscape with her head on one side.

The Archdeacon frowned. "They think that you have given them reason to hope."

"They cannot all think that!" she retorted, pouting scornfully. And the worst of it was that he could not controvert this.

"Philip Emerson, Dorothy, seemed in particular to fancy he had received some encouragement."

"Oh," said Dolly, "I should like to ask him what he meant; I don't think he would dare to say it to my face. Perhaps he meant this!" She went on contemptuously, rummaging in her work-basket--

"For all I can remember he may have given it to me. One of them did, I know. Isn't it nonsense?"

She held a crumpled scrap of paper towards her guardian, and he took it with the air of a man accepting service of a writ. "Am I to

read it?" he asked stiffly.

"Of course--I suppose he intended it to be read."

And the Archdeacon holding it gingerly, just as if it were the royal invitation before mentioned, read a few lines--

"Ah, great gray eyes, that, in my true love's face,
Tell of the pure and noble soul within;
One look in your calm depths I fain would trace,
I fain would win."

and threw it down with a contemptuous "pshaw!" He looked through the window for a moment before he spoke again; then with a great show of cheerfulness he said, "Now, my dear, let us be serious, which of them would you like to see yourself?"

"Which of them!" she answered impatiently. "None of them--ever! I hate them! That is, I mean that I don't want to marry them."

"I shall not let you give that answer without thought. It seems to me that you must have encouraged one or the other of them. You must take a fortnight to think it over."

"I won't have a minute!" she cried angrily.

"A clear fortnight," he repeated with some sternness. "If you are then resolved, I shall be the last to force you to marry against your will. I have, indeed, no legal power over you. I am not your father."

"No, you are not," she replied sullenly.

That pained the Archdeacon more than all that had gone before. It

was not only thoughtless, it was ungracious, it was ungrateful, and it hardened his heart so that he spoke out what was in his thoughts.

"Quite so," he began. "I was only going to say that if at the end of the time you found yourself unable to embrace----"

"I am a woman, if I am your ward," suddenly and spitefully.

"--to embrace this opportunity," shot out the clergyman, very red in the face, "then I should have to make an alteration in my household; in what direction, you will, no doubt, be able to guess."

She bent over her work and made no reply, so that he felt a cruel satisfaction that he had at last managed to cow her. Then, as there seemed no more to be said, the Archdeacon went downstairs and tried to feel content with his partial success. One way or another the difficulty would now be settled. And this being so, if he sighed over the consideration of this comfortable fact, we may presume that the sigh was one of relief.

The gravity which on a sudden fell upon the rectory folk was not unmarked by Stirhampton. But Stirhampton felt no surprise at it. Stirhampton well understood the cause of it. What wonder, asked Stirhampton, if the Archdeacon looked perplexed, and Miss Dorothy gloomy, and the curates anxious? What wonder, indeed, when as sure as eggs were what they seemed to be--and there they generally were--the Court of Arches had its eyes upon Stirhampton, and sentences of suspension were in the air, and there was even talk of unfrocking! so that much discussion was raised in town circles as to the details of that ceremony, and whether a cook's cleaver did, or did not, figure in it, and if it did, in what particular way it was used? What wonder, indeed? though those who knew best whispered that the race for the girl's hand (oh, those giggling eavesdropping maids!), disgraceful as it was in men of their calling and the Archdeacon's

age, might--observe--*might* have been overlooked. "But when it came," said these, "to the Archdeacon, in his chagrin at being outstripped by younger men, striking Mr. Brune, and knocking his own curate over the ropes, so that the very crowd cried shame! that was indeed going a little too far. There could be no winking at that, be the authority ever so favorable to him."

Still there are always froward people who will have no fire where others have been the first to espy the smoke. There were these at Stirhampton, men who were rude and said it was all fiddle-de-dee when Mrs. Fretchett said it was *scandalum magnatum*--a plain and unmannerly contradiction--and made themselves otherwise unpleasant. But even these grew silent after a time, when a very weighty fact came to be known. Two official letters--missives were the more proper word--of most threatening appearance had been delivered at the rectory. Their envelopes had been stamped with the name of an august street, and bore also in the left-hand bottom corner a distinguished title. On one had been a twopenny stamp. Timid people scanned the rector with curious pity, and such upon the whole was the effect of this postal intelligence that the doctrine of *scandalum magnatum* gained almost universal credence; even the froward ones grew serious and thought it over.

It was probably from a feeling of delicacy that they refrained from carrying their surmises to the Archdeacon. To the curates some hints were given, but what with their obtuseness--they scarcely seemed to understand--and a fretful touchy disposition, noticeable in young men, nothing came of these hints.

Of all the rectory folk, it was Dolly only who (oh, those giggling, tattling maids!) came to hear of the rumor. It distressed her beyond measure. She could not feel sure that it was untrue. Nay, she knew that one part was true, for had she not seen the Archdeacon read one

and the other of the letters mentioned, and immediately thereafter fall into deep thought. Ever since he had been grave and preoccupied. Her ideas upon unfrocking--though the cleaver was not one of them--were sufficiently terrible, and grew more and more vivid and daunting the longer she dwelt upon them. Yet there was not between herself and her guardian such an amount of confidence as made it easy for her to speak to him upon such a subject.

So poor Dorothy knew not what to think. She had her own little distresses, we know; but they were forgotten in this greater apprehension that she had brought grief and disgrace upon the Archdeacon. And when, about the end of the fortnight, he bade her come to his study, she thought of them only as of matters to be put aside, if mentioned, as quickly as possible, as matters of no importance in the face of the blow she felt was about to fall.

Archdeacon Holden was writing steadily. He looked up at her entrance to point with a faint smile to a chair, and then went on with his work. She fancied that there was something strange and new in his air; she marked under the paper-weight the letters about which all the town was talking; at her elbow she spied an envelope addressed to the Dean and Chapter of W----, the patron of the living, and Dorothy felt sick at heart.

Whether he was or was not aware of the direction of her thoughts, he folded his letter slowly, willing, perhaps, to put off as long as possible the evil day when something must be told. It was not until he had risen and approached the fireplace, so that his back was towards her, that he said pleasantly:

"Well, Dorothy, we will talk of your affairs first."

"They will not occupy you long," was her quiet answer; what were these things to her now? "I have made up my mind, or rather it is

unchanged. If I have thoughtlessly caused pain to Mr. Emerson and the others, I am sorry; but I cannot marry any of them."

He did not speak for a moment. Perhaps his thoughts had gone off to his own matters, for his hand shook a little as he adjusted the date-case over the mantelpiece. "You are quite sure, my dear?" he said at last. There was no displeasure in his tone.

"I am quite sure."

"Well, that would have been an embarrassing answer, Dorothy, if things still stood as they were," he said. "But they do not; and any change I am going to make will be the result of another cause. I have some news for you. I am going to leave Stirhampton, and you are the first person to whom I have told the fact. You will not do my parish much more harm, my dear, for in a few weeks at most I shall be without one."

His back was towards her, and so he could not see the current of grief and trouble that flashed from Dolly's heart to Dolly's face. He waited for the eager, happy words of congratulation that should have come; for the touch at which he should turn to meet the bright, animated face that would smile on him for a moment, and then flit joyfully upstairs to Granny. He waited for these things, wondering if his elevation could bring him any other pleasure to compare with this. And then, instead, he heard behind him a quick, low sob, and turned, with a sinking of the heart, to find the girl crying bitterly, her face cast forward in utter self-abandonment upon her arms, and her whole frame quivering with the sharpness of her sorrow.

His heart sank with a natural foreboding. But surely it must have been a singularly affectionate one, or where otherwise lay hidden the source of that deep feeling which welled up in the simple words wrung from him by the sight of her distress. "My darling, my darling,

only tell me what it is!" he cried, stroking her fair hair and striving to comfort her. "Tell me your trouble. Don't you know I would give my life to save you pain, Dolly? Don't hurt me like this, but look up and tell me. What is it, my darling?"

But for a time, though she heard him, she would not be comforted, and his words even seemed to give a fresh impulse to her grief. At last, amid half-stifled sobs, with her face still hidden, Dolly made him understand what she had heard and what she had feared, and what she had supposed him to mean when he said he was about to leave Stirhampton; and poured out, too, her own self-reproach, while he stood over her and listened, and now touched the bowed head, and now smiled grimly at the rumor of that unfrocking. And when he came to answer her, he did it in a score of words that dried her eyes effectually, and made her turn her flushed, pitiful, tear-stained face upon him, a glorious smile of pure happiness irradiating it that somehow made his heart leap up like a boy's--and then ache as those deserve to ache who play the boy when old enough to know better.

"It is a mistake," was all he said; "I am leaving here, but not in disgrace, Dolly. I have accepted the Bishopric of the new see of Deringham. What a silly, loving, little girl it is! You may read the letter, my dear." And while Dolly, in radiant dishevelment, was striving to tell him her pleasure, he took an envelope from his pocket and held it out. Dolly seized it eagerly and opened it, and found within it not at all what the Archdeacon had thought was in it. The envelope contained no statesman's autograph, or courtly to-apron-inviting note from Downing Street, but only a white rose, a dried rose, flattened, but still sweet and fragrant. Almost as soon as the girl's fingers touched it the Archdeacon was aware of his mistake--surely a very curious mistake--and snatched it from her with some confused words and a reddening brow. But Dolly had seen it--had certainly seen it; and

somehow it brought back to her memory the day of the curates' race; so that when the Archdeacon brusquely put another letter into her hand, she read it with her eyes, and not her mind. As for the Archdeacon, he sought the window, and hemmed and hawed, and at last said, hastily, without turning, "There, there, my dear, I think there is no more to be said. Will you kindly go and tell Granny?" and so affected to select a volume from a shelf of the Early Fathers.

But Dorothy did not move. She sat stooping forward, passing the hem of her much-bedabbled handkerchief through her fingers.

"Are you sure that you have told me all you wish to tell me?" she asked, slowly.

Her guardian started. "I think so," he answered, and plunged recklessly at a volume of Origen, or it might be St. Anthony, perhaps.

"Then why," cried Dolly, starting up and facing him, with crimson cheeks, "why did you call me your darling just now? You had no right to do it--no right, though you are my guardian, to say that--if you are going to say nothing more! If you want me, why don't you ask for me! Philip could, and Mr. Brune, and the other! I hate a coward. Why cannot you say, if--you--want me?"

There are men who have seen Deans in their shirt-sleeves, playing billiards. And there is one still living--chiefly on the fact--who once was last in a three-legged race in double harness with a Duke. So it is undeniable that great men do unbend at times to a surprising extent. But that the Archdeacon at the point of the story we have reached unbent in the manner much hinted at in Stirhampton, I shall ask no reader to believe. The more as the real facts which have been told fully explain the disorder of lace and neck-ribbon, the softness of eye, and crimson of cheek, which Granny noticed about the girl when she ran in upon her, all smiles and tears, knocking down the screen,

and hugging the little old lady into a state of deep alarm.

Which took, of course, the old direction. But the Archdeacon came upstairs in time to anticipate the usual question. "No," he said, putting his hand on the kneeling girl's head, "the balance is all right, Granny--except in years. There is a heavy overdraft of those against me."

"And I will honor it," said Dolly, gravely, and took his hand and kissed it. As for what followed--we had better put up Granny's screen again. This the man of system, who had no taste for jests? But then it is just possible that Dolly did not mean it for a jest. The curates? Mr. Philip Emerson, Mr. Brune, and Mr. Bigham? Indeed I cannot say what became of them. I should suppose they died prematurely of broken hearts. But the next time that I visit Deringham I will call at the Palace and ask the Bishop.

THE END.

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