A ROLLING STONE
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BY
CLARA CHEESEMAN

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CHAPTER I.

‘My lot hath long had little of my care;
But chafes my pride, thus baffled in the snare.
Is this my skill? my craft? to set at last
Hope, power, and life upon a single cast?’

The Corsair.

Mr. Philimore was a successful man. He had risen to the highest rank of his profession at a bound, escaping the various stages of trial and probation through which most men have to journey slowly and carefully before they can ever catch a glimpse of the gates of that palace where dwells the charming goddess with the wheel. But Mr. Philimore was clever, and cleverness rightly directed tends to economy of labour. He had not wasted his best years in trying to do something he disliked or could not understand. His parents, like those of many persons, had been laudably desirous that he should push himself into so-called openings in one or other of the professions, and as they had never considered the angularities of his character, were astonished when it was found that he would not exactly fit any of those openings. He was not to be moulded like a ball of wax either, so at last they let him alone, and he went to travel as secre-
tary to a great man who was benevolently allowing the uttermost ends of the earth to behold his greatness.

Travel—not the advantages of daily intercourse and communion with the great man—opened Mr. Philimore's eyes. He perceived, first of all, that great people abroad were greater by tenfold than they were at home. Then he discovered that genius and talent of the highest order were not equally distributed over the face of the globe. In some parts the illuminated elbowed one another, and were sorely pressed for want of breathing-room; in others—in newly settled or half-civilised countries, for example—they wandered singly, or were with difficulty to be found at all. Not that men are born without brains in those regions, but because those who are hewing farms out of the wilderness, founding cities, and building up a nation in all haste, have little time to consider whether Heaven has endowed them with genius. They know without consideration that hands have been given them, and that, as the work which lies before them demands the use of muscle rather than of brain, they must use those hands right manfully, or give place to other men. As for finer work, that may well be left to those people of leisure who shall come after them, and enter into the fruit of their labours.

But it has often been observed that people entertain the greatest respect for the qualities which they have not, and admire most that learning and that
culture to which they know full well they can lay no claim. And in all communities there are great numbers who desire nothing so much as to see or hear some new thing. To bring a bright light into a dark place is to dazzle the eyes and gladden the hearts of those who before were well pleased with their own obscurity. Mr. Philimore's idea was to enable those lights which were not needed at home, being in the way of other luminaries, to shine upon the unfortunates sitting in darkness, in remote colonies of the empire, or neglected corners of the earth. In other words, he constituted himself a purveyor of genius to America, India, the Australias, and, indeed, to any part where there was a demand for that valuable commodity.

It would not be easy to enumerate how many distinguished persons crossed the Atlantic under his guidance, or trusted themselves with him to the mercies of the broad Pacific. They were of all classes, of all kinds, and, as their agent soon found out, of all tempers. He was believed to know more than any other man living of the eccentricities and caprices of celebrated men and women, since most of those who had travelled—and who does not travel nowadays?—had been under his wing at one time or another. He had borne with much, poor little man! He had been annoyed by prima donnas who would not sing except according to their own sweet wills, he had had much to do with fiery-spirited actors and irascible novelists, with travellers
who were always tortured by an insatiable craving for notoriety, and with lecturers who could never rest from lecturing—in private as well as before the public. In fact, he had seen so much of the weaker side of the characters of these famous people, that it would not have been safe for him to be at large had he not been a very discreet man. He never betrayed any one who had been in his charge—great men or women might be as little as they liked in his company—the world they were posing for heard nothing thereof, and what mattered Philimore's opinions?—those were buried in his own bosom. If he had been capable of keeping a diary and maliciously exposing them to future generations by means of that abominable contrivance, then they might have feared him; but, thanks to an early sickening with much writing, Philimore was not to be suspected of writing anything less innocent in its nature than his own letters, or his account-books, which were models of all that bookkeeping should be. He had a clear head for matters of arithmetic; and, as his management was clever, and he only exported sound sterling talent, and would take out no failures, he made a fortune: nothing colossal, of course, but still one sufficiently large to stop the mouths of the elderly people who had prophesied his downfall and future poverty, because he would be neither lawyer, doctor, nor clergyman. And then he came home, and married a lady whom every one had said he never would or could marry,
because he had been violently repulsed by the whole of her kith and kin, and because, worse still, the lady herself had refused him thrice. But he had great faith in the virtues of perseverance, and he was not afraid to do many things which were called impossible, for he had learnt that nearly every difficulty is pronounced impossible by some person or other.

It was very easy for those who wanted to visit Mr. Philimore to find out where he lodged. From motives of policy, he went to the best hotel in every city he visited, and made himself as conspicuous as possible. Not that he cared so much about being seen, but a man who professes to be a conductor of genius must not bury his head in the sand. So Randall had no trouble in finding out where his former acquaintance abode, or in obtaining an interview. Mr. Philimore was one of those remarkable people who have time for their own affairs and other persons' as well. Randall was shown to his room at once.

The agent was reading the newspaper, while basking in the sunshine admitted by a large window from which the curtains were drawn tightly back, and the blind pulled up as far as it would go. He was small, and slim, and delicately fair, with a complexion like a young girl's, and a hand strangely white and small for a man's. There was nothing large about Mr. Philimore, except his eyes, which were too large, some people thought, and very bright
and piercing. His features were of the ordinary sort, which wear well, and seem to improve as one becomes better acquainted with the owner.

'Ah, good morning, Mr. ——' said the agent, jumping up from his chair with a vivacious alacrity that was characteristic of him. He stopped short, and his full gray eyes surveyed Randall from head to foot with a look of amazement. 'I really beg your pardon,' he said. 'I have been too hasty. I mistook you for another gentleman, an old friend of mine.'

'But are you sure I am not an old friend of yours?' asked Randall.

'I never saw you in my life before,' said Mr. Phillimore stiffly.

'And yet I have heard you say you never forgot a face,' said Randall, coming into the sunlight before the window. 'Will you tell me again that you do not know me?'

'No, I won't!' cried Mr. Phillimore, with a sudden change of countenance, and seizing the other's hand in both his own. 'Why, it is you, Randall!—the last man I should have expected to find here, and yet the second old friend I have discovered in this town. Well, I can't make that boast again of never forgetting a face, but there is some excuse for me—yours is not what it was ten or twelve years ago.'

'Yours hasn't altered in the least,' said Randall, laughing.

'No, and I haven't grown either, as you have
done since I saw you last. I am still "little Philimore!"
But whatever are you doing here? Living in the
old patriarchal style amongst your flocks and herds?
The idea of you taking to that sort of life!'

'My flocks and herds! Where are they, I
wonder? No, there never was any chance of that
sort of life for me. I am doing nothing at present.'

'Indeed,' said Philimore slowly. His eyes again
sought Randall's face, with a doubtful glance. If
there were one character especially abhorred by Mr.
Philimore, it was that of the man who did nothing.

Just then certain vague rumours which had
reached him long ago about the friend who was now
sitting beside him came back to his memory. By
putting these scattered pieces of information together,
and by eliminating all that seemed too improbable, a
process in which he was an adept, and which was
only the work of a few minutes, Mr. Philimore
arrived at a tolerably clear conception of the circum-
stances which had brought Randall to New Zealand.
He went on talking meanwhile in the same cordial
manner. He put no direct questions, but his remarks
were skilfully contrived to extract information.

'And so you are doing nothing?' he said at length.
'Would that I could know for a few weeks what it
is to do nothing!' This was not quite sincere.
Philimore would have fretted himself to death in a
fortnight of inactivity. 'I am stranded here alone,
now that poor Virchow is gone, and I am getting rid
of the rest of our company as peaceably as I can
His death has broken it up. They are all going, some one way and some another. I shall be off to Melbourne in a few days.'

'You are going, then, by the steamer next week?'

'Why should I stay here? I am no colonist. No, I go home again to make terms with some one who may wish to star it in Australasia. These colonies are our happy hunting grounds, and although —let me whisper it in your ear—I do not love musicians, nothing draws like music.'

'Nothing draws like music?' repeated Randall.

'Nothing equal to it, when it is really good, for, mind you, colonists are sharp in detecting shams. Those people who pack off inferior goods to the colonies, and think that there they will be taken for first-class, delude themselves. You were a musical prodigy in your youth. You might as well have cultivated that talent; the profession is a fine one.'

'I have cultivated it to some degree since I knew you,' said Randall. 'I came to speak to you about that.'

'Ah, it wasn't all for old acquaintance' sake,' cried Mr. Philimore, with a little grimace.

'I must confess it wasn't. It is best to be honest. Still I should have come in any case, and—I don't know whether I ought to say it or not, but because I have something to ask of you, I almost wish you were a stranger, not an old friend.'

'You must have curious views of friendship,' said Philimore, with a laugh, but he knew the real meaning of the other's words. It was never easy for you to
ask favours, he thought; you've had some trouble to bring yourself here for that purpose.

'You remember that I studied music?'

'I should think so. Most of us thought you were rather touched on that subject.'

'Perhaps I was. Do you believe I could have done what Virchow did while with you?'

'Why, of course, I know that when you were young you seemed to have an extraordinary talent for music, possibly as much as Virchow or other trained musicians would have at the same age. But what have you been doing since? You know, nothing rusts like talent when it lies unused.'

'I hope to show you that it hasn't rusted away. You think me over-confident or too bold. I don't ask you to believe in me all at once. Of course, I can't expect you to know that I am not foolishly boasting; but I know it. I feel that I have a right to say, all that Virchow did, I can do; and, if I were to give my whole time and thought to it again, do better.'

Mr. Philimore's eyes were larger and rounder than ever. 'Eh?' he said. 'You come to the point. Well, I'm glad to hear it. If you can do so much, you have the means ready to your hand of making your fortune. Do you want recommendations? I know many musicians, English and foreign. If I can help you, I will. I suppose you intend to go home to enter on your profession.'
'No,' said Randall. 'The only person I wish to be recommended to is yourself.'

'I am a nobody,' replied Philimore. 'What you want to do is to get at the public.'

'But I wish to get at them through you. I am going to be very bold. I shall surprise—perhaps offend you. You will say to yourself, "This man was once my schoolfellow, so he thinks he has a right to all that I can do for him." But if you think that, if you have the slightest suspicion that I am deceiving you, or presuming on our old friendship with a view to making something out of you, then I need not tell you what I have thought of.'

'Oh, no more in that strain, if you please,' said Philimore. 'I beg to say that I'm not quite so suspicious or niggardly as all that. But go on; say what you have to say.'

'I hardly know how to say it. I want to persuade you that you can find a successor to Virchow without going to the other side of the world to search for one. In plain words, I ask you to put me in his place; I have assurance enough to think that I can fill it. I don't know what terms you made with him; I should not dream of asking for the same. But if I succeed, you won't regret the choice, and in case of the other event, I will secure by some means that you shall lose nothing by me.'

Mr. Philimore leaned back in his chair, pushed the light hair away from his forehead, and seemed to
be watching the fluttering of a moth across the window-pane.

'Yes, this is all very well, Randall,' he said at length. 'I suppose I ought to be cruelly plain with you. I run a greater risk of offending you with my answer than you did in asking me.'

'No; I want you to say whatever you think, and I fancy I know what it will be.'

'Possibly; but you don't know what it is you wish to do. In the country place where I was born the rustics called it "putting the cart before the horse." From what I remember of you when you were only a boy, I am quite prepared to believe in the existence of your talent. I am no judge of music, however, and if you were to play to me on all kinds of instruments for a day at a time, I couldn't tell you whether your playing would please the public, which, of course, is the point we wish to come to. I'm not so certain of my own judgment as to fancy that I can take the initiative in any such case; all that I can do is to go with the multitude. When a man has made himself remarkable, notorious, famous, which you will, he is the man for my business. The world doesn't make many mistakes in these matters; I believe it picks out the best of us in the long run. You may be picked out some day; but I don't know whether it's wise to anticipate the decision. Some things can't be hurried.'

'Does not every one try to have it as quickly as possible?'
‘Oh, they try; but in nine cases out of ten they are obliged to wait all the same. You spoke of Virchow. You may be cleverer than he for all I know; but you can’t put yourself into his place at once. He was ten or fifteen years in advance of you. He had a European reputation. Everyone had heard of him; newspapers had written him up; he had played in almost every large city in the world, and royal personages had petted and patronised him, which goes a long way towards making a name for a man. There is everything in a name. When once a man has made himself famous, the thousands who, while he was poor and unknown, would have turned a deaf ear to him, if he had played as never man played before, at their doors every day, will rush to hear him, and even if he should lose his skill and produce discord instead of harmony, the senseless public will go on applauding him. If he should become very famous, he won’t be able to do wrong in the estimation of the multitude, no matter what execrable music he may give them. Of course, bubble reputations of that kind don’t outlast a lifetime—don’t last that always; but they are very glorious for a while. The question is not, can you do better than this or that person, but can you make other people think so. At present people don’t know of your existence. You might be more wonderful than Paganini, and yet be able to do nothing as long as you remained unknown.’

‘There are ways of becoming known, however.’
'Yes, and I don't know why you should not succeed in the profession you are thinking of; but not with a leap into fame as I'm afraid you imagine. Years—it will take years.'

'I am content to wait for that. I am not mad enough to dream of leaping into fame. But I mean to do this in the next four years—to gain such a position that I may have no need to fear for the future success of my enterprise. I may as well explain myself, though the idea can't be entertained. It need not have involved you in any way. I have a little of my own, enough to take me to Australia, and to provide for expenses for a short time. You are going home by that way. Our first venture might have been made there, and if it had failed you could have dropped me into obscurity again, and I should have looked for something else to do, with a better chance of finding it than in this country.'

There was silence. Mr. Philimore delayed to answer, but looked at his friend. That person rose from his seat; he was impatient to end the interview.

'Good morning,' he said unconcernedly. 'Thank you for being plain with me. You are right. I am in too great a hurry to be successful. I will see you again to say good-bye before you leave for Melbourne.'

Sometimes, by inspiration as it were, we may read another's thoughts. Just for an instant Mr.
Philimore saw into the other man's mind, saw that which the calm expression of the face and the composed manner were intended to hide, saw that his friend was humiliated and ashamed. He had stooped to beg a favour, and it had been withheld; he had forced himself to argue his own claims, and they had been coldly put aside. Oh, torment for a proud heart!

It was not generally supposed that the agent was of a very tender or sympathetic nature. Most people thought better of his head than his heart, because he was so cool in business, and because he had driven one or two hard bargains with intellectual sharpers who had tried to outwit him. But then he had known the sort of man he had to deal with. And just now his apprehension of things which generally escape notice was so quick, that he felt very uncomfortable. A curious feeling came over him; a feeling he was not accustomed to, and which was remarkably lively considering his habits and experience. In fact, I am not at all sure whether, if Mr. Philimore had been a woman, he would not have cried.

But, being one of those who are denied the relief of tears, he only took the hand which was offered to him in good-bye, and held it rather tightly, as if he would detain his friend.

'Did I tell you to go?' he asked. 'Do you think I meet an old schoolmate every day? I haven't done with you yet. I have stated the case
against you, but we haven't heard the pleading on the other side. You have more to tell me.'

'No. I have said enough.'

'Not by one half. You should have said, "Philimore, you remember that school, don't you—that den of wicked, mischievous youngsters, always on the look-out for some one to torment. You remember yourself, awkward, stupid, small in stature but a great dunce, plodding on amongst the little fellows when you were old enough to have known as much as any boy there. Poor and shabby, despised, scouted, sent to Coventry—amongst all those boys you'd only one friend. He was younger than you, but before you in everything—clever, rich, popular, a favourite with every one, masters and all. And he didn't laugh when others jeered at you; he took your part and helped your idle brain to do its tasks; he believed, or pretended to believe, that you weren't such a dolt after all.'"

A flush suddenly darkened the face of the other man. 'Why do you remind me of this? It is not worth remembering.'

'You remind me,' said Philimore. 'Not worth remembering, is it? I ought to know best. Well, never mind; you always hated fuss, and so do I. Don't go yet, or if you must, come again to-morrow and we'll settle the affair. I don't believe in talking of business in an unbusinesslike manner. Do you know?'—and his smile was irresistible, he had a most infectious smile—'I'm wavering. I've made
stranger bargains out of pure bravado because people said I couldn't succeed in them.'

'I will come to-morrow or any day you like, but not to talk of business, if by that you mean what we have discussed already. You have no faith in my scheme, I can see that; and do you think I will let you take it up for friendship's sake, just as if you owed me some immense debt and must pay it off?'

'I could laugh at you, Randall, if you weren't so serious. Your sensitiveness—a nasty sort of thing that; I've lost mine with knocking about the world—makes you bristle like a porcupine. Oh, no, if I do anything—mind that if! I've not promised—it will be out of malignity and spite, and so on. But come now, I'm going to introduce you to my wife, whom you will remember as Miss Hollis.'

'As Miss Hollis?'

'Yes, when you knew her it wasn't thought she would ever write her name Philimore. Myra!' he cried, going towards the door which opened into another room, 'here is some one whom you ought to remember.'

Mrs. Philimore greeted Randall very pleasantly. She was a little taller than Philimore, and she had the advantage of him in another respect, for though the agent was not handsome his wife most certainly was. As there was no reserve between these three, who had known each other when they were in their teens, she told the gentlemen, with a mischievous
laugh, that she had overheard some of their conversation.

'And though you are no judge of music, as you had the grace to acknowledge,' she said to her husband, 'please remember that I am. I feel certain that Mr. Randall's playing will please the public you talk so much of. I have not forgotten your music, Mr. Randall, and if you have that wonderful old violin yet I am sure your fortune is made.'

'There are two sanguine people in the room now,' said Philimore, 'and I believe I'm catching the complaint. Yes, Randall, I expect I shall have to "run" you, as our American cousins say.'
CHAPTER II.

'Where rose the mountains there to him were friends;
   Where rolled the ocean thereon was his home;
Where a blue sky and glowing clime extends
   He had the passion and the power to roam.'

*Childe Harold.*

There were other conferences with Mr. Philimore, and with Mrs. Philimore also, for she was generally present. Mrs. Philimore was the only person for whom Philimore would readily change an opinion. Anything warmly advocated by that lady was sure, sooner or later, to find some kind of a reception in his mind; although he might not approve of it, he would not oppose it. Mrs. Philimore had not only friendly remembrances of Randall—she had been much attached to his sister, and thus, she assured her husband, they were constrained by every feeling that can spring from the bond of old comradeship to do what they could for their friend. Meanwhile Philimore occupied himself with looking at the question from every point of view.

'It's impossible to tell how it might turn out,' he said. 'A good speculation might be made of the affair; stranger things have happened, but it's not safe to reckon on improbabilities.'
'You look at it in such a mercenary spirit,' said Mrs. Philimore.

'Precisely, Myra. What is the good of doing it on any but mercenary principles? If nothing can be made out of it, both Randall and I had better leave it alone. I don't want him to throw away the little money he has, any more than I wish to throw away my own to no purpose.'

'He is terribly poor, I suppose,' said Mrs. Philimore compassionately.

'Well, really he ought not to be so poor. No man ought who has a fair amount of ability. I wonder if he has ever done his best. Some of us have a way of working with a lukewarm sort of zeal, and then wondering why we don't get on.'

'He is sure to succeed in this if he will persevere,' said Mrs. Philimore. 'Every one said he was marvellous, even as a boy, and he has advanced more than I expected.'

This was after Randall had spent an evening with his friends, and at their request had played to them. Philimore had listened with the air of a critic, and (first premising that his opinion was of no value, as he could never understand music) had confessed that he thought Randall's style would be a popular one. 'You have animation,' he said, 'and that was where Virchow failed; he was often very flat and lifeless. I don't know, though, whether you are noisy enough. The public, as a whole, like bang
and crash. Concert music is an effective kind of uproar rather than melody.

'Oh, don't let us always be thinking of that tiresome public:' said Mrs. Philimore.

'We have to study it,' said Philimore, 'and I know nothing which pays better for study.'

By this time it was understood that Randall was to accompany them to Melbourne. Philimore professed to be glad to leave New Zealand. 'I've had bad luck here more than once,' he said. 'The finest time I ever had—I had Loftus with me, lecturing on his theory of the universe—was cut short by the appearance of Pabolovsky, a fire-eating, sword-swallowing, spirit-raising fellow, who called himself the great Russian necromancer. He was a Cockney, and a clever one in his way. I find that a great deal of foreign talent is born within the sound of Bow Bells. He spoilt our success; the people went to see his tricks, and my man, who had no wizardry about him, and only told them what he believed to be true, was left to lecture to empty benches.'

The passage down the New Zealand coast and to Australia was a fine one. It would have made no difference to the agent, however, had the weather been bad. 'Blow high, blow low,' he was always at his ease; he had never known the agonies of mal de mer. Had it been otherwise, perhaps he would not have prosecuted his enterprises in foreign countries with such boldness.
He was eminently sociable when travelling. It was part of his policy to make himself popular wherever he might be, and also not to allow the gifted being or beings under his charge to fall into that familiarity with the crowd which has destroyed many reputations. It was not to be suffered that public interest in such persons should wane and expire from people getting to know all about them before they had appeared in public. He gave Randall some hints on the subject.

'It doesn't matter much this time,' he said, 'for no one knows why you're going over, or that there is any connection between us; but should we travel together again I shall advise you to be more careful not to be intimate with the other passengers.'

'Why?'

'Well, it takes time to explain; but it's wisest to avoid close contact with the general public, if you wish them to esteem you.'

'That doesn't seem flattering advice,' said Randall, laughing. 'Evidently I cannot bear close inspection.'

'Nobody can. I had to be especially careful with Virchow, who had a natural propensity (alas! poor fellow) to associate with those whom he ought to have kept at a distance. I was worn out with watching him. If people only knew what poor stuff most of their idols are made of they'd be more likely to tear them from their shrines than to fall down before them. However admirable you might be, I'd
still say, keep all besides the few friends you know well at arm's length, if you wish to succeed in one of the higher or more conspicuous professions. By all means, Randall—and this is advice for the present—don't touch that piano; don't play a note.'

'I have not offended in that way yet, and have no desire; but again, why not?'

'One may have too much of the best of things, and when a talent is always being displayed, it is all the more likely to be depreciated. Some one will be picking holes in it, and pointing them out to others. Keep up your reputation, my dear fellow, by keeping it high above people's heads, not opposite their eyes. No member of your profession should be given to tinkling semi-privately. Let people go to his concerts if they want to hear him. They'll be disposed to praise what they've paid for. If he's always doing it in a gratuitous kind of way, they'll soon begin to despise him.'

'Then I'm not to play, but to keep myself as quiet as possible?'

'Most certainly. I am your agent; I do all the talking, and attend to all the drudgery of business. Consider that excellent man, the sum of whose good works was to stand on a pillar. He knew he would be a nobody amongst his fellow-creatures if he were to come down, and place himself in the ranks with them, shoulder to shoulder. Ah, he knew how to comport himself towards the public!'
'The public—always the public!' cried Mrs. Phillimore, in a tone of distress.

'We must talk of our business, Myra,' said Phillimore apologetically.

Phillimore followed out his tactics in the manner in which he entered the premier city of Australia. The newspapers heralded his approach; he always managed to be on friendly terms with the press, and he believed in advertising. He had been known to fill the smallest of towns with his bills and posters. He advertised his protege until that person almost blushed at the extravagance with which he was hurled at the public; but he kept him in the background. He must burst upon the expectant city like a meteor.

It was blazoned about, as soon as they had come to town, that Phillimore had with him a new light that was likely to surpass in brilliance all whom he had ever guided thither for the delectation of Australians. It was averred that he had mysteriously hinted as much. This was a remarkable thing; on all other occasions he had maintained a provoking as well as discreet silence respecting his charges. What he had said in this case was very little, and very uncertain in its nature: so much the better; it would bear magnifying, and it was magnified. That the musician was a man of whom no one had ever heard, and that Phillimore hardly allowed him to be seen, made people all the more curious. Those who had been so fortunate as to see him persuaded
themselves they had seen something out of the common way. His name was English; but no one believed he was English; it is a settled article of faith with many people that no Englishman can be a genius. By different voices he was declared to be of almost every nationality, till some one finally decided that he was of the Hebrew race. And Philimore would tell no one who he was, or whence he had come; but one thing was certain, he was no ordinary man, or the agent would not have brought him out. As Randall was aware, it was Philimore’s reputation, and not his own, which was likely to secure him a favourable reception.

The opening night came. He had waited for it with a feverish anxiety; he had prepared himself for it with a diligence that found no labour too great, and spurned the thought of weariness. He had thought too much of it, and had worked too unremittingly; so, as a natural result, it found him nervous and depressed. He believed that all depended on this first trial. Philimore, more sagaciously, said that first nights were not everything, and that a break-down was sometimes useful. Kind little Philimore! it was something better than mercenary principles which made him work so hard for his friend’s success.

‘You and Myra make too much of it,’ he said. ‘Even if it should be a regular fiasco, it won’t end everything. Take things coolly.’

Randall replied that he would, although conscious
that he was too excited for such advice to be of any use. As he waited for his time to go on the platform, he knew by the sounds of feet hurrying on the galleries and the stairs that the hall was filling fast. It was ridiculous, he knew, but he felt as if he could not play a note. He had often played in public before, at concerts, and twice or thrice at different musical festivals he had attended with his father. But then he had not been so insanely anxious to please as he was this night. It felt like making a plunge, as he stepped forward before all those expectant faces. All kinds of faces, every variety of expression, every type of humanity seemed to be represented in that house—and all were strangers. It was distracting to think that about fifteen hundred people were expecting that he should instantaneously produce something brilliant, strange, or delightful. What if he did not?

He was expected to begin, and he did not begin. What a silence! He had an irritating consciousness that a bland old gentleman and a bespectacled lady in the front seats were saying to each other that he was in a pitiable state of nervousness. He thought all the faces began to look colder; they were already disappointed, before he had struck a note. But suddenly he saw one face that he knew. Mrs. Philimore was looking directly at him, with an anxious, beseeching expression. If she had cried out, she could not have spoken plainer than her look told him, that another moment of irresolution and
he was lost. She actually smiled at him when he began to play.

And then, at once, his nervousness was gone. He saw no one, and it would have mattered less than nothing if the large hall had expanded to ten times its original size, and if ten times as many faces had ranged themselves within it, tier above tier. He felt that his hand was firm enough now, and that his face was hot and flushed. But he soon forgot himself altogether, and though the piece he played had been his study till he knew it note by note, for the first time he felt that he understood it. Hitherto he had played it as one who was repeating words spoken in a foreign language; but now it seemed as if it might have been his own, and its melody had come fresh to his imagination that very night.

Surely that fearful uproar was not meant for applause! He could see Mrs. Philimore again now; she was calmly smiling; had she not known how it would be? her look seemed to say. Philimore was far too sensible and cautious to keep his eye on Randall. If he had forebodings, no one knew of them. All through he had preserved a careless composure of manner which gave every one to understand that failures and break-downs entered not into his thoughts. But he had listened intently, and while the bland old gentleman in the front seat was shouting 'Encore' with an h to it, and while the bespectacled lady was wiping away her tears, he
found time to send a little note to Mrs. Philimore which contained one word—'Glorious!'

It was over at last. The musician was in his own room again, glad to be free of the glare of gas light and the noisy plaudits of his audience. This, then, was success. He had tasted it for the first time. When it has become a thing of everyday life; when he is wearied of loud acclamations, and disgusted with the adulation of a public that will not let its favourites have a private life,—then perhaps he will call it vulgar, common, mean; but now he is enthralled by it. To-night, as he listens to the warm praise of the friends who have made his cause their own, and as hope after hope which had been crushed down rises again, brighter, fairer than ever, he is so intoxicated with his happiness that he can scarcely believe in its reality. This is a wine the first draught of which steals away the senses; over those who drink deeply it has but little power. There are other triumphs in his way—greater ones than this—but none will ever be so dear.

But all this is only as the opening of a door. Night after night the crowd comes to hear him—not the same crowd, but one like it, only larger. The first night there had been some empty seats in the hall. It was hard to find a vacant place the second night; harder still—impossible—on the third. The public are here. They crush, crowd, squeeze, push one another; they submit to unheard-of inconveniences rather than be turned from the doors, and yet every
night hundreds are turned away. It is a rush such as Philimore has never known. The agent expands; he seems to grow; his face is nothing but a pair of large beaming eyes and a smile.

All Melbourne has heard Randall at last; but there is the country. There are the people amongst the mines, the sheep-runs, the farms, the vineyards. There are the villages that will be towns five years hence; the towns that will be cities in ten years' time. This is a country where distance is set at naught; from ten, twenty, thirty miles the people will come into the towns to hear him. Crowds again, but different from the Melbourne crowd. Shepherds and stockmen; miners and traders; squatters and free selectors jumbled together. No marvel if the squatters, some of them, have once been shepherds and shearers, and the shepherds have once been gentlemen—here, as much as in any other country, the battle is to the strong, and the weakest must go to the wall.

Many amongst these mixed audiences had once known him who now drew them from all quarters. They remembered him as a harmless person, a sort of wandering troubadour, industrious in so much that he earned his own living, and was chargeable to no one, but not content to sit down in one place, and wait for a fortune. He had charmed them even then with his music. Often when he had come at sunset to a homestead, and, according to the custom of the country, had been welcomed kindly, though
an unbidden guest, he had played to them for hours, whatever they could ask him, all the old, sweet tunes which had been woven into their memory long ago, in the home of their early life. They had not forgotten his songs, his stories of the mysterious deserts of the interior, many miles of which he had traversed on foot and oftentimes alone. Some of them recognised him, and came to say how pleased they were to find him in prosperity, they who had shown him friendship when he was poor. A generous people, they could not make too much of him. Philimore was dismayed; his charge was taken out of his hands. People would have him; would haul them both from house to house. They hardly knew how they broke away at last.

The agent's eye was already darting its glances far beyond the horizon. They had not yet exhausted the galaxy of Australian colonies. And after Australia, was there not India—America—the World? There was no country to which Philimore would not go if he saw his way clear to a profit. All countries were pretty much alike to him. Climate he cared nothing about, the peculiarities of different nations had been lessened in his eyes by much travelling, and, moreover, he was a consummate linguist. Those who maintain that the English do not readily master foreign languages say so because, in so many cases, languages are stupidly taught in English schools. Philimore's tutors had declared him to be hopelessly dull in the study of languages,
because he had hated his Greek and made Latin verses which were the horror of the masters and the derision of the whole school. But, in after life, he had managed to pick up such a knowledge of tongues as would have enabled him to acquit himself with credit at the building of Babel. He was a proud man on the day that an enraptured Frenchman rushed to embrace him, in the mistaken idea that he was greeting a compatriot. Though he had forgotten his school Latin he spoke good Italian, and, though the Greek of Homer had fled from his mind, he could haggle with any modern Greek, and deceive him too, with flattering words of his own tongue. And, if we mention that he had more than a slight acquaintance with three or four other languages, not omitting even Russ, that most disheartening of all, it should be granted that Mr. Philimore had been slandered when his teachers had called him dull.

So he was not slack in pointing out new openings and avenues, all leading to the goal he as well as Randall had in view. He had been much surprised at the sudden success of his friend. No one knew better than himself the time it takes to build up a reputation; no one knew better also how often heart-sickening disappointment and neglect fill up all but the last years of those who are striving for fortune and fame in some branch of art. Yet he had known instances also of men who had found a royal road to success. He considered that, without being so intended, Randall’s whole education had
fitted him for this, and that for years past he had been unconsciously learning the profession he had now adopted. Even now he seemed to study laboriously. He was not dazzled by his wonderful good fortune into believing that he could afford to be idle. He gave himself too little rest, his friends thought and said, and he would reply, there was no time for it. There was much to be done yet, and the hour-glass of time never stops running.

They went from city to city. The agent found no cause to regret his bargain, and his friend soon lost his morbid fear of a failure. Not that they met with no reverses, however. Sometimes an ebb tide would bear away their luck; sometimes they would come to a place where people were chary of spending money on sweet sounds only. But generally their sails did not flap idly against the mast, but were filled with the fair breezes of popularity. The musician grew to make a business of his art, and became habituated to applause and the giddy whirl of excitement. There was no pause—no rest in this life: once he had longed to 'get at' the public; now the public had captured him. But the months flow swiftly into years—it will soon be over.
CHAPTER III.

'So you from out my life have swept
One frail illusion, flower sweet.
If I am poorer for the loss,
You shall not know it when we meet.'

Mr. Everard Palmer's feeble health had been recruited by a sojourn of several months in the dry, warm climate of South Australia. He came home in such strength and health as was possible for a man of his weak constitution. One of his first duties, he thought, was to inquire into what had been done on his behalf; for neither Mrs. Palmer's letters, nor even those of the respected Gatherall and Sampson, who were bound to be as a lamp to guide him into ways that were lawful and honest, had been altogether satisfactory. 'It was no use troubling you about such things when you were so ill,' Mrs. Palmer said, in excuse for her shortcomings. Mr. Gatherall defended himself in much the same way.

'Your interests have not been neglected, my dear Mr. Palmer,' he sweetly remarked, 'as I am sure you will acknowledge.'

Mr. Palmer mildly assented, though it was not of
sins of omission that he had complained. He inquired after Randall. 'He behaved so well to my brother,' he said, 'that I should like to hear how he is getting on.'

The mention of his name seemed to affect Mr. Gatherall; he half closed his eyes and groaned. Mr. Sampson, who was an imitation of his partner, though a long way after him, mournfully sighed. Mr. Palmer asked the meaning of these manifestations of feeling—very unusual with his legal advisers, who as a rule stuck to business, and were not men of sentiment. Mr. Gatherall told the story, and Mr. Sampson acted the part of chorus, repeating such words as were, in his opinion, particularly choice and expressive. Mr. Gatherall also showed the letter of good advice he had sent to Randall, and the very ungrateful reply he had received.

'This is the letter of an angry man, certainly,' said Mr. Everard, when Mr. Gatherall had proclaimed it to be 'insulting.' 'But I think, supposing he was innocent—we may as well give him the benefit of the doubt—it is just such a letter as I should have written if I had been in his place.'

'Indeed,' said Mr. Gatherall, at a loss what to think of this speech. 'For all that, and with all deference to your opinion, I think I shall not try to find Mr. Randall: indeed I believe he has left the country. I was told he had gone to Melbourne. He may do well there.'

Mrs. Palmer gave a garbled account of the same
affair. She saw, however, that her husband was displeased at the way in which Randall had been treated, and did not dare to say much in excuse of it. Besides, it was an unpleasant subject; it was nearly concerned with that secret which she had endeavoured to hide where it could never be found, but which, so her fearful heart told her now, would yet come to light. She was not sure that Palmer's last letter to his brother might not be found again. When she had brought it away from the house she had also taken another, which had been written by her husband's mother, and which therefore she had thought he would wish to preserve. She imagined that she had put this letter amongst Mr. Everard's papers. But a little circumstance which came to her recollection shortly afterwards convinced her that she had made a serious mistake. Palmer's letter had been written on blue paper; the other was on white. As with a sudden flash, she remembered how she had stood for a moment, and watched a folded piece of white paper shrivelling in the flame. Why had she forgotten then that it ought to have been blue? She had destroyed the wrong letter, and the other one was now in her husband's possession though he did not know it.

She searched for it, but never found it. Mr. Everard had rearranged all his papers shortly after his return; it was hardly possible to conjecture where it had been placed. It had no envelope, but was folded with the writing inside; he might easily
mistake it for something else. It might remain in his room for years and never attract his notice, and again any day he might open it and see what it was. Then, she believed, she would be degraded in his eyes. She knew his character; weak though it might be in some respects, it was steadfast in its abhorrence of every species of deceit and dishonesty. 'Oh!' she thought, 'I shall be the most miserable of women if he finds it out. I have nothing to care for but his good opinion, and I know what he would think if he knew all.'

Again and again she was on the point of throwing herself on his compassion, and confessing everything. But the words seemed to choke her; her trembling lips refused to pronounce them. While she believed it could never be known, her fault had been a little thing, a trifle; now that there was a chance of its being found out it seemed enormous. To her this had been no sin so long as it could not shame her in the eyes of others. Whom had she harmed, she asked herself, by keeping back the letter? Oh, no one! no one but herself; for surely, as soon as her husband knew, what little respect her conduct had not destroyed, whatever affection he might have for her, would be utterly lost.

Such harassing thoughts as these were sometimes driven from her mind by another trouble. Violet's conduct made her unhappy. Mrs. Palmer was more than ever anxious that her daughter should be married out of the way; but the engagement, which
had already lasted so long was, so far as she could see, no more likely to attain this desired end than it had been for the last two years. Delayed and postponed from one time to another as it was, Mrs. Palmer began to fear, what other people had long ago foreseen, that the marriage never would take place. Violet hardly deigned to give a reason for the postponements she had begged for. Mrs. Palmer grew tired of remonstrating with her on this subject; but at length she spoke to her again.

'Violet,' she said, 'I was married when I was your age.'

'So I believe were many other people,' said Violet; 'but I know some who are twice as old and are not married yet.'

'I don't think you are behaving nicely to Mr. Wishart. When he spoke to you a month ago, and seemed to wish that the wedding should be this spring, you ought to have given way, not to have put him off again. This is the third put-off, Violet, since you left school, and if it's an engagement at all I think it ought to come to something. You can't expect him, at his age, to wait years for you.'

'At his age—yes, he really is frightfully old, compared to me,' laughed Violet. 'I believe his hair is actually turning gray. I don't suppose mine ever will; there is too much yellow in it. Only think! persons will be taking him for my grandfather, or something of the kind, when we go about together.'
'You are a bad girl to talk like that,' said Mrs. Palmer angrily. 'I shall speak to Mr. Wishart myself.'

'Mamma,' said Violet, abandoning the careless flippancy of her manner, 'if you do you will put an end to everything between me and Mr. Wishart.'

'Violet, do you know what you are saying? Do you mean to put it off and off for ever?'

'I don't know,' said Violet sullenly. 'I know one thing, though—that Mr. Holmsby is coming to the door, and if I were you I'd change that dress.'

'I needn't come in, need I, if you are here?' said Mrs. Palmer piteously. 'I am too tired to dress, and I don't feel well. I will go and lie down, if you don't mind. He comes to see you, not me; but I think he ought not to be here so often. It does not look proper, and people say such ill-natured things. Mr. Wishart might hear them.'

'Oh, perhaps he has heard,' said Violet, with a little laugh.

Mr. Wishart heard nothing; but something came to the ears of sleepy, novel-reading Mrs. Meade, and aroused her to an unusual state of indignation. She had always thought of the engagement between Violet and her brother as 'ridiculous.' She had only feeble dislikes and affections; in most cases she was too lazy to consider whether she liked a person or not; but there was little love lost between her and Violet. She knew that Violet made fun of her openly, and she saw through most of the young
lady's little shams. But, having made up her mind to receive her as a sister-in-law, she was vexed at the unreasonable prolongation of the engagement. If they were to be married at all it would look better to have it over at once. That Violet was an incorrigible flirt every one knew. People had become used to her naughtinesses and smiled at them; she had such a charming way of doing what was not exactly right. Mrs. Meade could not smile at the stories she had heard of her. She read the same things in her novels about interesting and vivacious heroines who were always impulsively rushing into dreadful predicaments and coming out of them again none the worse; but however much it might interest her in a book, in real life she thought such conduct very improper. She resolved to speak to Violet in a kind, motherly way. But cunning little Violet would not allow herself to be advised. Every attempt at serious conversation was skilfully turned aside with some light, airy remark. Mrs. Meade could only sorrow in silence over her frivolity and Mr. Wishart's blindness. He saw nothing in all this but the natural exuberance of youth and high spirits.

'Dance from night to morning, does she?' he said. 'Why, when I was twenty, I danced so much and went to so many parties that I was thought the most rattle-brained youth in the whole country side. And you, may I ask, did you never waltz a little oftener with some one or other, or dress a
little smarter than the old dowagers thought be-
coming?"

'Ah, I see it is no use talking,' said Mrs. Meade
resignedly.

She thought out a little scheme. She would
ask both Violet and her mother to stay with them
for a short time, and she would get Mrs. Palmer
on her side. Between them they ought to be able
to curb this little coquette.

Mrs. Palmer was much flattered by the invitation;
she went from home but seldom. She thought
deeply on the subject of dress, and took refuge in
that salvation of women who have not learnt how
to attire themselves—a black silk. The carriage
was waiting for her and Violet at the station, and
it seemed so luxurious and delightful to have a
drive of several miles—the vehicle Mrs. Palmer was
best acquainted with was an omnibus. Violet, of
course, was used to better things, and was vexed
that her mother should say aloud that 'it was such
a treat to ride in a carriage;' the servant might
have heard. Mrs. Palmer being snubbed, subsided
among the cushions. She admired the house, and
the large well-kept garden and shrubberies. 'What
a lovely place!' she cried. 'Oh, Vi, you ought to
be a happy girl to think that you'll be mistress here
some day.'

Violet did not hear; she was looking at a group
on the verandah who were watching their approach.
These were Maud and Mrs. Meade and two gentle-
men. 'Oh, I believe,' she said hastily, 'that is Mr. Holmsby.'

'Is it?' said Mrs. Palmer, with an uninterested look. 'I did not know he was friendly with Mr. Wishart.'

'Yes; they knew his family in England. Mamma, do put your veil down; it does not suit you drawn away from the face like that.'

'Don't pull me about, my dear,' said Mrs. Palmer meekly, feeling that it was a trial to have a daughter who knew how things ought to be done.

Mrs. Meade was extremely annoyed because Mr. Holmsby had come, just when it was most undesirable that he should present himself. She suspected him of having intrigued for an invitation until he had extracted one from Mr. Wishart's good nature. She believed he had known Violet was coming; but she made solemn vows that all his crafty ways should not avail him.

During that week she forswore novel-reading, and displayed a mental activity so preternatural in one of her temperament that her brother was filled with silent wonder at the change. Never had she exerted herself so much in conversation, and she was so kind to Mr. Holmsby as to bestow most of her words upon him; indeed it seemed as if she wanted to begin a dialogue with him whenever he attempted to talk with Violet, which was nearly every time he opened his mouth. Poor fellow, if he expected to have any nice confidential talks with
that young lady while Mrs. Meade was in the same house he was very much mistaken. At dinner there was always the whole length of the table between them; it was very seldom that he found a vacant chair beside her in the drawing-room, or if he did, he was soon ousted from it by her vigilant duenna, on some pretext or other. He could not walk with her, because Mrs. Meade always wanted to walk with him; he could not ride with her but he must ride with Mrs. Meade as well. That unselfish woman would sacrifice her personal comfort rather than fail in her duty. For seven years she had not been on horseback; she was afraid of any horse which was not so broken-spirited as to be above suspicion. But sooner than Violet and Mr. Holmsby should ride alone (for Violet, alas!—so she lamented to herself—did not know better than that) she would accompany them wherever they might go, and keep their pace, cost what it might. She was as tenacious as any leech. Mr. Holmsby, who was warm-tempered, had such a heartful of disappointment, vexation, and resentment, that he could not always behave so politely to his hostess as he should have done. He had a savage pleasure in knowing that she was inexpressibly worried and fatigued.

But, in adopting these extreme measures, Mrs. Meade over-reached herself. At last Mr. Holmsby was exasperated to recklessness, and Violet retaliated by taking advantage of her chaperon on every
opportunity. Do what she would, Violet eluded her surveillance and behaved very much as she pleased; consequently in a manner that shocked Mrs. Meade and caused poor Mrs. Palmer to cry quietly to herself in obscure corners of the drawing-room, or in her own bedchamber when she was very much distressed.

Mrs. Meade had fancied that by means of Mrs. Palmer's influence Violet might be brought to her senses. But she very quickly made the discovery that Mrs. Palmer had no influence whatever over her daughter. Finding that their efforts were of little use, or only served to make matters worse, the two elderly ladies united in wishing that the impressionable Mr. Holmsby would betake himself to some other part of the country. Mrs. Meade even told him that he ought to see more of New Zealand, and that it was just the season of the year in which travelling was most enjoyable; but he replied that he was in no hurry, and that he had not exhausted the place where he was.

'I believe he sees no harm in it!' cried Mrs. Meade impatiently.

'If he doesn't, Violet knows it's wrong,' said Mrs. Palmer. 'But she was always a provoking little thing; she likes to tease one. I think, Mrs. Meade, it's a pity to trouble yourself about the foolish young things. What good can we do? I've spoken to Violet till I'm tired.'

'I've a good mind to astonish them by speaking
out in a manner they won't like,' said Mrs. Meade, with a sudden flash of energy. She frowned disapprobation at Mr. Holmsby, who was turning over the pages of Violet's music. She got him away from the piano by asking him to wind a skein of cotton in such a state of entanglement that she computed it could not be unravelled in less than half an hour. But Mr. Holmsby, like Alexander, cut all the Gordian knots in his way, declaring that it was useless to attempt to untie them, and in five minutes the skein was transformed into a neatly-wound ball. She tried to detain him, and started many promising topics of conversation; but he was looking out of the window the whole time, and his answers plainly betokened his absent-mindedness. Then Harry ran in with a used-up whip in his hand. 'Please, Mr. Holmsby,' he cried, 'come and mend this.'

Mr. Holmsby was not fond of children, and had not encouraged Harry's advances; but he was glad to seize this opportunity. 'I'll mend it in a second,' he said, though he had no idea how it could be done. As might have been expected he mended it in the garden, where Violet was wandering about. But he found it easier to mend the whip than to get rid of Harry when the work was done.

'What a nuisance spoilt children are,' he reflected. 'I say, Harry, suppose you run down to the creek, and shoot at the birds with your catapult.'

'I haven't got a catapult,' said Harry, 'Aunt
Maud took it from me; she said it was cruel to shoot little birds; so now I’ve to throw stones at them, and it’s not such good fun.’

‘Cruel—bosh!’ said Mr. Holmsby. ‘I used to shoot scores, and get the eggs too.’

‘Let’s go and get some eggs now,’ proposed Harry.

‘Oh, too much bother—too hot,’ said the gentleman. ‘If I were you I’d go inside and look at pictures.’

‘I will, if you’ll show me them,’ said Harry, of which remark Mr. Holmsby took no notice.

Harry cracked his whip seven or eight times inconveniently near to his companion, and then, in a confidential manner, said, ‘I say, Mr. Holmsby, what makes Mrs. Meade so cross with you?’

‘Oh, I don’t know,’ said Mr. Holmsby, with a stare. ‘Perhaps she isn’t cross.’

‘Yes, she is, because she looks cross at you, and last night when I went to say good night to her, she said to Mrs. Palmer that you ought to be ashamed of yourself, and you weren’t doing anything wrong, only walking on the verandah and talking.’

‘Look here, little fellow,’ said Mr. Holmsby, with dignity, ‘don’t you repeat everything you hear. It doesn’t do for little boys to talk of things they don’t understand.’

‘I’m not such a very little boy,’ said Harry. But had you been doing wrong?’

‘Don’t care if I had,’ said Mr. Holmsby, ‘and you
can repeat that to Mrs. Meade, if you like, Master Harry.'

'Mrs. Grigsby whipped me once when I said I didn't care,' said Harry reflectively.

'She ought to whip you oftener,' returned Mr. Holmsby, and, to his great pleasure, this speech was so offensive to Harry that he instantly left him. Perhaps he would not have been so pleased had he known that Harry's next action was to go to Mrs. Meade and report exactly what had been said, and what he, the much-watched Mr. Holmsby, was doing. Harry's sharpness made him very disagreeable to the persons concerned in the little comedy he was studying with all a child's eager interest. It annoyed Mrs. Meade to have him rushing in every now and then with, 'Aunt, don't you want to know where Mr. Holmsby is?' or, 'Aunt, Mr. Holmsby has gone down to the boathouse with Miss Palmer. I said you wouldn't like it;' or, as it was at last, 'Aunt, I told Mr. Holmsby he ought to come in, because you wanted him, and I think he said he wouldn't; but he didn't speak plain.' This being the culminating point, Mrs. Meade took Harry's hand and led him away to another room, where, after a severe lecture, she left him to occupy his too active mind with a whole column of his spelling-book.

She was reading the last sentence of Tancred, which, as will be remembered, breaks off when the Duke and Duchess arrive at Jerusalem, just as Tancred has made himself comfortable in the Holy
City. Her ears, being now open to sounds of earth, began to be aware of two voices which assuredly spoke not of Jerusalem nor of anything connected therewith.

'I don't mean to be tutored and driven about as if I were a child,' said one voice. 'I don't see why we should be afraid of these people.'

'Oh; but how are we to tell them; what will they think of me?' said the other.

'Well, does it matter what they think? Of course we shan't stay here, Violet. I daresay my people at home will be a little restive; but they are sure to be reconciled to it when they see you. As for my father, I expect he won't be pleased, but I can tell you I wasn't pleased when he took it into his head to marry again, and he never consulted me about that. Perhaps he'll cut off my allowance; if he does, I shall have to go at my profession in earnest, that's all. It won't matter much anyway, for I'm to have my grandmother's property; and though I wouldn't have you think that I wish the dear old lady's days shortened, in the natural course of things you know that must come into my hands soon, and then, Vi, we can afford to laugh at them all.'

Mrs. Meade almost groaned in her retreat beside the open window. 'If I were your grandmother,' she said, 'I'd cut you off with a penny.'

'Oh,' said a low voice which faltered a little, 'such horrid things will be said of me. I can see what Mrs. Meade thinks of me already.'
‘Mrs. Meade is a nuisance—a meddling, novel-reading old woman!’ The voice that said this was quite a loud one; but it gradually sank to pianissimo, and employed itself in consoling the owner of the other voice, and in proving by very specious arguments that a certain course was the right one to take. Then was heard, in broken sentences: ‘Oh, it'll all come right. Why shouldn't we please ourselves? Ridiculous to expect you to carry out a thing of that kind, arranged for you when you were a child—ought to have known better—serve them right. If you're afraid of Mrs. Meade I'm not—don't see why we should go in just yet.’

Mrs. Meade could bear it no longer. ‘Violet!’ she cried, in a voice pitched so high it sounded like a scream. ‘I must insist on your coming inside; you take cold so easily, my dear. Mr. Holmsby, I hope you will catch cold to punish you for being so careless.’ She was very sincere in this wish.

‘Oh, I'm proof against colds,’ carelessly answered Mr. Holmsby. ‘The evening is quite balmy. You should come out yourself, Mrs. Meade.’

Mrs. Meade leaned over to Mrs. Palmer, who was sitting near her, and whispered, ‘Did you hear anything?’

‘Everything,’ was the reply. ‘Oh, that Violet! she breaks my heart. I shall take her home to-morrow. Does Mr. Wishart——’

‘Not he!’ said Mrs. Meade. ‘Algy is still in his blindness. I believe he's so used to seeing Violet
noticed and admired that even the infatuation of this silly young man only seems a thing of course to him. He laughs at me when I say anything.'

Mrs. Meade sighed, and returned to her novels. It was much pleasanter to study life by means of these than to go to the fountain-head and perplex herself with the actions and motives of incomprensible men and women.

Mrs. Palmer went home wearied and dispirited. She was angry with Violet, and for some days hardly a word passed between the mother and daughter. This could not last with two persons who were both of that shallow nature which must pour forth all its feelings or be crushed by them.

Mrs. Palmer began to reason with and entreat her daughter.

'You mustn't throw away all your prospects in life,' she said. 'Think of your father and me, how we've looked forward to your marriage. And, Violet,' she added, with a smile, 'I don't know whether I ought to tell; but Miss Desmond wishes to give your wedding-dress: she persuaded me to let her do so. It's to be beautifully made, and to cost, I don't know how much; but we've nothing to do with that.'

'It is very kind of them to arrange everything for me, even to choosing my wedding-dress; but I don't think it will be of much use. I shall not wear it.'

'Not wear it! Why, Violet, don't you see how good they are? How could you have dressed so
well, and gone into society, if Mr. Wishart hadn't educated you, and given you everything suitable for a lady. If you'd had no more than we could have spared you would always have been plain and shabby like the other children.'

'I think I'd better tell you at once,' said Violet, in a voice strangely altered from its usual soft tones. 'This can't go on any longer. I have written to Mr. Wishart and told him.'

Mrs. Palmer excitedly threw up her hands, and burst out into passionate sobbing and crying. 'Violet—oh, my girl, you are crazed! How can you behave like that after all he has done for us? You don't know what we owe to him. Aren't you ashamed—don't you blush for yourself—all these years you've been dependent on him, and—why! even the clothes you have on were bought with his money.'

'Yes, I have the grace to be ashamed,' said Violet; 'but you made that bargain, not I. I have been bought with presents and fine clothes, you think, and I am to marry him out of gratitude.'

'I thought you were so pleased with it till just lately,' sobbed Mrs. Palmer.

'I suppose I was for a time,' said Violet. 'Oh yes, it seemed very nice at first, and the girls at school thought I was to be envied because I should be married, and be rich, and have a house of my own, as soon as I pleased. But I have changed my mind.'

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Yes, some one else has made you change it,' said Mrs. Palmer. 'It is Mr. Holmsby, isn't it? I don't want to make you angry, but I have a right to know.'

'I would rather not be questioned, if you please,' answered her daughter.

'I won't hear of it, Violet. Remember he has nothing but what his father gives him, and you oughtn't to marry a poor man—your habits are too expensive.'

'I have no intention of marrying a poor man,' said Violet. 'Don't be afraid of that. I am satisfied with what I have seen of poverty in your house, mamma. Mr. Holmsby will be rich some day,' she added, thrown off her guard.

'Then it is him!' cried Mrs. Palmer. 'Violet, you bad, wicked girl! I shall never be able to look Mr. Wishart or any one belonging to him in the face again.'

Violet turned away impatiently. 'Don't be violent, please,' she said; 'don't let us have a scene.'

'It will break your father's heart,' said Mrs. Palmer.

'Poor papa!' said Violet. She seemed softened, and a tear stole into her eye. 'But, no; it won't break his heart; he was against it; he would not have bound me in that way if it hadn't been for you.'

'Oh, I did it for the best!' Mrs. Palmer said, in a choked voice. 'Oh, poor Mr. Wishart!'
'And I'm doing this for the best,' rejoined Violet; 'and let me assure you of one thing, my dear mother, that it won't break Mr. Wishart's heart; so you need not sorrow for him.'

She flitted out of the room on tiptoe, as was her habit, and her mother looked after her with eyes dimmed with tears. She could not help contrasting herself with her daughter. Her own dress was coarse and plain, and soiled with work; her hands were brown and rough; her light hair, as beautiful and abundant as Violet's, was untidily twisted up under a cap of rusty black lace. She had had no time to dress, she told herself, since the first toilet made at six that morning, when Violet's rosy face was still resting on her pillow. She had nearly everything to do now; for she had lost that invaluable Rosa, and the house had returned to its former state. She also had gone back; the orderly ways that her young housekeeper had led her into had been soon given up. Again had she become the ill-dressed drudge who worked harder than her own maid-of-all-work. And her daughter, so graceful, so ladylike, Mrs. Palmer said, in her pretty cambric morning dress. How many hours had her mother spent in ironing those cambric dresses! How often had she worked when she felt tired and unwell lest Violet's white hands should be spoiled, or lest she should not have sufficient time for her ladylike accomplishments or her visitings! She cried more and more as she thought of these things, till at last, ashamed
of her swollen eyes and flushed face, she went into
the fresh air to recover herself.

Mrs. Palmer was afraid that when her husband
knew what had happened, he would say, as Violet
had said, that but for her the engagement now
broken would never have been made. But Mr.
Everard was incapable of making such a remark.
He had never been guilty of the meanness of seeking
to cover his own faults with those of another person.
He was deeply grieved, but he was not angry with
any one; experience had taught him the uselessness
of anger. He spoke very gently to Violet, and he
did not encourage Mrs. Palmer in the passionate
upbraidings with which she inveighed against her
daughter, herself, and even Mr. Wishart.

'Ve have all done wrong,' she cried; 'but it is
his own fault, Everard; he allowed the marriage to
be put off and off on the slightest excuse. If I had
done as I ought, and insisted on its taking place
when Violet was eighteen, as was settled at first,
this wouldn't have happened.'

'Surely, Alice, we were not going to force our
daughter into a marriage she disliked? I never
dreamed till now that she wished to break the
engagement or it should not have lasted so
long.'

'You see nothing, Everard—you take so little
notice of your family,' replied Mrs. Palmer, with a
pettyish turn of the head. 'It is only that Mr.
Holmsby, and very likely he means nothing. Oh,
I'm miserable! other women haven't such trouble with their daughters.'

'I'm afraid we haven't done well by our daughter,' said Mr. Everard sadly. He crept away quietly in his slippers, coughing as he went down the draughty passage to his room, where he shut himself in with his books and microscope.

Mr. Wishart answered Violet's letter in person. He held that if a thing could be written it could be spoken far better, unless people were foolishly afraid of plain common sense. Violet could not detect any change in him; he spoke to her as kindly as ever, and in the same old manner which both had grown used to. It seemed even more indulgent, as if he were talking to the child of eight or nine years ago. It is doubtful whether he had ever ceased to think of this little Violet, whose head even now did not reach to his shoulder, otherwise than as a winsome but spoilt child, whom only a hard, sour-tempered person could hold accountable, or chide for her freaks and caprices.

'What's amiss?' he said, looking at her face. 'I never saw you so pale. This won't do, Miss Violet; you are to come for a drive with me. I am not going away without you.'

He would listen to no excuse; so she complied unwillingly: for the first time she felt shy and uncomfortable in his company. When they were driving he talked of almost everything except the subject that was uppermost in her thoughts, and
most likely in his as well. His gaiety seemed natural enough; he made all sorts of absurd jokes and startling assertions, as it seemed, merely for the pleasure of seeing her smile at them. But not one word of what she had written to him about. For a time she forgot it herself, and with a sudden reaction her spirits rose as high as his own appeared to be. It was strange that then he should become silent and thoughtful in his turn. When they were coming home, all at once, she perceived that he was going to speak on the subject that hitherto had been avoided, and she felt frightened and nervous immediately.

'So you were afraid to tell me sooner, Violet,' he said. 'I did not know any one was afraid of me. Why, all my life I have had so little dignity that people have been accustomed to tell me their minds pretty freely. I'm bullied by my own gardener, and my servants generally do as they please. One word of Maud's goes as far as ten of mine. Why should you be afraid of me? no one else is.'

'I was ashamed,' she said; and she felt too much so just then to meet his eye.

'Poor little girl!' he said. 'Never mind, you won't be bored by a prosy old fellow like me any more. I ought to have known long ago. We're a little selfish, we middle-aged people; we think ourselves so interesting to every one, so estimable, and I'm not sure whether we don't think ourselves always young as well. It was right of you to tell me, Violet, for I was not likely to find it out.'
'Oh! why don't you say what you really think?' she exclaimed, with an earnestness she seldom showed. 'You know I've done wrong. Why don't you say, like other people, that I've been ungrateful and selfish? You've been too good to me from the beginning; you have given me everything.'

'Oh, hush! if you please,' said Mr. Wishart. 'I can't listen to anything about such ugly subjects as ingratitude and selfishness. Whoever thought of them? As for what other people say—well, it really does not pay to be always listening to them and treasuring up their words.'

'But when one knows it's true,' said Violet, and her voice trembled. 'I know what they will say of me.'

Perhaps they'll say something about me as well,' said Mr. Wishart, assuming a rueful expression. 'I expect they'll say "Serve him right, stupid old fellow!" But'—and he smiled at her—'if they say anything about you, Vi, that comes to my hearing, I think they'd better look to themselves.'

'Then,' she said, feeling the kindness of his manner too much for her, 'you really are not angry with me? I thought you would despise me.' She was on the point of bursting into tears. Had he been displeased with her she could have preserved her calmness, and answered him with the same cool ease which she had opposed to her mother's passionate reproaches. But his forbearance touched what little heart she had.
'Angry with you! Was I ever angry with you?'

She did not answer. In that moment there passed through her mind memory after memory of his constant kindness and care. Perhaps, as her mother had said, she was throwing her best chance away. But that worldly little heart of hers had not much room to spare for such feelings. It had been filled with other fancies lately, dazzling visions of a rich luxurious home, of success in London society, of being something there—a fashionable beauty perhaps; to be flattered, followed, and imitated by the crowd. Mr. Holmsby had painted all this in brilliant colours. How dull the even level of colonial life seemed in comparison! Could she have endured for a week the quietness of that country house which had so nearly been hers? Could she have entered into the way of life to which he had been accustomed for so long that the idea of change or variety in it never came into his mind? She had taken off her glove, and her eye fell on the ring which he had given her years ago, and which she still wore.

'I ought to return this to you,' she said, in a low voice.

'No,' he replied, 'not now, nor at any other time, if you wish to please me in one little thing. Do not return anything I have given you.'

The carriage stopped. 'Good-bye,' she said, as she gave him her hand in farewell. 'I never knew till now how good and kind you are.'
'Good-bye, little Violet,' he answered. He was accustomed to call her 'little Violet'; and when in future he spoke of her it was most often as 'little Violet,' even years afterwards, when he was undoubtedly an old man, and those dreadful 'other people' had forgotten all about his romantic scheme of training up a wife for himself.
CHAPTER IV.

'I have a silent sorrow here
A grief I'll ne'er impart,
It breathes no sigh, it sheds no tear,
But it consumes my heart.'

Need we say that Mr. and Mrs. Palmer gave away their daughter in marriage ere long, but to another person than they had dreamed of in days gone by? Or need it be told how Mr. and Mrs. Holmsby made haste to escape from the colonial society so much in want of 'tone;' and how Mr. Holmsby unblushingly presented himself and his bride at the parental habitation? There were scenes between him and his father which had better be veiled. For the space of nine months the house of Holmsby was divided against itself. It is extremely difficult to say what would have become of Mr. Holmsby if his stepmother had not been on his side. Although she was a nice young lady about his own age, he had always disliked her, had behaved ill to her, and had been angry with his father for bringing her into the family. Now, when he was in disgrace, her conduct ought to have made him feel as if a fiery circlet of red-hot coals had been set upon his head. She and his
youngest sister were for him; the other members of the family ranged themselves under the elder Mr. Holmsby's banner, and the tide of party warfare ran high—so high as to engulf Holmsby junior's allowance, and to compel him to work, for the first time in his life. But at length a flag of truce, in the person of the kind-hearted stepmother, visited the offending pair, and made overtures of reconciliation. Mr. Holmsby did inherit his maternal grandmother's property in course of time, though the 'dear old lady' lived to be ninety, and her grandson had learned the value of money long before hers came into his hand. And he and Violet finally succeeded in becoming lights of London society—whether lesser luminaries or stars of the first magnitude we have never been able to discover. It may be said, however, that they are well pleased with the social distinction they have obtained. Colonial days and things have grown faint in Violet's remembrance; she only thinks of them with a pitying wonder at herself for having once found so much satisfaction in their insignificance. Mr. Holmsby always speaks of the 'colonies' (meaning by this the country which was so fortunate as to possess him for a year or two,) with lofty patronage. He has written a book on New Zealand.

Mrs. Palmer consoled herself by degrees for her daughter's disobedience—far more easily than her husband, who had been disappointed in his favourite child. But Mrs. Palmer's greater trouble pressed upon her so heavily that all others seemed trifling
annoyances. Unaccustomed to serious thought; unable even before this time to conceal a matter that agitated or distressed her, she had brooded over this until it had become a torture. The dread of discovery would return to her with such force that at intervals she would renew her search amongst her husband's papers for the letter. It was only by stealth she could do this, and while so occupied her ears would be nervously sensitive to the slightest sound which might betoken an approaching footstep, and often she would turn with a start, fancying that some one was looking over her shoulder. And although she was perpetually thinking of new places in which it might lie concealed, or of different ways in which it might have escaped her notice, it was never to be found.

It was growing late one day, and Mr. Everard, for a wonder, was from home, and knowing this, Mrs. Palmer had once again gone into his room. Oh, how wearily she went through the same hopeless search! There were drawers of papers, boxes and shelves full of them. Poor Mr. Everard! he was always writing something; he had written enough to make many volumes of printed matter; only no one, least of all himself, had thought of printing it. It was only for his own delectation, all this immense quantity of manuscript, and most of it related to the studies he quietly pursued in his little room. Very likely most of it had been written before much better by some one else, or very likely there was no need
that it should be written at all; but what matter?—it had been occupation and pleasure to a man not able to do much else, and with little enough besides from which pleasure could be extracted. Mrs. Palmer, for the first time, thought something of this. 'I daresay he'd much rather write about these dry things than sit and talk with me,' she said; 'but of course I can't understand what he cares for.'

She started suddenly; there was a little bit of blue paper in the middle of one of the bundles of manuscript. A piece of blue paper was what she sought. But this was not it, though she drew her breath quickly as she untied the bundle. No; not yet. She was too intent on her business just then to look up, as she had often done within the last half-hour, with fear to meet another eye. There was one watching her at last.

Mr. Everard had returned from his long walk and had seen her through the window. He stood looking for a moment, wondering what his wife could be doing. Arranging his papers? No; they were always in order; when he had used one it was invariably put in its place, and no one but himself had need to touch them, or ever thought of doing so. She was not reading them—she rarely read anything, and he did not suspect her of taking any interest in that which he wrote. She was looking for something—yes, looking earnestly, as if it were no trifle that she wanted. Her face had a painfully anxious and careworn look, and there was a deep flush on her
hollow cheek. She paused in her work, looked up without glancing towards him, and pressing her hand to her forehead, cried out so that he could hear, 'Oh! what shall I do? I shall never find it again—never!'

Find what? he thought. He would have asked her that night; only somehow he felt as if he could not. He remembered that lately he had found his papers in places in which he had not left them, that things had been moved in his room, where usually they remained where he placed them, and that many signs of the visitation of another person had presented themselves to him at different times. He had fancied himself mistaken; he had thought he must have made these alterations himself, and out of absence of mind not known it, or have forgotten it immediately. Now he knew how it was; but something inexplicable prevented him from asking his wife what she had lost in his room.

And now, for the first time, he noticed that she was a changed woman. She had no longer spirit even to be fretful—a dull langour or indifference to whatever happened almost always possessed her. Only one thing seemed of importance to her—she was nervously anxious to please him. She was timid of her own opinions, which formerly she would have upheld to the extreme; she was ready to yield to him in everything. It was to please him that habits and ways which had vexed him for years, and which he had well-nigh become reconciled to as incurable, were suddenly renounced. He saw with surprise
that she had acquired a new power of controlling herself, of leaving that unsaid which can do no good, and of working with method rather than with intermitting and spasmodic exertions. A great quietness fell on the house. Things were done regularly and in a careful manner. But she went about unsmiling, a haggard-faced silent woman, busying herself always with work of some kind, because it was in any case better than sitting still to think.

But now, if she could only have known it, part of her secret was already shared with another. It was not long before Mr. Everard knew that his wife prosecuted her search in his room whenever he was out of the way. He began himself to search. He would look for what she wanted, without having any idea of what it was, but expecting that he should know it if he found it. He searched day by day when she thought he was studying in his room. She stole in there when she had made certain he had gone out, and pursued the same wearying work. He looked through everything systematically, beginning at the packet marked A and ending at D3, which was as far as his system of alphabetical arrangement extended. He took the books from the shelves; he examined every receptacle, corner, or cranny of the room. Nothing came to light that was in any way likely to be an object much desired by his wife, or that she could ever have lost.

She came to his room one evening in the twilight. He had observed that she had been restless all day,
and that she had watched him. She was waiting for him to go out. He went into the dining-room and read there. Then he heard her footstep, so light his ear hardly caught the sound, and so hurried that it seemed something which must be done quickly had come into her mind. He knew by the sound where she was going; he knew by it when she had opened the door of his room, and crossed the uncarpeted floor to his table. And by a sudden impulse, which he never thought of resisting, he followed her.

She had left the door open. There was a strange smile on her face; was it found? She had an old writing-case of his in her hand. He only used it as a receptacle for odds and ends; papers that could not be brought under his system of classification. It was full of such, and she had often looked amongst them, as he knew well. But she had never done this before. With a penknife she ripped off the lining of the case, torn and worn into holes for a long time, and several scraps of paper and letters which had slipped inside fell out. There was a folded sheet of blue letter paper among them. With some kind of inarticulate cry she almost fell in her haste to clutch it as it fluttered to the floor, 'Oh, I am safe, I am safe; he will never know,' she kept repeating, crushing the paper in her hand, till she turned and saw her husband.

She stood as if changed to stone, and her stiffened fingers refused to hold the paper which fell again to the floor. Mr. Everard stooped and picked it up. Then words came to her with a rush, as of frenzy.
'Don't read it!' she cried, throwing herself before him. 'It is nothing, nothing; but you must not read it. I have been punished enough already. Oh, Everard, if you know what it is, you will despise me. Oh, for mercy's sake, say you will not read it! Promise, promise!'

'Is it this you have been looking for so long?' he said, still holding the paper. 'Is it this which has broken your health, and made you miserable—just this little piece of paper? What have you to fear from it?'

'Everything! I know what you would say—no, it is not that; it is what you would think that I cannot bear.'

'Alice,' said her husband, 'if I promise not to read it will you tell me what you are afraid of?'

'I cannot!' cried the wretched woman. 'Oh! if I could have told you, do you think I would have suffered it to tear at my heart all this while? Yes; I know you would say you forgave me: it is easy to say that; but you would never respect me again. I should be a low deceitful woman in your sight and that would kill me! I cannot tell you.'

In that moment a wave of inexpressible sympathy and of the deepest pity passed over his mind. What it was that she had done he could not guess. It might be something very heinous; but probably it was only a small offence which her distempered imagination had magnified into a crime. What right had he to judge her? He would never know; he
would never seek to know. He looked her in the face; she uttered no word, only fixed her supplicating eyes on his, and clung to his arm. Without opening the letter, without even looking at it, he dropped it on the smouldering fire on the hearth. There was a light blue flame for a second, and it was gone.

'Remember,' he said, 'I will never ask you, so long as I live, what that paper contained. Perhaps some day you will be able to tell me; but if not, it is buried for ever and done with.'

'Oh, this is noble of you!' she managed to say. 'Yes, yes, I will tell you; but—not now!'

He took her hand and led her from the room. He kept his promise; he never again spoke of the letter. And is it to be wondered at that she, poor woman, weak, timid, and anxious to cling to the last shred of covering for her fault, should never make her confession, though she had proved his generosity? So the secret was buried, but it was written too deeply on her heart ever to be forgotten.
CHAPTER V.

'Seems he a dove?—his feathers are but borrowed,
For he's disposed as the hateful raven.
Is he a lamb? his skin is surely lent him,
For he's inclined as the ravenous wolf.
Who cannot steal a shape that means deceit?'

Because the worthy Mrs. Sherlock has been neglected for a while, it follows that she has during that time only been drifting peacefully across the smooth sea of prosperity. Her happiness has not afforded materials for history. Or, to eschew figures of speech, the boarding-house has been paying, the boarders have been the ordinary class of well-behaved, commonplace men and women; Sherlock and James have been as careful and industrious as Mrs. Sherlock herself, and in consequence of the united efforts of the family, a well-proportioned deposit in a certain bank, and divers investments in profitable affairs, have been growing at a rate very comforting to the hearts of worldly-minded people.

The amiable Mr. Borage was still an inmate of the house. Whether he ever intended to leave it had become extremely problematical. He was much more energetic than of old; he rose early, and did a good deal of walking or riding during the day; he
even studied a little in the evenings, acting on a suggestion of Randall's, who had thought some employment of the brain might be of service in Mr. Borage's case.

Besides this, he regularly attended the debating class—more regularly than was pleasing to James. Miss Spowers, the young lady whom James secretly admired, still came to listen to the debates, and after sitting in the next seat at each meeting during twelve months, Borage, by means which James thought ungentlemanly, obtained an introduction, and had so assiduously cultivated her friendship that now James was overshadowed to such a degree that he felt himself thrust out into regions of coldness and obscurity.

James made a point of calling on the Spowers family twice or thrice a week; that is to say—as he wished others to believe,—he went there as often as that to see Miss Spowers' brother, an ungainly youth who, to judge from his conversation, lived that he might kick a huge ball about, in company with other young men of the same age and of a similarly advanced type of cerebral development. It was most exasperating to James that he should always find Borage there, basking in the smiles of all the Spowers, who appeared to worship him. Mr. Borage who all this while was as innocent as a dove, could not understand why James should be so disagreeable and contentious, but took very little notice of him, devoting all his attention to Miss Spowers; and that
lady became so frigid in her manner to the unlucky James that at last he determined to bring the matter to an end. He spent the whole of a holiday in writing to Miss Spowers. Borage, more shrewdly, spent it in going to a picnic with the Spowers family. But, by a singular coincidence, he also wrote a letter shortly afterwards, and the coincidence became more remarkable when both brought their letters to Mrs. Sherlock, and asked the advice of that experienced woman. James was the first to appear with his letter, which his mother read with silent wonder.

The first page was occupied with diffidently approaching the subject, which, however, notwithstanding this cautious approach, appeared to be jerked out at last in the most abrupt manner. In the next half page James made a modest acknowledgment of his own unworthiness, and three sentences after this were devoted to judicious praise of the lady addressed. Then, to assure her that it would be very much to her advantage if she should decide on accepting him, he gave a whole page and a half to dilating on his future prospects—what he had done already, and what he was determined to do. It was vaguely hinted that he might become something remarkable, and that Miss Spowers might share in his glory. In the conclusion he had not been able to deny himself the pleasure of shooting some light arrows at Borage, but unfortunately that wicked man was so darkly alluded to that it
was not likely either Miss Spowers or any one else would know who was meant.

'Well, James—well, well really!' was all Mrs. Sherlock could ejaculate when she had come to the signature.

'Will it do?' meekly inquired James.

'Do!' said Mrs. Sherlock, regaining the power of speech. 'If you send that, she'll think you've lost your senses. It's four pages long, and all about yourself. I don't know what you mean by this about defying spies and trampling on a viper hidden in the grass, but I should call it rubbish, and I'd cut it out if I were you.'

James determined that if he cut everything else out, that should stay in.

'I don't know why you would write at all to a person who doesn't live half a mile away,' said Mrs. Sherlock. 'Are you afraid of speaking?'

'I might have to wait a year for a chance of that,' said James. 'Whenever I go Borage is there, and he won't leave first, though I've tried to tire him out. I wonder what they can see in him.'

'I thought you had more wisdom, James. People can generally see something in a young man whose parents are so well off as Mr. Borage's. There's nothing amiss with him, except that he's rather simple. What of that, I should like to know? Some girls will have to put up with simpletons, or not get married at all.'

James did not see the applicability of this state-
ment; but he had no time to dispute it. Mr. Borage entered, holding a beautifully-written letter at arm's length, as if he should not have minded all the world reading it.

James immediately darted through the doorway, in such haste that the wind blew the letter out of his hand, and wafted it towards Mr. Borage, who picked it up and handed it to him with a smile, which in reality meant nothing, but which James thought most insolent. He flung out of the room, and tore his letter into such small fragments that hardly a word was left on each. Then he wrote another, and after that another, and yet another, until his brain was so fatigued with his unwonted labours in literary composition that he could not be certain that any word or expression was right, not even the commonest and simplest. The last-amended version was in some respects worse than the first. It was so short and curt, and so decided in its tone, that it seemed to intimate to Miss Spowers that she ought to accept the offer of the writer, whether it were agreeable to her or not, and that it would be her last chance of bettering her condition.

Meanwhile Mr. Borage was reading his letter, pacing up and down as he declaimed it aloud, and emphasising certain portions by stamping, so that Mrs. Sherlock began to fear for the carpet.

The letter was a fine piece of composition. Mr. Borage had been prodigal of the midnight oil; he had sat up twice until two in the morning, and after
he had arranged every word and sentence to his satisfaction, had been so fastidious about the handwriting that he had copied it as many as four times, and finally had attained to a graceful caligraphy which had astonished himself.

'Dear Miss Spowers,'—began Mr. Borage, reading as he talked, with slight pauses here and there, and a stress upon the following word, which generally came out with a jerk,—'I do not presume to address you without sufficient cause. I can hardly hope that you have guessed the thoughts which for a long time have been—Agitating my mind. Many times, words have risen to my lips which would have—Revealed them. I have often been on the point of divulging them; but after intense—Consideration, I have thought it better to avail myself of the medium of my pen, with which I can express myself more clearly than I could do verbally, and in your—Presence.'

Mr. Borage drew a deep breath, and stopping in his walk, turned to Mrs. Sherlock, and cried, 'What do you think of that introduction? does it sound well? have I made it plain?'

'Well, it's not very plain,' said Mrs. Sherlock; 'at least not to me, but you've put it into beautiful language.'

'It took me a long time,' said Mr. Borage. 'I assure you I've given my whole mind to this letter.'

Mrs. Sherlock said it looked like it, and Mr. Borage proceeded—'There is little need that I
should tell you anything about myself. During a friendship of nine months, and a slight acquaintance-
ship of more than twice that duration, you must have had many opportunities of judging of my abilities,—
such as they are,—and of knowing me with all my faults, and all my merits if I have any.'

'Yes; it's as well to put that in,' Mrs. Sherlock could not help saying; but Mr. Borage was too absorbed to hear her.

'Yet I may be bold enough to say that I have some. I could refer you to many friends in Mel-
bourne, where our family is widely known and respected, who would gladly testify to my worth —— (Dear me! I've written "your worth." However am I to alter that?) I do not presume on this, for in many respects I am so sensible of my defi-
ciences that I tremble sometimes at the thought of—'

'Aren't you a long while coming to what you want to say?' asked Mrs. Sherlock, as Mr. Borage was obliged to pause on account of a dreadful sneeze.

'I am just at it,' he said. 'One can't blurt out an important thing like this at once. I've always understood, Mrs. Sherlock, that in writing to a lady — abruptness should be avoided more than anything. I wish those doors could be shut. I am catching a cold I know, with all these draughts.'

'I haven't much time to spare, Mr. Borage,' replied his landlady, 'and if the letter goes on
much longer I shall have to leave you before it's finished.'

Mr. Borage promised to finish in three minutes. 'I shouldn't have troubled you,' he said; 'but I knew you had had so much—Experience.'

'Not in this kind of thing surely,' objected Mrs. Sherlock. 'I don't remember asking any one to marry me.'

'Oh, I mean you've observed so much,' said Mr. Borage, preparing to begin again. But it was fated that he should never be able to explain what it was that caused him to tremble. Mrs. Sherlock was called away to speak with an intending lodger. She left the door open, thus introducing so lively a current of air from the outside—both hall and passage doors being open at the same time—that Mr. Borage's letter, which he had momentarily laid on the table while suffering from a second severe sneeze, floated away as easily as a withered leaf upon the autumn blast. He tried to clutch it, but it was sucked into the little whirlwind which careered up the opening of the grate this gusty day, and he could only surmise that it went up the chimney, for he never saw it more.

He did not often lose his temper, but on this occasion it quite escaped from his control. He raged helplessly; all he could do was to stand outside waiting for his letter to emerge from the chimney, as he fully expected it would. He was prepared to follow it wherever it might be borne on the wings of
the wind, or to whatever remote or extraordinary place it might alight in. But he turned his eyes to the chimney-tops in vain. At last, as he felt himself quite unequal to the toil of writing another letter, he adopted the plan of going to the dwelling of Miss Spowers, and repeating to her as many of the words of the vanished scroll as he could remember.

While he went on this mission Mrs. Sherlock came to terms with the new lodger. At first she was so little prepossessed with his appearance that she had thoughts of advising him to apply elsewhere. But manner is everything. Manners not only make the man, as has been said ever since the days of the wise William of Wykeham, but they enable him to make himself into several different kinds of man. The stranger was wonderfully gifted with manners; he was well acquainted with the first use of language as a means of disguising what it is not convenient to display, and he had a large fortune in his funds of assurance and self-esteem. He pleased Mrs. Sherlock; but she wished he had been as well attired as he was well mannered. He was decidedly slovenly in apparel, and when his luggage came, it was on a diminutive scale. He had been ‘roughing it,’ he said, in the North, and had worn out and destroyed all his clothing; but now he was in town he should have to replenish his attenuated wardrobe. Mrs. Sherlock, like a good creature who told no tales herself, believed him. He was very good-looking, she thought, and a very free-spoken gentleman.
When he gave his name as Mr. Godfrey Palmer, she asked him if he was related to Mr. Everard Palmer, in whose family her daughter had lived for a time.

'Why, there is some relationship between us, I believe,' said he, with an odd smile.

'Indeed!' cried Mrs. Sherlock. 'Well, you have a look of him, sir. It is wonderful what likenesses there will sometimes be between very distant relatives. My son James now, who is just coming in at the gate, is like no one on my side of the family, but he's the very image of a second cousin of my husband.'

'Mr. Sherlock's second cousin must have been a very handsome man,' said the lodger.

'So he was,' said Mrs. Sherlock; 'and James is exactly like him.'

At the table that evening the new lodger seemed determined to ingratiate himself with the family. He could talk of the debating class with James, of the last new novel with Rosa, of household management with Mrs. Sherlock, amazing her with his wide and varied knowledge, and of town gossip and politics with the lodgers and Mr. Sherlock. And, with regard to politics, he made such confident assertions and such searching criticisms that Sherlock felt he had found a kindred spirit, and plunged into discussion with him. Sherlock began by declaring himself to be a Greyite, and called upon Mr. Godfrey Palmer to avow his party. That person at once said he was a Greyite heart and soul. Then it was as if the floodgates of some reservoir of political discus-
sion had suddenly been opened. There was such talk about the corruption and imbecility of the existing Government, against land-rings and land-sharks, of native affairs and the maladministration of native ministers, of public works and public indebtedness; and such explanation of the abstruse questions of Separation, Triennial Parliaments, Elective Governors, and lastly, that awful catastrophe known as the Abolition of the Upper House, as had not hitherto been heard in that family, nor probably in any other. The names of leading politicians on both sides, and the watchwords and war-cries of their parties, were constantly cropping up in this avalanche of talk, so that Mrs. Sherlock declared they rang in her ears till bedtime, and Sherlock's mind was so agitated by a full disclosure of the iniquitous transactions of the powers that were, that he dreamed of them all night.

The stranger threw a new light on most of these matters, and explained many which had always puzzled Sherlock in a way that perfectly satisfied that worthy man, although one or two of the lodgers seemed more amused than the dryness of the subject warranted, and James wondered how such things could be.

'Then any one can be Governor if this new order of things comes in?' said Sherlock. 'I didn't know it could be thrown open to the public.'

'Oh, yes, we shall all have a chance then,' said Mr. Palmer. 'I may put up for it myself.'
'And what do you think of Separation?' inquired Sherlock. 'Are you for that?'

'Why, the fact is,' answered Mr. Palmer, 'it appears to me that we've always had separation. The country has been cut in two ever since I knew it. I should rather be for joining it together. Run an embankment across each end of Cook's Straits, and keep out the Pacific. Then we should have room for a decent capital and seat of Government. Wellington could swell out and expand.'

Sherlock was struck with the magnitude of this idea. 'What a speech Sir George Grey would make on a subject like that!' he exclaimed. 'Whatever do some of 'em mean by calling him the great Proconsul?'

'Oh, it's only a term of endearment,' said Mr. Godfrey Palmer.

After they had risen from the table Mr. Palmer asked Mrs. Sherlock to oblige him with all the old newspapers which she might have in the house. He wanted one, he said, which he believed was about a week old; he wished to look at an advertisement which had appeared in it for the last time. Mrs. Sherlock gave him a pile of newspapers, and he retired with them to the verandah, and sitting down in a lounging chair, leisurely examined the advertisement sheets.

When he was alone it was curious how the expression of his face altered. He knit his brows, and thrust his hands through the thick mass of black
hair, beginning to be sprinkled with gray, which hung low on his forehead, almost to the level of his eyebrows. He muttered to himself;—this was a habit he allowed himself when alone; at other times he never indulged in it; it might have been dangerous. Mrs. Sherlock had already noticed his white hands and long thin fingers; the hands of a 'gentleman,' she had said. And indeed in this respect Mr. Godfrey Palmer surpassed most gentlemen. Certainly there is no reason why a man who lives by his wits should have rough brown hands.

'Yes; here it is,' he said aloud, in his eagerness. 'Godfrey Palmer is requested to call at the office of Messrs. Gatherall and Sampson, is he? Now, Gatherall and Sampson, why didn't you say why you so particularly wish to see that individual? Couldn't you have put in at the end that he would hear of something to his advantage? Close old fellows! If it isn't to his advantage I don't think you'll have the pleasure of renewing your acquaintance with Godfrey Palmer. But if it should be old Moresby's property at last—ah!'

He thought silently for a few minutes, and then got out of his chair with such haste that it tilted backwards. 'Here, Mary Jane,' he cried, addressing the servant-girl at a venture, 'be so good as to return these to your mistress, with a thousand thanks, and say that I'll be much more obliged if she can tell me where to get a sight of some back numbers of the Illustrated London News.'
‘Sir, my name is Blanche,’ said the girl with dignity, resenting the common appellation which had been thrust upon her. ‘And Mr. Borage, which is a lodger of ours, takes the *Lustrated News.*’

‘Illustrious Borage! will he lend me them, do you suppose, Miss Blanche?’

‘Oh, Mr. Borage is so good-natured he'll lend anything; I'll get them in a moment.’

‘Well, just ask him for them politely, with my compliments,’ said Mr. Godfrey Palmer, settling down again in the easy chair.

The servant-girl reappeared with an armful of papers. Here was more occupation for Mr. Godfrey Palmer who carefully read the columns of Wills and Bequests, and looked at all the obituary notices. In Wills and Bequests he found nothing, but, after a long search, a name under the heading of Deaths caught his eye. ‘I thought so!’ he said, as he brought his hand down heavily on the pile of papers on his knee. ‘It has come at last, to set me on my feet again. It is that they want me for.’

After this Mr. Godfrey Palmer’s spirits rose so rapidly and to such a giddy height that Mrs. Sherlock was not altogether unreasonable in the opinion she privately expressed, that they had been impelled to that height by means of other spirits. He must have had ‘something,’ she was sure, before he had come, for it was not possible that what he had received in her house could have produced the effect. The lodgers had flocked to the verandah
to enjoy the evening coolness in the only place where it could be enjoyed in Mrs. Sherlock's close and confined premises. Mr. Godfrey Palmer began to be very loquacious, and they thronged round him to listen. At first they were amused by his originality, then very soon they began to be amazed at his irreverence, and his large stock in trade of what some of them objected to as 'cool impudence.' He was reckless in the exuberance of those spirits which had most certainly, as Mrs. Sherlock observed, 'got into his head,' and he was not long in divesting himself of the last remnants of the politeness which had been so obtrusive earlier in the evening. The innocent Mr. Borage listened and stared with wide open eyes, not understanding one-half of what he heard. He thought the new lodger a very nice fellow, so amusing and friendly. Mr. Borage had beamed with inward joy all dinner-time, and had only been waiting for the chance of opening his heart to some one. The engaging Mr. Palmer soon obtained his confidence, and when a sudden rush of the lodgers to the other end of the verandah, to see what Sherlock said was a magnificent meteor, but which turned out to be an inferior kind of rocket, had left them alone, he told him that he had been accepted by the charming Miss Spowers, of whom no doubt Mr. Palmer had heard, as she was known and admired by a large circle of acquaintances.

'Can't say that I have,' replied the new lodger,
coolly appropriating an expensive cigar of Mr. Borage's, 'but I congratulate you. It's a jolly good thing for you, if she's got any money.'

'Money! I never thought of that,' said Mr. Borage, wondering at the difference between this speech and the polite and well-turned expressions which had been bestowed on him at the dinner-table.

'Didn't you? Very foolish. What is life without its greatest sweetener?'

'But I've money enough of my own,' said Mr. Borage.

'Oh, have you? That's a blessed thing,' said Mr. Godfrey Palmer.

'I'm sure I've often envied those who earned their own living,' said Mr. Borage. 'I think there's such a dignity in labour.'

At which the other laughed, much more loudly, Mr. Borage thought, than he need have done. 'Yes; it's very dignified,' he said, 'but I could never do it;' and he clasped his delicate hands.

'I couldn't either,' said Mr. Borage, now thinking that his new acquaintance must be similarly afflicted to himself. 'With this buzzing in my head—have you ever felt it?—I can't apply myself to anything for long.'

'Buzzing in your head?' said the other, staring at him with his wild black eyes. 'You ought to be glad of that—proves there's something inside.'

Mr. Borage was not quite sure what was meant by this reply; but he did not like it. Further
conversation soon quenched the interest he had taken in Mr. Palmer, and made him repent that he had told him so many of his private affairs. Sherlock also was grievously undeceived. On endeavouring to lure him into the maze of political discussion once again, Mr. Godfrey Palmer made haste to disavow all the opinions which an hour previously he had advanced and skilfully proved by arguments of no mean power. One by one he abandoned his political principles, and veered round to the opposite side with such unblushing coolness that Sherlock, scandalised to the utmost, cried out, 'After this, I shan't be surprised if you say you're no Greyite at all.'

'Greyite! not I,' contemptuously returned his opponent. 'I was drawing you out a bit; that's all, my good friend. But the Greyites ought to be proud of you as a champion; you stick at nothing.'

'Sir, you are no gentleman,' said Sherlock, rising and leaving the room with as much dignity as he could command. He sought Mrs. Sherlock, and finding her, immediately said, 'Martha, this new lodger is an abominable man.'

'Whatever he is, I shan't keep him long,' said Mrs. Sherlock, who also had seen and heard things which caused Mr. Godfrey Palmer's character to appear in its true light. 'I believe he's brought more packs of playing cards than collars or pocket-handkerchiefs, and that most of the clothes he has are on him now. I'll give him a hint that we want his room if he doesn't turn out better than I expect.'
Instead of redeeming his character, however, Mr. Godfrey Palmer sank still lower in the estimation of his landlady. As the other boarders seemed not to know exactly what to do with their leisure time he proposed several nice games at cards, and produced the much-handled packs which Mrs. Sherlock had noticed with a lowering brow. He was very skilful in these little games; his long thin fingers seemed to be made for card manipulations. On the contrary, the other players might have been divided into three classes—those who thought they understood the game, those who knew a little about it and wanted to learn, and those who had never tried it before. None of these gentlemen could recollect afterwards who had proposed that they should play for stakes. They began to do so after a while: at first for some modest sum, such as sixpence, and then for amounts of greater value and importance. At first their winnings and losings were evenly balanced, then they began to plunder one another, and finally they lost heavily to Mr. Godfrey Palmer, who had an extraordinary run of luck which (he said) he could not account for.

But he soothed the spirits of the vanquished with such a happy facetiousness, and such encouraging suggestions for their future play, that they felt sure this was only one of the little reverses all must expect who would learn the science of cards. And when Mr. Godfrey Palmer retired to his chamber, with a serene and contented mind he laid quite
an imposing pile of half-crowns, five and ten shilling pieces on his dressing-table, and observed that it would keep him afloat till he could get something from Gatherall and Sampson, if things were as he imagined. Then he fell asleep, and dreamed that he was immensely rich, and that Gatherall and Sampson were crouching at his feet.
CHAPTER VI.

"Here are a few of the unpleasantest words
That ever blotted paper."

 Merchant of Venice.

Mr. Godfrey Palmer and his friends had not expected that Mrs. Sherlock would be informed of the little games with which they had so pleasurably employed one whole evening. But it would have been strange indeed if such things could have been done under her roof and not have come to her ears. She was so indignant that she even subdued Mr. Godfrey Palmer’s natural audacity, and silenced him by a flow of words, beside which his own was as a little trickling stream to an impetuous mountain torrent.

Mrs. Sherlock told him that hitherto she had only entertained such strangers as bore unmistakable tokens of respectability, and were gifted with characters. What he was she didn’t know and didn’t care; but she would advise him to lodge with people who could appreciate his peculiar turn of mind. As soon as he was able to find room for an answer, Mr. Godfrey Palmer replied that he did not wish to burden Mrs. Sherlock with his presence for a moment
longer than was agreeable to her. He had tried her lodging-house for one night, and was satisfied that it would endanger his life to remain longer; for if the cookery didn't kill him, the boredom and dulness of the place would. Mrs. Sherlock's last words were to the effect that the sooner he went out of the door the pleasanter for every one, and that she hoped he wouldn't leave any of his cards behind him. It was the first time she had had card-sharping and gambling in her house, and it should be the last. Whereupon her departing lodger bowed politely, smiled his sweetest smile, and five minutes after left the house, carrying his cards with him. He had a parting word from Mrs. Sherlock, which was not intended to cheer him on his way. He could not help feeling rather small; for although he belonged to the class of pachydermatous animals, Mrs. Sherlock's words had been so sharp and pointed that they had made him wince a little; and altogether he did not relish having been worsted and silenced by an old woman.

Messrs. Gatherall and Sampson’s office was in its usual inviting state of order and neatness, and the clerks were industriously doing their duty, when Mr. Godfrey Palmer entered. He had got another set of manners out for use by this time, and the quiet low-voiced gentleman who asked if Mr. Gatherall or Mr. Sampson could be seen was a very different person from the one who had striven to talk down his land-lady half an hour earlier.
In return for this question he was asked his name, and informed that Mr. Sampson was out (as indeed he generally was), but that Mr. Gatherall was in, although he was so particularly engaged that it was doubtful whether he could see any one.

For some reason, which it may be surmised was not derived from modest consciousness of his demerits, Mr. Godfrey Palmer did not like to give his name. Instead of doing so, he took out of his pocket an advertisement cut from a newspaper, and folding it, gave it to the clerk, saying 'If you tell him I have called on business connected with this, Mr. Gatherall will see me immediately.'

The scrap of paper was as an 'Open Sesame' in Mr. Godfrey Palmer's hand. As he had prophesied Mr. Gatherall did see him immediately, and professed to be delighted at his opportune arrival. He shook hands with him in the warmest manner, he was very kind in his references to old times, and was almost affected when he spoke of the cold neglect of his friends which Mr. Palmer had shown, whence it was that he—Gatherall—hardly knew him again, such an age had intervened between the time when they had last seen each other and this joyful meeting. Then he inducted Mr. Godfrey Palmer into the easiest chair in the room, and seated himself in the uneasiest one, as if to show what sacrifices he would make for him.

This flattering reception raised high hopes in Mr. Godfrey Palmer's breast, and was the cause of a
rapid deterioration in the quality of his manners. It was a most unlucky failing of his that although he could manufacture a very high class of manners when necessary, he never could keep up the supply for long together. On this occasion it was exhausted in five minutes. In his first remark, he returned thanks for Mr. Gatherall's warm welcome and affectionate inquiries. In his second, he made a matter-of-fact statement, telling how he had found the advertisement; in his third, he asked why it had been put in; and in his fourth, he averred that he should not have come within a hundred yards of Gatherall's, notwithstanding all the yearnings of ancient friendship, if he had not expected to be benefited by the visit, and that he should like to know at once what benefit, if any, he was to receive.

Mr. Gatherall smiled, and then, as it occurred to him that he ought not to announce a bereavement with a smiling face, looked mournful, and said, 'You have heard nothing, I see, Mr. Palmer. Life is very uncertain—very.'

'So it is,' said Mr Godfrey Palmer; 'there is nothing certain about it, except that it's an expensive business if one wants to enjoy it.'

'You have not heard from your uncle, Mr. Moresby, lately, I believe?' said Mr. Gatherall.

'Never heard from him since I left England,' replied his visitor, putting his feet up on another chair, that he might be yet more at his ease. 'But don't trouble to break the news to me. I am
aware that he is no more. I saw the notice of his death in the *Illustrated News*.

'Indeed,' said Mr. Gatherall. 'Well, I need hardly tell you that it is on account of his death that you have been advertised for. Perhaps you saw something else in the *Illustrated News*—an account of his will, and the legacies he has left to different people. No? The property is very generously and equitably divided, Mr. Palmer. He has remembered all his old servants, and he has left a large sum for charitable purposes.'

'Has he remembered me?' said Mr. Godfrey Palmer.

'Most certainly,' said Mr. Gatherall. 'The value of the estate amounts to upwards of £160,000.'

'Which, I suppose, goes to charitable purposes,' sneered Mr. Godfrey Palmer. 'Hospitals, reformatories, asylums for the blind, and so on.'

'Twenty thousand is left to different charitable institutions,' said Mr. Gatherall. 'Your brother receives five thousand.'

'Well, quite right, and little enough. He ought to have left poor Everard the twenty thousand. It would have been more like applying the money to a charitable purpose than flinging it to a public institution.'

'We cannot discover by what motives Mr. Moresby was actuated in making his will,' said Mr. Gatherall.

'Had he any at all?' queried Mr. Godfrey Palmer.
'But you've only accounted for twenty-five thousand yet. Where's the rest going to?'

'Ten thousand for mission work in the worst part of the East End of London,' continued Mr. Gatherall.

'Oh! missions to the heathen,' said Mr. Godfrey Palmer. 'Anything for the savages out here?'

'The small legacies amount to between three or four thousand,' said Mr. Gatherall. 'To yourself, my dear Mr. Godfrey'—he smiled a smile of ineffable sweetness, and Mr. Godfrey arched his neck, and threw back his head, with eyes half closed, as if the sights of every-day life were too much for him at such a moment—'to yourself'—Mr. Gatherall, in his cunning, paused again, and allowed his friend to hang on the tenter-hooks—'your uncle has left the sum of five hundred pounds, a very acceptable little fortune, I have no doubt, and one which I hope will be productive of more in your hands. Some of our millionaires have had much less to begin with.'

'Five—hundred—pounds,' repeated Mr. Godfrey Palmer, and the words sounded like a snarl. 'Well, then, if you can make haste, Mr. Gatherall, do so and come to the end of it. What does he do with the rest? There ought to be something over a hundred thousand left. Is it for a mission to New Guinea, or a refuge for destitute old men—alms-house or something of the kind? I hope it is for the latter purpose, for then I can creep into it when
I'm old; his five hundred won't last me long, and Nature never intended me for a millionaire.'

'The whole of the estate, after the bequests I have mentioned are paid, goes to his brother-in-law, Mr. Randall,' said Mr. Gatherall, keenly watching his companion, to see what effect would be produced by this final blow.

'To Henry Randall,' said Godfrey Palmer, quieted at once, and changing colour. 'His brother-in-law? Oh, I remember; his young wife that he made an idol of was Randall's sister. What has he made such an insane will for?'

'How can we tell?' said Mr. Gatherall, shrugging his shoulders. 'We of course were not his advisers.'

'Oh, of course, Gatherall!' said Mr. Godfrey Palmer, sufficiently recovered to be noisy and uncivil once more. 'You and Sampson could have concocted a better sort of will than that.'

Mr. Gatherall returned a sour smile for this compliment, and looked at Mr. Palmer with an expression which, if translated, might have read—'I bear with your impertinences because you are not worth the trouble of an ejection.'

'You might sympathise with me,' said Mr. Godfrey Palmer in a milder tone. 'You know it was always expected I should have my uncle's fortune. I was his favourite nephew. Everard and John both managed to offend him.'

'It was expected, as you say,' returned the lawyer. 'This is not the first time, Mr. Palmer,
that I have been your uncle's agent in matters concerning you. He has written to me at different times within the last ten years, always asking after you, and showing great interest in your welfare.'

'Oh, has he? And what did you tell him?'

'I told him the truth.'

'Yes; I've no doubt you were virtuous enough to do that. Told him I was a renegade and a scamp, I suppose?'

'Your uncle was deeply offended and grieved by the reports I was obliged to send him,' said Mr. Gatherall. 'He did not trust to me alone. I happen to know that he wrote to your younger brother, who is now dead.'

'And what did poor John say about me? Did he paint me black enough?'

'I suppose you know your brother's character as well as I do. I can affirm that he would not say an unjust word about you, and yet the result of his letter was to cause your uncle to alter his will. I do not mean that it caused him to leave his property to Mr. Randall, but it caused him to reduce your portion.'

'Reduce! yes, reduced enough.'

'Just at that time he was in great trouble. He had lost his wife and son by a terrible misfortune. You will remember that they were on board the Cairngorm, which was burnt at sea. There had been a misunderstanding between him and his wife, and she had left England without his knowledge.
It was supposed she had formed some impossible plan of finding her brother and bringing him home with her. You know something of his career, so I need not go into particulars. He is an unfortunate, and I believe an unprincipled young man. However, such men, though they are a disgrace to their families, often seem to be dearer to them than their respectable relatives. His sister threw her life away for him, and for her sake Mr. Moresby has given him a fortune.

'\nI have little doubt that it was solely on account of the affection he bore to his wife, whom, as you have said, he idolised, that he has done this for her brother, who, if common report had any truth in it, was a good deal more to her than her husband. But I have not told you all.'

'I wish you would, then; if there is anything at the bottom of Pandora's box, I should like to see it.'

'There is hope, at all events,' said Mr. Gatherall. 'In the first place, this fortune is not left unreservedly. Mr. Moresby always fancied his son might have been saved by some means. Only one of the boats which left the ship was heard of afterwards; but he deluded himself into believing that they might not all have been lost, and that his wife and child might be castaways on some island. He made a voyage himself in search of them. So, it is expressly stated that if his son should be found he is to have everything. In any case only the income of this money can be touched during the next ten
years. Now, in the second place, Mr. Henry Randall, as you are aware, is a wanderer. He is not to be found at present. He has not been heard of for three years. In the event of his death you inherit the whole of the property, subject to the conditions I have just mentioned.'

'He is not dead, and he never will die,' said Mr. Godfrey Palmer, refusing to be comforted. 'Such men never do.'

'Men who lead unsettled lives rarely live to old age.'

'Wandering about won't kill him, if that's what you mean. It is more likely to invigorate his constitution. He isn't given to any injurious habits, you know, Gatherall, however unprincipled he may be, so I don't see why you should anticipate his popping off suddenly. The last time I saw him he didn't look like dying. I would sell my reversionary chances for a moderate sum. He is years younger than I am, and he is the sort of man to live to be a hundred.'

'Let us hope he may have reformed,' said Mr. Gatherall sweetly.

'Amen, so be it,' said Mr. Godfrey Palmer. 'If he hasn't, it won't matter now, for the money he's got will cover all his sins.'

'You were his friend?'

'Oh, yes, quite in the David and Jonathan style. But he became too—unprincipled.'

'Yes. You were with him at Mr. Trevet's. A
A ROLLING STONE.

sad case; a great breach of trust, and not the first offence, I believe. If one had heard of him making amends by returning the money he took there would be some hope that he was penitent. But human nature—my dear friend—human nature is soon hardened. A sad instance of wasted opportunities and misapplied talent! A warning to us all.'

'Yes, just so; but he's got on pretty well, after all,' said Mr. Godfrey Palmer, suppressing a yawn.

'You will naturally feel some disappointment,' observed Mr. Gatherall.

'Disappointment!' said the other gentleman, snarling again. 'Oh, not at all; so fond of my old friend that I rejoice at his good fortune.'

'If I might advise you,' said Mr. Gatherall, becoming fatherly in his manner, 'let this be the turning-point in your career. Five hundred pounds is a small sum certainly; but, prudently used, it may assist you to do better for yourself than you imagine in your present low-spirited state. It is not too late to retrieve the confidence and respect of your friends. Temperance and industry and patience are what you need. If the advice and assistance of a friend can help you onward, I shall always be ready to extend——'

'Come, Gatherall, drop it,' said Mr. Godfrey Palmer, rising from his seat. 'If you really want to extend anything to me, just consider my present destitute state—shabby, seedy, and without a penny in my pocket.' Mr. G. P. had forgotten these little
gleanings of the card-table. 'How am I to exist till I get my five hundred? The ravens won't feed me, nor will the robins cover me with leaves.'

'You want me to give you an advance, I suppose,' said Mr. Gatherall, with cold severity.

'I do cherish that desire,' said Mr. Godfrey Palmer, 'and I see from your countenance that you are going to fulfil it.'

Mr. Gatherall's countenance was not benevolent in its expression; but he satisfied Mr. Godfrey Palmer nevertheless, and the latter person pocketed the advance with 'Thanks, how nice! Now, before I go, Gatherall, I should like to know if you've tried very hard to find our mutual friend Mr. Randall. You took some trouble about me, when only a paltry five hundred was concerned; you ought to bestir yourself about a man for whom over a hundred thousand is waiting.'

'Mr. Randall is supposed to be in Australia,' said Mr. Gatherall. 'He left here for Melbourne over three years since.'

'And because he went to Melbourne three years ago, he is still in Australia. You would not adorn the detective force. Why, he may be in Japan, in Brazil, in Timbuctoo, by this time. Now, what will you give me for finding him?'

'The business is in competent hands,' said Mr. Gatherall stiffly. 'If living, he will be found in a few months.'

'Oh, no doubt he'll turn up. He's in this world
yet, you may be sure. There is no more to say. You were very much engaged when I came in, and I have kept you from your lucrative business for half an hour. Time I went.'

Mr. Gatherall had the kindness to attend him to the door of the sanctum; but the instant his visitor's foot had passed the threshold he shut the door with a clap, as if afraid he might change his mind and come in again. Mr. Godfrey Palmer went out smilingly; but the smile was a scowl before he had gone very far. 'Cheated at the last,' he muttered, 'and by him.'
CHAPTER VII.

‘And the mother at home says, “Hark!  
For his voice I listen and yearn;  
It is growing late and dark,  
And my boy does not return.”’

LONGFELLOW.

And where was the man for whom a fortune waited, for whom Gatherall and Sampson inquired in vain, and whom Godfrey Palmer spoke of as being somewhere in the world and sure to turn up? They had not the gift of clairvoyance, or they might have seen him on an ocean steamer, coming towards that southern continent wherein Mr. Gatherall’s advertisements were widely disseminated, and his agents made zealous search for a person thousands of miles away.

It was true, as Mr. Gatherall had said, that for some years no one in New Zealand had heard of Randall. Mr. Wishart and Mrs. Meade, anxious that their step-sister should not be fettered by more than the semblance of an engagement, had stipulated that he should not write to her, nor by any means attempt to bring himself to her remembrance, during those years. He had not blamed them for this, nor wondered that they should have faint hopes of his success; it seemed a far-away and unreal thing to
himself. Nothing but a penniless adventurer; was it strange that what he dared to hope for was a mad scheme, an impossibility in the opinion of others? He had seen (not without feeling it keenly) that Mrs. Meade and her brother were glad of his departure—glad that he should be out of the way. They wanted Maud to forget him. Perhaps they would be well pleased, notwithstanding their profession of friendship, if they never heard of him again. When his pride was stirred by these thoughts he resolved no one should hear how he fared. He went away without informing a single person of his plans, or whither he was bound. Mr. Borage, indeed, was surprised to have his money returned, shortly after Randall's departure; but the letter which accompanied it told him nothing of the writer's circumstances further than that his position was much improved and that he was in no need of aid. There were others to whom he might have written, and who often wondered what had become of him. No letters came. They had known him only as a man who was perseveringly unlucky. He had determined that they should know no more until he could come himself and tell them that the wheel had turned with him in right earnest.

It was to be expected that Mr. Gatherall should lose all trace of him in Australia. To advertise for a man under a name by which he had never been known in those parts was certainly not of much use. When first Randall had wandered about Australia
the thought of his disgrace had lost none of its bitterness. Fearful lest he should be found out by some one who had once known him or had heard of his misfortune, afraid of being pitied or patronised by former friends, he had hidden himself under an assumed name. Again, when travelling with Philimore, he had returned to this name, and by it had been known wherever he and his agent had gone. Thus for a time he had virtually disappeared from the world, and Mr. Gatherall might well have difficulty in finding him.

But it was inexcusable that one who had more claims on him than all the rest should have waited years and received neither letter nor word of news. True, he had written to his mother during his stay at Palmer's; but the letter had been returned to him unanswered. He could not know that this mishap had been caused by a wrong address. At that time Mrs. Randall had been living with her son-in-law. She had since returned to that house which had been her home when Randall left England. One by one, relative and friend had fallen away from her. Many had died, some had gone to distant countries, and, like her only son, sent her no word of remembrance. The place to which she had come seemed an asylum for such as herself. Some instinct leads the lonely, the disappointed, and the neglected to such world-forgotten spots. It was a gloomy little village, standing amongst grass-grown roads; full of old trees, old houses, and old people. Youth could not
endure its dulness; when it was chained there it withered prematurely. Who has not known such a place?—where nothing ever happened, to which no one ever came who could help it, in which all the dreary monotony, all the oppressing trifles, all the apathetic resignation of what is called a quiet life, had dominion. A calm, untroubled, pleasurable sort of existence to those who see it from a distance, or who only catch a glimpse as they hasten past. Yet there may be great depths, dark and cold, beneath the still waters, and sometimes they hide the grave of happiness. Better, perhaps, to take the stream where, all sparkle and foam, it rushes from the hills, than to moor our boat in this sluggish backwater.

But amongst her neighbours Mrs. Randall was believed to be rather a fortunate person. Most of them were poor; they knew that by her son-in-law’s generosity she was placed beyond the reach of want. To the end of her days she would have a comfortable home. She had, indeed, by one misfortune after another, lost everything except a home; but years had passed since those trials, and it appeared as if she were comforted for them. They had not aged her so much as fretfulness and sour discontent age many women. Her manner was invariably cheerful; if she had a grief she kept it to herself. It is a little trouble that can be babbled out to every acquaintance.

She never went from home now. It seemed to
her as if her son might come at any time. The
dawn whispered hope to her—he would surely come
that day: the dusk of night fell sadly around her—
sitting in her deserted home. Often in the mid-
night the noise of the train rushing into the station,
the sound of wheels upon the road, the clatter of a
horse's hoofs, would cause her to start from her
pillow and listen with a longing heart for what she
knew too soon was not yet to be.

Some days she believed him to be dead. It was
not otherwise possible that he could have neglected
or forgotten her for so long. Would not even the
strong yearnings, the prayers and tears of a forsaken
mother, by some mysterious influence, have turned
his footsteps homewards long ago? He had died—
it was because he could not that he did not come.

For years she had sought for information, and
had vainly endeavoured to trace him. She had
heard of him in different places; but the clue had
always broken before it had led her through the
maze. She made a practice of reading several
Australian papers, in the faint hope of seeing some-
thing which might help her to find him. Frequently
she read of things in these papers which stirred her
soul with dread; sad stories of the fateful endings of
just such homeless wanderers as the one she sought.
In each she feared to find her son. Was he the
man who was found lying in a Melbourne street, his
cold white face turned from the pitiless world to a
starry sky, and a portrait—they thought it was his
mother's—tightly clasped in a hand that would not relax its hold? Was it he who wandered farther and farther on the endless plains, till he maddened with the fiercely burning heat and the unchanging scene, and when he was found could only smile vacantly in the faces of his deliverers? Oh, Heaven! it could not be that he had suffered thus. It was better to think he had been that stranger who in the fearful hours of a shipwreck had saved others, without thought of his own life, and had been drowned with the child in his arms for whose sake he had returned to the sinking vessel. But these fancies were vain; she would never know how he had perished.

Yet she had her days of gladness, as we all have. There were times when she believed he was coming home. No one else believed he ever would return: was that any reason why she should not cling to a thought that comforted her? Though this day had not brought him to her door the morrow might; though the morrow even should not fulfil her hopes he might be very near—a week? a month? and her waiting would be ended. Oh, what patience, that in this thought forgot all the years which had passed without word or sign!—forgot to blame the cause of a grief which had been slow of healing; forgot to murmur; but buoyed itself upon a hope that to every other mind seemed a fond delusion.

One morning in particular Mrs. Randall had risen in good spirits, and was so bright and cheerful as to excite the curiosity of Miss Gibson, her
companion, a quiet, mild-tempered elderly lady who had lived with her for years. 'Mrs. Randall, I can't help noticing how well you are looking,' she said.

'Yes, I am very well,' answered the other lady, rather absently. 'But my health is always good.' Then brightening, she added, 'You will laugh at me; but I have had such a delightful dream, I feel happy in thinking of it. I can't forget it, and I don't want to.'

'A dream!' said Miss Gibson.

'Yes; it was about Henry. He is always in my thoughts, it is no wonder I should dream of him. I have often dreamed he had come home; but it was never so clear, so vivid, as it was last night.'

'I had that dream once,' said Miss Gibson; 'but I think it was with reading some historical romance late at night, for in my dream he came home like a knight of the olden time, all in armour, and followed by a long train of captives and loads of spoil.'

'The dream was not all pleasant,' continued Mrs. Randall; 'but it ended so well! At first I thought I was looking for Henry in some large city, and could not find him. It was not an English city; the streets were uneven, narrow, and thronged, and the buildings rose very high on each side; and above, I remember, there was a beautiful sky, without a cloud, and so darkly blue. It was mid-day, and very hot, with a close sultry heat. I walked through the streets for many hours, as I thought, amongst endless crowds of people. It seemed strange to me
that not one of all those numbers was going in the same direction as mine; they were all hastening the other way. Thousands of faces, all meeting me, with terrible eyes that seemed to burn into mine. I could hear their footsteps on the pavement; but in all the streets, amongst all the multitude, there was no sound of a human voice. I begged, prayed, entreated them to help me; they would not answer; they only looked at me and passed me by. And I was so weary, heartsick, and footsore! the sun burned down upon me; I lost my way often, and turned back, always to find the same faces looking into mine, but not the one I wanted. Then suddenly all that faded away, and I was in my own room at home—our old home, where we lived before my husband died, and there was a nightingale singing in the shrubbery, where I have often heard them sing on summer evenings. I listened to it—oh, how sweetly it sang!—and I knew I need not be troubled about Henry any more, for he was coming home. It seemed only a few days since he had left me, and when he came in he wasn’t altered, not in the least, but just as he was when I saw him for the last time—my own handsome boy! Of course I felt, even in my dream, that it couldn’t be so; years must have made a difference to him as well as to me. And I wanted—oh, how I wanted him to speak! but he only stood before me and smiled. Then, when I felt as if my heart would break with joy, I woke as I was calling to him aloud.'
'Ah, if it would only come true!' said the sympathising Miss Gibson.

'It will, some day. If he is yet alive he will come back. Did he not promise? He may be coming now.'

'Oh, but we had better not think too much of this,' said Miss Gibson, looking pityingly at the other lady. 'You know a dream isn't much to trust in. You have thought so much of his return it is only natural you should dream of it.'

'Oh, come, Mary,' said Mrs. Randall impatiently, 'I never said I believed in dreams. I know what you think though you wouldn't say it to me for worlds—you think that he will never come back. But he will, for he promised, and I never knew him to break his word.'

Miss Gibson would not argue against this belief. 'If he could not have come he might at least have written,' she said presently.

'Yes,' said Mrs. Randall. 'I have often wondered why he did not write. Perhaps he thought I was offended with him, and was too proud to make the first advance; it is often that which keeps near relatives asunder. Or perhaps he has been unfortunate, and would not send me word lest I should be distressed and unhappy on his account. As if any news, almost, would not have been better than none. To know the truth is so much better than to be left only to one's imagination, terrifying oneself with all sorts of fancies. He ought to have known that I
want to hear of him always, not only when he is fortunate and happy. This is what grieves me most—that he may be in trouble or suffering, ill, wretched, and in want, far away from me, and I know nothing of it. I can't get to him, I can't help him, nor even send him one word of comfort. Yes, if I were certain he would always be happy I could bear not to hear from him, but to be in trouble, and hide it from me—that is not like him, not right. When he was a boy he told me everything; it was as if I knew every thought in his mind. Oh, if he remembered, he would surely write.'

'Yes,' replied Miss Gibson; 'but, so far as I know anything about them, young men who leave their families and go away to other countries don't think much of such things. I suppose most men are a little harder and more selfish than women; at any rate they behave as if they were, and I daresay they get along all the better for not being too soft-hearted.'

'No, it isn't that,' said Mrs. Randall. 'They are not harder nor more selfish than we are. It is because they don't know how it is with those they have left behind. They haven't so much time in their restless busy lives to think of others as we have who only stay at home and wait. Every day they may meet with new things, with new faces, and new people; we only think and dream of one. And how can they guess that they are causing us any grief or trouble? Do they know of the long nights in which no sleep comes to our eyes because of them,
of the tears we can't always keep back, and how often we weary Heaven in their behalf? Oh no, they can never know, and of course we can never tell them.'

'I should like to tell some of them, and give them a piece of my mind into the bargain,' said Miss Gibson emphatically.

'What was that?' suddenly asked Mrs. Randall, after a few moments' silence.

'Only the branch of that tree tapping against the wall.'

'I thought it sounded like a footstep outside.'

'No, it was the tree,' persisted Miss Gibson, rising and leaving the room. She usually went out into the village at this hour for a campaign with the curate, with whom she had concluded a league which had for its object the regeneration of their poorer neighbours—the county families, unfortunately for themselves, were supposed to be irreclaimable. So vigorously had Miss Gibson and her clerical companion scoured the parish that hardly an indigent man or woman therein dared to be irreligious. This morning she made such haste to begin her daily labour of love that it was not surprising she should be unobservant of a stranger, who, just as she left the house, coolly entered it by a little porch at the side. The door opening into this led into a sitting-room not often used, and by this way it was easy, during the daytime, to gain admittance to the house without disturbing the inmates—too easy, the timid Miss Gibson had often thought. She sometimes had
visions of tramps and other undesirable characters joyfully entering by this convenient door; one had only to turn the handle and come in. The stranger came in with a smile on his face, as if he found housebreaking an agreeable diversion. 'How quiet it is!' he said to himself, pausing and listening, with his hand still on the door-knob. 'I hardly know why I've crept in here like a thief, instead of sensibly walking up to the front door and ringing the bell. This is a trick I've often played as a boy; but I could never disguise my face so well as to cheat my mother. I wonder, will she know me now, changed as I am? Yes, I suppose so; if I had wished to pass myself off as a stranger, I ought at least to have provided myself with blue glasses, and roughened my voice by some means—a severe cold would have been of use.'

He remained standing, as if absorbed in thought, and the expression of his face became more serious. He knew the room well; it had been his own during the short time he had lived with his mother in this house, and it was just as he had left it years ago. He could hardly turn his eyes anywhere without seeing little things which he had treasured in his boyhood, trifles for the most part of no real value to any one, but preserved and kept in their place because they had once belonged to him. Nothing was missing of all that he had left at home. There were fresh flowers on the table—he had always been fond of flowers, and his mother had been accustomed to put them in his room. Why, he could tell by the very
look of the room that he was expected—had been expected for years. Here, standing alone in the silence of this quiet place, which had known no change while he had changed from a boy into a man, he could almost fancy that something whispered to him, 'Why did you not come before? we have waited so long—the years have been very long.'

He had only just begun to realise how long they must have been to the one left at home. He had never forgotten her for long together; not all the wanderings and vicissitudes of his life had blotted from his mind the remembrance of his mother and the affection and reverence which were her due. But what had been his few vagrant thoughts, the moments here and there he had spared for her. On those scattered occasions he had perhaps unconsciously thought it very good of himself to remember her, as we may often feel highly satisfied with the propriety of our reflections. Ah, how very seldom, after all, had he yielded his restless mind to such quieting thoughts, how often had he foolishly imagined he would not be welcomed in her home, that she was offended or ashamed of him. He knew now what he wondered at himself for not having known years before. There had been no day on which she had not thought of him; no time at which he could have come and not have brought joy to her heart.

He went out of the room, intending to go and find her. No one met him as he passed through the silent house. Its stillness and deserted appearance
would have made him anxious, had he not already known from his inquiries in the village that his mother was at home and well. At the open door of her sitting-room he hesitated; there was no one to be seen, nothing to be heard; she could not be within. Yes; she was sitting beside the window, leaning back in her chair with her face turned away from him. She did not move nor look up, and as he came nearer he saw that she was asleep.

It has been well said that the face of a mother is never unlovely to her children. As it lay there on the dark cushion, partly shaded by the window-curtain, there was a pathetic beauty on this sleeping face—the worn and faded face of an elderly woman who had never been beautiful, not even in her youth. What matter? what difference had that ever made to the few to whom hers had always been the dearest face on earth? It was changed, and yet not so changed as might have been expected, thought the one who stood silently gazing at it. A little thinner and paler, a few more fine lines drawn on the forehead and around the eyes. There was something in the expression—was it patient expectation, longing, hope unwearied?—which moved him strangely. Oh, well that he had not come to find her face stilled and calmed in a longer sleep than this.

 Somehow he felt so awed and humbled just then, that when he spoke to her, calling her by her name, his voice hardly rose above a whisper, and that whisper did not awake her. He would not disturb
her suddenly. There was his own old piano standing in its accustomed place, would it not be a good idea to play her gradually out of sleep? But trying to open the piano he found it locked, and noticed at the same time that there was another in the room, opened as if for use, and with music lying upon it. No one, then, was allowed to touch the one which had been his. However, he had a fancy to play on it rather than on any other, and after some search found what proved to be the key. Then he opened it and began to play.

What strange, unearthly sounds! It was the ghost of a melody, filled with jangling and discordancy, faint and tremulous, weak and quavering, when it should have been full, and clear, and sweet. Poor old piano! it was husky, as if its music had dried up long ago; its strings were beginning to rust; its keys were stiff from want of exercise: it could not be expected to give forth sweet tones when suddenly aroused from a slumber of years. But he brought some music out of it at last. It was wonderful how the ancient instrument regained its tone under his management. It was the hand of a master that swept the keys. The wild rich melody, faint and low at first, then louder and louder till it filled the room, stole upon the sleeper’s ear like the music of a dream.

It must be—it was a dream, she kept telling herself even after she had opened her eyes. No; she was awake; she could hear the murmur of the
wind outside; mark the clouds moving across the sky; here was the book she had taken up to read awhile ago; she knew where she had left off. But what stranger was this who had stolen in while she slept, and was playing such music as seemed hardly to belong to earth? Why did it speak to her of all that she had known or felt? It was soft as words of consolation, and the balm of a great peace stole into her heart; it was grand and full in its tones, and thought after thought crowded into her mind; voices whispered to her; faces passed before her. Now it grew louder and more passionate, like waves beating against the immovable rock; then soft and slow as the distant murmur of summer seas. And hark! she had caught some familiar air, some old English ballad tune, so sweet and simple. But it changed again to a dreamy waltz measure whose delicious tones brought back memories of her girlhood, of the unwearying dance through still summer nights, with the soft breezes wafting in through open windows, of the brilliantly-lighted hall, and the crowd of dancers whose feet kept time to strains like these.

She felt as if chained to her seat. A wild hope flashed through her mind; it was so like Henry's playing, and yet she could not but acknowledge to herself finer, far better in every way. Oh, if he would only turn his head! And yet why should she be in such a hurry to see his face? it would only disappoint her. For this could not—could
not be what she had thought: it was only in dreams that such things happened—only in dreams.

Still he continued to play, as unconcernedly as if he had a perfect right to be there. But she fancied as she watched him, sitting in the shadow at the other end of the large room, that once he moved a little as if he were trying to look sideways at her. She would still let him go on, whoever he might be; his music did her good, she could not tire of it.

But he began another piece, one that had been familiar to her long ago, a favourite with both her husband and her son. All at once her reserve, her inexplicable shyness of this mysterious stranger, was broken through; trembling and agitated she started from her seat; the tears rushed to her eyes. ‘Not that,’ she cried, ‘oh, not that!’ and her hand was on the musician’s arm. He turned and smiled in her face, but it needed not that smile to tell her who he was. With a cry, ‘My son, you are my son!’ she caught his hands in hers, and the music ended with a jarring chord.
CHAPTER VIII.

'I had a sister whom the blind waves and surges have devoured.'

*Twelfth Night.*

How quickly the hours and days flew by after this! They seemed very short, those first days, to Mrs. Randall and her companion, with whom Time had ambled slowly and drowsily for so long,—too short to hear all that they wanted to hear, and to say all that must be said. But in the midst of this joyful excitement there was one disappointment. Their visitor was only a visitor; he had not come home to stay.

'To Sydney again!' Mrs. Randall cried in dismay.

'I cannot stay in England long,' said Randall. 'Have I not heard you say that I never broke a promise? I ought to be in Sydney not later than the end of March, and in New Zealand within the next month, or my word will most certainly be broken.'

The two ladies instantly perceived that something had been kept back. Doubtless the pith of the story had yet to be communicated. He ought to have told it first; it was the most important thing
of all, they thought, when it was made known to
them. His mother was vexed with herself because
she could not help feeling a slight chill of disap-
pointment. It had been an old dream of hers that
when her son returned it would be to live in
England, in the house which had been his father’s.
He would (so the pleasing romance had it) have
made his fortune in one of those mysterious colonies
where fortunes are to be made easily and expedi-
tiously; he would come back to the old home; he
would marry some nice, amiable English girl; and
she would have a little corner in their house, and
live out the rest of her days with her children,
amongst the scenes which were familiar and homely
to her. But to leave her again so soon, and to
marry, and perhaps live in a far country, was a very
different ending. It consoled her that it was Maud
whom he was going to marry after all. But she
felt all at once that she was a feeble old woman,
who might die before they were able to come to
her; they would be thousands of miles away, and
she should never see them again.

‘Then you will be leaving in a month or two?’
she said.

‘Yes; I shall have to take our passages by the
February steamer.’

‘Our passages!’

‘Well,’—and he laughed,—‘do you want to stay
behind? No; I came for you. There was nothing
else that would have brought me to England. I
should not care to live here now; it is all strange to me. I do not even feel English. I feel like a foreigner in this country, and people almost look upon me as one. And I don't love dull skies and cold gloomy days. I know you will say it is not always so; that you have June as well as November; but I have lived in countries where we may have your June weather on a winter's day, and where we may hope to see the sun oftener than once a week.'

'Yes; that is the way with Australians and New Zealanders,' said Miss Gibson; 'they only come home to grumble at the English climate. As if we had no sunshine, and as if there was no bad weather in their country!'

'It is so far away, and I am an old woman,' said Mrs. Randall.

'I deny both those assertions. No place is far away nowadays; and do you dare to look me in the face and call yourself an old woman, with hardly a gray hair or a wrinkle to show? No, I won't have it! I am not going to believe it.'

'My hair won't turn gray, I know,' said the lady, 'and I have been told that I do not look my age, but that does not alter it. All your reasoning won't bring back my sixtieth birthday.'

'Is one so very old at sixty? Or perhaps it wasn't sixty you meant to say. For my part, I believe it was fifty; and fifty, you know, is quite young. So far! why, it is a pleasure-trip that is taken by people older than you every year. We shall steam
out of this wintry atmosphere into fine weather. It will still be summer when we arrive in Australia, and when we come to New Zealand it will be what they call autumn, but what they ought to call a second summer. Don't I tempt you? don't you want to see the beautiful skies which are clearer and bluer than any you have known?—don't remind me of Italian skies—I won't have them brought into comparison. We can travel together through scenery as grand and as romantic as that which is overdone by tourists in Switzerland. We have our lakes, our mountains and forests, as well as other people. Come! I am persuading you.'

'Ah,' she said, 'I don't need much persuasion after all. You are the only one left to me. I must follow wherever you may go.'

And then they planned a little holiday for themselves before starting on their long voyage. There were two months to spare; why should they spend them in a dull little village, where surely winter was wintrier than anywhere else in England? They had memories of the Riviera, as they had known it long ago; of blue skies, of flowers blooming, a bright sunshine, a delightful air. How pleasant to revisit the places that had been familiar to them years before. Why, two months was an immensity of time; they might go almost anywhere; they might see nearly everything. In that period an American of enterprise could 'do' Europe.

Before leaving England Mrs. Randall wrote to
Mr. Moresby, who was in Jersey for the benefit of his health. Although they had seen little of each other for the last few years, she had never been unfriendly with her son-in-law. He had always been kind to her, and she had understood him better, perhaps, than most people. She felt some regret that she could not see him before her departure; possibly they might never meet again. They were indeed never to see each other more. At that time, even while she was writing to him, Mr. Moresby was lying on his death-bed.

Neither she nor Randall were likely to guess what had been his last act. The letters which might have told them never fell into their hands. After playing hide and seek with the news which was so important to them, and which in their little Italian tour had followed them from place to place, they fairly ran away from it at last. They left Naples by the Orient steamer, and for some time were beyond the reach of letter or message.

Well, it was but a pleasure-trip after all. They had glorious weather; the seas were calm; the winds held their peace while they rushed along in their track of foam on the ocean highway. They were in time to meet Mr. Phillimore in Sydney, according to an appointment between him and Randall. The agent was preparing to go to England again in search of fresh talent for the delectation of the Australians. A great undertaking was on foot, he told Randall. He must make a brilliant
success this time; his reputation was imperilled. He had actually been deceived and imposed on—he, the man who had boasted that he had never brought out a failure. A lecturer introduced by him to the Australian public had shrunk into nothingness when confronted with the expectant colonists. His lectures had told on his agent, however, if they had affected no one else. Poor little Philimore looked worn and jaded; but, with his usual discretion, he said nothing about what he had suffered from the disappointed orator. Mrs. Philimore was not so reticent. She was inclined to be sarcastic, and her references to the person who had been a thorn in her husband's pillow for upwards of three months were not complimentary. Philimore's next importation was to be a journalist; a gentleman who had seen, known, and written about everything and every one. The agent might well look serious. 'Pray for me, my friends,' he said, as he took leave of Randall and his mother. 'I am as much in need of the prayers of a congregation as any man who ever went to sea. I have not had such an anxious time since I brought out an author empowered to read his own writings to as many colonists as would listen to him. Alas! he read them to me all the way over.'

Randall was in Sydney for a few days only. Gatherall's emissaries in Australia were now endeavouring to find him; but perhaps the Sydney branch of the business was not conducted with much
energy, for they did not discover him while there, nor was he made aware that they were anxious to meet with him.

Every one knows that there is many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip, and those who travel much, and pass with fiery haste from one steamer to another, and become acquainted with all the troubles of trans-shipping and hotel porterage, will know as well that there are many slips between the traveller and his luggage. Our travellers had gone on board their steamer in good time, and conceived themselves safely disposed of in the care of a company pledged to convey them to the shores of New Zealand without hurt or harm, when it was discovered that their luggage was only represented by a moiety on board. As the missing half was, as is usual in such cases, the most indispensable, Randall went ashore again to find it. By some blunder it had been left at the hotel. It took him some time to ascertain this, however, and to get it sent on board, while one or two warning blasts from the steamer reminded him that he had not many minutes to spare. Delay and hindrance seemed to follow on each other's steps. He thought he had never spent such a preposterous length of time over so small a piece of business in his life, and as a fitting termination to the whole, found himself abandoned by the steamer in the end.

He was an old traveller, so this was not such an alarming accident in his eyes as it would have
been to an innocent abroad for the first time. He knew that if he left by train for Melbourne on the next day he would be in time for the New Zealand steamer from that port. Unfortunately his mother, having gone by the direct route, would be in New Zealand several days before he could join her. The Melbourne steamer would be fully a week coming up the New Zealand coast from south to north, visiting all her ports of call. This was vexatious; but his mother would know the reason of the misadventure, and when she arrived at her journey’s end would find a telegram waiting, telling her that he had gone round by Melbourne.

He walked back to his hotel. He had noticed once or twice that afternoon a lady, very handsomely dressed, and apparently very desirous of being observed, languidly walking to and fro on the pavement. She was pretty, and her toilet was not untasteful, though perhaps a little too elaborate for street wear; so she had her reward for her pains—many eyes were turned towards her. The first time Randall met this lady she seemed to wish to be looked at. The second time it was evident that she wished to look at him. He thought her conduct peculiar, especially as she paused in her walk while he passed, and stared at him with the utmost coolness. He went into a bookseller’s shop; the lady followed, and, as it were, waited for him at the door.

‘I don’t know what you’ll think of me, Mr. Ran-
dall,' she said; 'but I was determined to speak to you. I suppose you don't remember me.'

'No, indeed,' he said, looking at her, 'and yet I can't help thinking I must have known you once.'

She laughed. 'I shouldn't have known you, if I hadn't seen you in the street with your mother. How you have altered! I was Maria Chase when you knew me, and your sister's maid. I am Mrs. Forster now, and I live in Sidney.'

'You were Maria Chase!' he cried, in astonishment, as he shook the very plump hand, in a glove of exquisite fit, which was held out to him so frankly by the owner. 'Oh, yes, I remember you very well now, and am very pleased to meet you. You left my sister, I suppose, when she married.'

'No, indeed!' cried the former ladies' maid. 'I'd have been indignant then if such a thing had been proposed to me. I don't know how I brought myself to leaving her at all. I should dearly like to see her again. Would she think I was taking a liberty, I wonder, if I wrote? Is she well now, Mr. Randall, and at home again?'

'I wish you could write to her,' he said, with a change in his face. 'Have you never heard? She was lost with her child in that terrible disaster when the Cairngorm was burnt at sea.'

'Never!' Mrs. Forster clapped her tightly-gloved hands together with dangerous violence. 'Mr. Randall, are you dreaming? Your sister never set foot on the Cairngorm. We did intend to come by that
ship; but Mrs. Moresby was frightened of the long voyage in a sailing vessel, and so we came by steamer to Melbourne. But there was another Mrs. Moresby and her child on the Cairngorm. I remember reading their names in the passenger list, and thinking how strange it was to see them there. We came to Melbourne because, you know, Mr. Randall, it was to find you that your sister had left home, and she expected to hear of you there. I left her there—well, I didn't behave very handsomely, I suppose'—and the pretty Mrs. Forster hung her head;—'but Mr. Forster had been on the steamer with us, and we were engaged before we got to Melbourne, and I daresay you know that when people are promised to each other in that way they're inclined to be selfish. I'm sure I was horribly selfish; so Mrs. Moresby went on to New Zealand by herself.'

'But my sister never was in New Zealand,' said Randall.

'Well, I say she never was on the Cairngorm, and she was landed safe enough in New Zealand.'

'Is this all you know?' said Randall. 'I assure you it is a truth that her family have never heard of her since she left England more than five years ago. What part of New Zealand did she go to?'

'Oh, dear! she was going everywhere or anywhere to get news of you. If she hasn't been heard of since, then indeed she must have lost herself somewhere, or have died. You may well look grieved, Mr. Randall; you are the cause of it. It was for
you she left her home, and it was because of you there was never any peace or happiness between Mr. Moresby and her. 'I beg your pardon, though. I've no right to talk in this way.'

'Yes; you are right,' he said gloomily. 'I have myself to blame for that; but what a fearful mistake it has been! I do not know what I ought to do. Surely there is more you can tell me; yet we cannot talk in the street about these things.'

'Come, then, to my house,' said Mrs. Forster. 'You must know'—and she smiled archly—'I don't pretend to be anything better than I am, and I've not married above myself, though my husband is a rich man. But as we've money enough to last our day, and can afford to live in good style, we don't see any harm in doing so. I daresay, though, people call us upstarts and purse-proud.'

Randall went with Mrs. Forster to her house, a large and handsome one, which bore witness to the truth of her words that she lived in good style. Mr. Forster was invisible, being at that hour engaged in concocting an address to his constituents which was to prove that he had done great things for them in the last session of Parliament. His constituents were obstinate and ungrateful, so he had to be careful in what he wrote, and as he knew from experience that a train of thought once broken is not easily reunited, he begged to be excused when Mrs. Forster wished to introduce him to Randall. She could only exhibit her two children therefore. Her pride in these was
very pardonable; as much so as the intention she had formed of educating them for a class greatly above that from which their parents had come was worthy of praise.

She could tell Randall but little more of his sister.

'You will have to seek for news of her in New Zealand,' she said; 'but I am afraid'—and here she began to cry very unabashedly—'that she won't be found any more in this world. For she was ill most of the time we were in Melbourne.'

'Ill, and travelling alone!'

'Yes; she was strong enough to travel though, and very few would have thought there was anything amiss. She didn't suspect it herself, though she had been very unwell just before leaving England; but in Melbourne she was worse, and I persuaded her to see a doctor. He said it was disease of the heart, and that she ought to be very careful. He gave her advice, and she looked much better before she left. But do you not think of another thing, Mr. Randall? What has become of her little boy? Oh, how I wish I hadn't been so selfish! I was young and strong, and your sister had been a kind mistress to me. Why did I let her go into a strange country by herself? If I had only known!'

'But you could not have known, Mrs. Forster,' said Randall, pitying her distress. 'It is well that I met with you. But for an accident I should have been on my way to New Zealand before this. Now
I have all the more reason to be there as soon as possible. I only wish I had a better clue to follow.'

'I have just thought of something!' cried Mrs. Forster. 'Jim (I mean my husband), who had been in New Zealand, gave Mrs. Moresby the name of some one he knew who kept a boarding-house in one of the towns. She had asked him a good many questions about the places she expected to visit. It's only a chance; but he may remember the name; and, if she got so far, she would be sure to lodge there. I'll run and ask him.'

Mrs. Forster actually did run, and disturbed her husband in the middle of a long sentence.

'Now, Jim,' she cried, 'collect your thoughts.'

'Just what I want to do,' replied the gentleman, 'and you've driven them all away. Don't bother. I'm polishing this off beautifully.'

'Oh, I don't care for your speech,' said his wife. 'What boarding-house, somewhere in New Zealand, did you recommend Mrs. Moresby to stay at?'

'Bless me!' said Mr. Forster, clasping his forehead with his hands, 'what kind of a memory do you think I've got? How can I remember such a thing after all this time? I don't know that I recommended one to her at all. I'm sure I shouldn't, unless she asked me.'

'Of course she asked you! I remember it, if you don't. Put away your speech; you can think of nothing while it's before you. It was a place where you had stayed sometimes, and you knew the people.'
'Oh——' said Mr. Forster, beginning to feel the dawnings of memory, 'I know—that is—I used to know; but the name has just slipped my memory. If you wait while I write this last bit——'

'No; come into the drawing-room,' said the inexorable Mrs. Forster, tugging at his sleeve. Mr. Forster made but feeble resistance, being very much under the control of the lady. She brought him into the room and introduced him to Randall, and then jogged his memory to such purpose that he succeeded in writing out the address which was required. Randall read it with surprise.

'Was this it?' he said. 'Why, I know the house very well. I have often stayed at Mrs. Sherlock's.'

'Mrs. Sherlock is a cousin of my mother's,' said Mr. Forster. 'That was the reason I had been at her house, and I daresay I should mention it to Mrs. Moresby if she asked me about lodging-houses, as my wife is positive she did, though I declare I haven't the least recollection of it.'

Mrs. Forster and her husband had no other information to give Randall that was likely to be of use, and he had no heart for further conversation on the subject. But when he would have taken his leave, they made so many objections, and were so vehement in their desire that he should spend the one night which was at his disposal in Sydney at their house, that he was fain to yield himself to their hospitable entreaties. He found his host to be an
intelligent though not an educated man, and he had opportunities of perceiving that Mrs. Forster knew how to rule her household. The next day they kindly saw him off by the train, speeding him on his way with good wishes, and oft-repeated assurances that he would always be a welcome guest in their house.

It was a relief, in his unsettled state, to be on the road once more. A strange feeling had come over him; his mind was confused, and even, he thought, wandered at times. He could not rest anywhere, wearied though he was with the entanglement of thought which seemed to be ceaselessly sweeping through his brain. Did it ever stop—that whirligig? It might lull for a time, so that he could snatch an hour or two of restless, unrefreshing slumber, but it was at work again as soon as he awoke. He had been shocked and disturbed by hearing of his sister so suddenly; but it ought not to have unhinged his mind in this way. 'Am I going to be ill?' he wondered; and then he resolved that he would not give way to it. Yet it would have its way in spite of him.

In Melbourne he had hardly a moment to spare: it was not likely that Mr. Gatherall's inquiring agent would catch him there. A feverish impatience possessed him—a desire to get on quicker and still quicker. 'At least I shall not have to wait here,' he congratulated himself when he found that the steamer was in harbour. He was thankful again when she steamed out to sea that same day. But oh, that
slow steamer!—those exasperating delays! He grudged the stoppage at Hobart, he hated that little place at the Bluff where they must spend a day. They were detained there some hours longer than usual, and it was late in the evening when they left the little village on the Land's End of New Zealand to its dreary quietness. A black moonless night and a treacherous coast were before them. That night they must thread their way between rocks and islets so closely set together that to be over fearful of one was to rush upon another. It was a Scylla and Charybdis whose dangers were trifled with because mariners had happily escaped from them so often. Because, time after time, those dangers had been defied with impunity, their existence was forgotten or disbelieved by those whose business was not to go down to the sea in ships. So no light burned upon the rocks; no beacon warned the helmsman from the low and mist-wrapped shore. But when, in the darkness, a ship rushes on the jagged reefs, and the sea takes its spoil of human life and treasure, it is always the seaman at the helm who steered a wrong course, the look-out who slumbered, or the captain who was rash or ignorant. For some one must be found in fault, and it would be ungrateful to blame the patriots who have saved their country the cost of the oil which might have burned to waste upon those rocks for night after night. Many wrecks are needed to build a lighthouse. It is soon forgotten, this one item in the long list of sea sorrows, and ships go
merrily by again. Yet it is true that the sirens sing here, and often have their songs dulled the ears of men; so that they knew not it was the sound of the breakers they heard, and dreamt not until it was too late,

'That here is none but the wild wind's haven,
With death for the harbour bar.'
CHAPTER IX.

'Ships are but boards; sailors but men.'

'For here, when the night roars round, and under
The white sea lightens and leaps like fire,
Acclaimed of storm and applauded in thunder,
Sits death on the throne of his crowned desire.
Yea, hardly the hand of the god might fashion
A seat more strong for his strength to take,
For the might of his heart and the pride of his passion
To rejoice in the wars they make.'

ALGERNON SWINBURNE.

The steamer ploughed her way onwards. From stem to stern all her lamps were burning, like a chain of stars shining cheerily above the gloomy waters. There were no other stars, for the sky was not less gloomy than the sea. The sun had gone down with angry redness, and ever since the clouds had been surging upwards from the south-east, until a canopy of gray hid the blue of heaven. There was a melancholy moaning now and then, which meant that the wind would rise in a few hours, and the long steady roll of the green billows, which as yet only rocked the steamer, would be stronger by and by.

In the lulls between the puffs of wind there was a great quietness. No sounds for miles and miles,
except those which the steamer bore along with her—the regular throb of the engines, the music and singing, the voices and laughter of the passengers. They were spending a merry evening. They had been a week in each other's company, and at sea a week is quite a long time, during which one may become very intimate with a fellow-voyager. There were those who had formed friendships which they vowed should not be broken by the end of the voyage. It was agreed that this had been one of the most pleasant trips any of them could remember, and there were some on board who had often made the passage. It had been a smooth passage too, till their faithful vessel's keel had plunged into the boisterous seas which rush about the extremity of New Zealand. They were in New Zealand waters now, and to one-half of the passengers New Zealand meant home.

Yes—they were going home, and with the land they lived in so near, that, but for the darkness they could have seen it, they felt too secure to have a care for the evil portents of the sky and sea. A landsman will love to hug the shore, though it may have been strewn with wrecks. Timid souls who, while on a ship in mid-ocean, are never able to forget that only a few planks stand between them and fathomless depths, will sleep in peace while they are running the gauntlet between the reefs, the islands, and headlands of a coast to which a sailor would much rather give a wide berth. But such things do not claim the
thoughts of those who are but a day from their hearths and homes.

The Australasians are a nation of travellers. Of New Zealanders, in particular, it has been said that they travel more than any other community of the same size. As usual, at that season of the year, the steamer was crowded. What with sunburnt Victorians hastening to recruit their energies in a cooler climate, and what with New Zealanders whose business or pleasure in distant countries was ended, every berth was full, and doubtless many places as well which never had been designed for berths. This was the favourite boat, and many who might have waited for another had chosen to return by her. There was nothing to warn them that a fate pursued her from wave to wave, and would overtake her in the end.

There were men whom money affairs had taken abroad; had they foreseen the end of their journey a world’s wealth would not have tempted them. There were honest artisans who had been to sell the labour of their hands in the best market, and after a time of industry and careful saving were bringing their gains to their families. There were sons and daughters returning home after an education had been finished or a profession learnt. There were the old couple whom a son had sent for, and who were so happy, because they had only a peaceful old age before them, and toil and penury would know them no more. There were the sisters who
were coming out to their brother, and who had laughed, and chattered, and been more unaffectedly joyous during the last two months than in all their lives before, because they had left behind them the poor pinched life of a school governess. And, oh, the pity of it!—there was the brightest, sweetest, most lovable, the favourite of them all—the smiling light-hearted girl, who herself was at school only the other day, and had come half-way round the world because some one in New Zealand had asked her to share his fortunes. She must needs tell this to all the other ladies; for with such guileless creatures the mouth really does speak out of the abundance of the heart. They have all heard, even before the Bluff is reached, how long she has been engaged, and how it might have happened before, only Mamma thought she was too young, and how Walter—who, of course, is the some one awaiting her—has been very fortunate; so that they will be perfectly comfortable, which has removed Papa's great objection. Some of them—a favoured few—have seen the fortunate Walter's portrait, and have sworn with all the feminine oaths of assurance that he is handsome. Some other persons (not feminine) have been heard to say that Walter is a lucky fellow. And there have been confidential descriptions—blame her not for this frivolity—of the trousseau, folded away in I know not how many boxes, and consigned to inaccessible regions, or she would have been delighted to show it. Especially
has every one heard of that dress of cream white satin, shimmering through filmy lace, which has been packed with an infinity of care, and in wrappers innumerable, in a trunk all to itself. An unsurpassable bridal dress, they have assured her.

They have been told all this, and naturally they have retailed it to others; so that all on the steamer, passengers, captain, officers, even sailors, know her as the 'bride.' She is a privileged passenger; stewards and stewardesses, who consult their own ease when ordinary persons desire their attendance, would wear themselves out in her service. And when she has confessed to a great fear which troubles her, that there will be some mistake, and no one will come to meet her when the steamer arrives, and then she will feel so desolate, and not know what to do or where to go,—it is a small wonder that one and all should vow to take care of her in that trying hour. She is in charge of them all, from the captain downwards, and it will be strange if harm or trouble befall her.

Amongst those who were not home-returning New Zealanders a young Australian had, more than all the rest, attracted Randall's notice. It was not merely because they shared the same cabin, and were thus forced into a certain degree of intimacy; there was something peculiarly winning in the quiet, almost melancholy manner of his companion, which interested Randall in the first hour of their acquaintance, and would have compelled his attention where-
ever they might have met. He was still in the same restless, disturbed state of mind which had come over him in Sydney, and he had little inclination for the conversation or the amusements of the other passengers. Wearied of everything, and impatient to be at the end of the journey, he would willingly have travelled alone, had such a thing been possible, except for the companionship of this one person whose society really was pleasant to him. It did not pass unnoticed that he would talk with him when he did not seem to be in a mood to converse with any one else, and those who remarked this intimacy, and contrasted it with the reserved habits of Randall, said that they must have known each other for a long while, as he was too misanthropical in his character to form a friendship with any one in a few days. Other people, however, more justly attributed his misanthropy to the fact that he had been ill, or would be very soon,—a supposition which his appearance rendered probable enough. He gave them some music one evening; and then they said he was a genius; and after that no one would have been surprised at any eccentricity of conduct he might have manifested. After that, too, his friend, whom they called Moray, seemed to make him the subject of a sort of hero-worship. They were something alike, perhaps, in disposition, and in one thing they certainly resembled each other—both were in a great hurry to be in New Zealand. Mr. Moray's mission, however, was only a prosaic
affair of every-day life: he was obliged to go to collect money which was owing to him, and he seemed such a gentle amiable sort of man that it was not thought his debtors would be much terrified at his appearance. 'Will he ever get it, d'ye think?' said a sporting gentleman to a friend of his, as in the blissful retirement of the smoking-room they were discussing other people's business. 'Not he!' replied the friend. The sporting gentleman expected to get a good deal during his sojourn in New Zealand.

Mr. Moray wore mourning. He told Randall it was for his father, and that this debt-collecting excursion was one of the results of taking the business into his own hands. His mother and sister had been unreasonably anxious about him, and had wanted him to let the money go rather than take a voyage on its account.

'I don't know why; but they have made me as timid as themselves,' he said. 'I almost wish I had let it go. But our means are not so large that we can allow two or three hundred to be lost. They have put thoughts into my head I can't get rid of. I even feel sometimes as if I were not to see Melbourne again.'

'This is not such a long or dangerous passage, though,' said Randall.

'No. I don't know of anything; but perhaps one may feel a danger which can't be seen. I wish, at least, I had not come by this steamer.
They wanted me to wait. If anything should happen——'

'But we have no reason to suppose that anything will happen.'

'You think I'm foolishly nervous? I thought at first you were anxious like myself.'

'Not about that,' said Randall, feeling perfectly apathetic on the subject of danger. 'I never thought of it.'

'The others don't, evidently,' said Moray, as, mingled with bursts of laughter and loud exclamations, the strains of a comic song, and a noisy rattling pianoforte accompaniment, came to their ears. 'I would rather be like them, and not know till it comes. You are not going down, are you? I don't think either of us is much inclined to sleep. Stay here a little longer.'

'Not to humour you in your fancies of danger, though,' said Randall. 'The cautiousness with which we are feeling our way along the coast ought to convince you that we are in careful hands.'

They went below soon after this. There had been no change up to the time of their leaving the deck. Still the same gray curtain over everything. The night went on; there was not a passenger astir, and probably not one awake—few lights now; no laughter nor music. The same great stillness was on the sea; the wind had hardly freshened, and the expected storm seemed long in coming. To the north-east was the land; but it is a low-lying coast,
and the mists hid it from sight. But from that
direction, when the wind was quiet, came a sound
which as yet no one on the steamer had heard. It
is a sound you will never forget if you hear it, on
such a night as this, from a hidden coast. It is a
sound they who shall live to tell of this night never
will forget to the last day of their lives.

But no one hears, and they steam on. Nearer
yet; and now it cannot be mistaken. Breakers
ahead! there are the white crests curling over as
they fling themselves on the rocks. So near are
they that the foam swirls around the steamer.
There is but a second, and in that second the
captain has sprung to the wheel; but no steersman
can save her now. Into the white water she rushes;
they have been steering her to her doom for the last
half-hour. There is a grating, a quivering start, and
then, with a fearful shock, she has hurled herself with
all the force of her weight upon the reef, and wave
after wave dashes on her in wild triumph.

At that shock all below started from their
slumbers. Oh, what an awakening from sweet dreams
of home! Frightened, shrieking women and children
crowded on to the deck, believing from the loud
noise of the seas which struck the vessel, and from
her continual bumping on the rock, that she was
going to pieces. But the land was now in sight,
and there was comfort in that; it was so near, they
must be safe. The captain assured them there was
no danger (did he believe it himself?); the steamer
was not breaking up, and they would be landed when it was light enough.

Landed — but how? What boat would live through the surf which was running in upon the beach? Nevertheless his words quieted them, and the most panic-stricken soon saw the uselessness of their outcries. There was no disturbance after the first shock had passed over, and amongst the crew all were willing to abide by orders. The boats were cleared away in readiness to be lowered as soon as it should be light enough to find a landing-place; and they waited for the morning as they had never yet waited for another day.

It came at last. Not with a rosy glow; not with the sun going up in his strength behind the eastern hills. A clouded sky, an angry sea, and a long line of surf between them and the shore, were what it showed them. It seemed well-nigh impossible to pass that barrier of foam; but, with so many lives at stake, impossibilities must be dared. No boat can be taken through the surf, but a man may swim through it, and bear the tidings of the disaster to those on land.

When the first boat was being lowered, and some of the men were with difficulty taking their places in it, Randall saw that Moray was close to him. Curiously enough he had not seen anything of him up to that time, although they had been aroused at the same moment, and had left the cabin together. Moray was without coat or waistcoat; he had not
had time to find these, and the greatcoat he had
snatched up in his hurry he had taken off to wrap
round a poor shivering woman, who, thinking only of
saving bare life, had rushed out in her night-clothes.
It had been impossible to return to the cabins after
the first ten minutes, for the water had immediately
gushed in at every opening. The engine-room, as
Randall had just seen, was half full of water, and the
fires were out. The unfortunate vessel had broken
amidships, and the sea washed over her stern. But
most of those on her deck, in view of the waste of
storm-driven water around them, thought it safest to
hold by her till rescue came.

Moray’s eyes met Randall’s with a peculiar, half-
reproachful glance. ‘You laughed at my fancies,’
he said.

‘Do you mean to say you foresaw this?’ answered
his friend. ‘All isn’t over yet.’

‘You have heard the captain saying there was no
danger. He is obliged to say such things, or those
poor women would be mad with fright. He knows
better than you or I what case we are in. Can we
land through that surf, or can we afford to wait for
help? I think’—and he lowered his voice—‘that
help must come within the next six hours, or we are
lost. Do you see those fellows? They would rush the
boat, but the captain is firm, and keeps them in hand.’

Some passengers, who had attempted to get into
the boat, were ordered out by the captain, and
sullenly fell back to their places. The men whom
he had selected from the crew, on the contrary, though they obeyed without a murmur, said to one another that they were going to their deaths. The captain called for volunteers to swim ashore from the boat. He looked for a response towards the steerage passengers, a number of whom were strong young men. They were ready to offer themselves for the work, dangerous though it was. Some were chosen by the captain, and afterwards sent back. In his anxiety not to throw away life in vain he resolved only to send one man. Randall, followed by his friend, had pressed forward with the rest. Something which Moray saw in the other's face prompted him to ask, 'Are you going?'

'Yes,' said Randall. 'I can't endure to stand here doing nothing. If a life has to be risked it may as well be mine. I will go,' he cried, stepping out before the rest.

The captain took time, even in the hurry of the moment to notice the excited look, the flushed face, and dilated eyes of the man who cried out to him in this way. 'Do you know what you have to do?' he said doubtfully.

'I have swam through a surf as heavy as that once before,' said Randall. 'I know this coast. You can't see it from here, but there is a house near to the beach. The nearest telegraph station is in that direction, twenty miles away. Some of these men who have volunteered have wives and children. I had better go than they.'
'I would go with you if I could swim,' said Moray.

'One life is enough to risk,' said the captain. He gave his instructions to Randall in a few plain words; whoever might have lost his head that day he was not the one. Long afterwards Randall remembered his face as he saw it last, and the look with which he followed the boat as it left the ship. The fixed calmness which comes near to utter despair was on his countenance. He would do all that he could to the very end, but hope had left him.

Moray was at his friend's side as he turned to leave the deck.

'Take care of this for me,' said Randall, giving him a ring. 'It has worn loose lately, and I should lose it if I kept it on. If I don't get through you will send it to my mother. Better put it on; that's the safest way.'

'If I live she shall have it,' said Moray; 'but it may be safer with you among the breakers than here on my hand. Good-bye, for I may never see you again.'

He was holding on with one hand; with the other, cold and stiffened as a leaden one, he grasped Randall's. As long as Randall could look back he was standing in the same place, straining his eyes after the departing boat, the wind blowing his hair about his blanched face, and the spray of the seas, which dashed almost to his feet, drenching through and through his clothing.

They watched that boat—oh, how anxiously!
Like a little shell it was tossed from the crest to the hollow of the waves; like a shell it might be crushed in an instant by their power. As one roller after another, like a great wall of dark green water, followed it, they dreaded lest it should be swallowed up in their mass. Now it was hidden from their eyes; it had gone. No; it rose again, buoyant as a float, on the crest of another wave. It neared the beach; it had reached that impassable line of breakers. They held their breath while they saw the swimmer fling himself into the whirling flood. Now—now was the moment, and their eyes pierced the distance with an intensity of longing. They saw him again! No: it was nothing: in that seething cauldron, where wave crashed into wave every moment, what was the strength of a man? What was his life worth now? The time grew long; he must be lost. But that last great wave which went up so high on the beach has thrown something from its grasp—a living thing, which can just weakly drag itself out of the backward sweep. A cheer burst from those on the steamer; their messenger was safe.

They had forgotten themselves in watching him; now they could think again of their own danger. They saw him leave the beach, as soon as he had recovered strength, to take the news of their peril and their cry for help where help might be found. But it would be long ere help could reach them. Every minute now was an immensity of time in its possibilities; every grain of sand in the hour-glass
was as a precious jewel in their sight. Three of their boats were broken in pieces; the other two had saved a few; but they could no longer approach the steamer on account of the fearful sea which had been steadily rising ever since daybreak. Hope left those who clustered together on the highest part of the forecastle, just above the wash of the sea. They saw people running to and fro on the beach, watching their agony, and wringing their hands because they were powerless to save them. They stood face to face with death; and in the awe of his approach the tears dried in their eyes, and the poor sobbing women, who clung to their children as if they could hold them safe in their arms, were quieted and calm. For it must come now; all has been done that men can do. To the last they have been faithful to one another. No sailor has turned from his duty; the captain has valued his own life less than theirs. No one can tell their story to the end; no one could bear to listen to it, if it were told in all its truth. This they knew who watched from the beach, that one by one the waves tore them from their hold and carried them away in their depths. The sea rose higher and higher till it rolled in mountain waves. Onward they came like hungry wolves; they broke upon the lost vessel; her decks crashed beneath their weight. They swirled back again; and where were the few who had clung to the railing a moment ago? Wave upon wave again; there was nothing now to check their wild rush but the masts. Would it beat them
down also, or would they defy the power of the sea
till help came for the few men who were on them? Oh, well may they look seaward for a sail, and well
may they look landward to the fires on the beach,
where the watchers are who will not leave before the
tragedy is played out to its end! O day, that has
seemed so long, because from moment to moment life
and death have wrestled with each other—be longer
yet! But slowly—slowly, yet all too soon, the sun
declines, and the gray mists rise from the heaving sea.

Then Darkness and the Night. The horrors of
the sea are tenfold greater when the light is gone.
The shout of an army is on the blast; the army of
those who were never wrapped in shrouds, for whom
no grave was hollowed, no knell was rung, nor prayer
repeated. Victims of the insatiate sea, their phantoms
rise and fall with the waves, their hands beckon from
the depths to those who are so nearly in their grasp.

All through the night it beats upon them; all
through the night they hang there. There is a light
moving on the waters; surely help is nigh, and they
raise a feeble cheer. But a mist comes before them,
and the light is gone. And towards morning, above
the roar of the sea, and above the crash of the break-
ing masts, a cry goes up—it is the last. Down,
down now with everything; the sea has its way at
last, and its proud waves find nothing to stay them
in their wild career.

And they need wait no longer in the towns, whose
lights shine within the bays and on the headlands of
the coast, for those who have so nearly won home
will come no more. And they need make no
wedding-feast for the golden-haired girl whom they
called the bride, for she has been bidden to another
marriage-supper, and whiter far her bridal robe than
that prepared for her on earth. They will find it on
the shore, tangled amongst the sea-weeds; but her
they will not find. The jealous sea hides that calm
white face, lying fathoms down, where no storm can
ever rage. Not a whisper; not a footfall breaks the
silence of that dark grave.

And again it was morning. Oh, what a fair and
lovely dawn! The clouds had all been blown from
the sky, and the roughest of the waves had golden
crests in the sunlight. The sea was high—it is
never stilled on this coast; but it rolled in rejoicingly,
as if it were a sport to toss upon the sand the frag-
ments of the ship it had broken on the rocks. A
long way outside the reef a faintly-outlined pillar of
smoke rose into the clear sky. Larger it grew and
rose higher above the water line, until the red funnel
and dark hull of a steamer could be seen. There
was other life upon the waters: a white-sailed cutter,
towing an open boat which had tossed up and down
here all night. It had held some of the few who
were saved from the wreck. The steamer met them,
received them on board, and altered her course.
There was no need now to steer closer to the fatal
reefs, for it was certain that the help she brought
was all too late.
CHAPTER X.

Under thick trees about it swaying
   A humpbacked hovel crouches low;
The roof-tree bends, the walls are fraying,
   And on the threshold mosses grow.

One curl of silver smoke is twining
   Its pale threads with the silent air,
To tell God that there yet is shining
   A soul-spark in that ruined lair.'

Théophile Gautier.

A mile from the place where the blowing sand of
the coast had piled itself into hills and ridges, in the
shelter of which scraggy plants and coarse grass
could grow, was a house. It was 'the house' of the
district, for there was none other within twelve or
fifteen miles, unless two or three shepherds' huts were
to be dignified by the name. It was a tolerably old
house; for it had been built some fifteen years
before, when the sheep-run, of which it was the
homestead, had first been taken up. A tolerably
large one, too, for those parts, as it had eight or nine
rooms, and appanages and appurtenances of different
sizes and shapes, and also different materials, cor-
rugated iron and wood predominating.

It was an ugly house, and it stood in an ugly
country, as flat as a table, and only varied by tussocky lumps of grass or other lumps, which on close examination proved to be sheep. There were no trees worthy of the name, though, at some distance inland, there were hills beautifully clad with forests. The country was pleasant enough near to these hills, or where the rivers ran; but round the house—though not unprofitable when the sheep are taken into account—it was decidedly unlovable.

This was the solitude to which Stephen Langridge had gone nearly four years before. He breakfasted alone in the front room of the house, which, from some whim of the builder, was not in front, opposite to the sea, but looked to the back, where there was nothing to be seen except a swampy straggling stream, and the usual arrangement of tussocks. He had been accustomed to breakfast alone in this room ever since he had come to the place; so it was not reprehensible that for want of better company his dog should be his vis-à-vis at the table, and that he should have a book propped up before him. A solitary person is apt to turn into a bookworm. Stephen had read more during his seclusion than his friends would ever have thought possible. For at a station—though all station managers will deny this fact—there is not always much to do. There are certain great times—shearing-time most especially—when men condense all the work they have not done for a long while before into the exertions, well-nigh superhuman, of a few days, and elated with
their achievements, deceive themselves into thinking they have been working at high pressure all the year round. But as a man, unfortunately, cannot shear his sheep oftener than once in twelve months, and as he would be but a foolish shepherd who was for ever following them and waiting upon them, it comes about that to keep a sheep farm means to have much leisure for at least three-quarters of the year.

Although the sitting-room commanded no very choice prospect, its interior was pleasing to the eye. It was well arranged and neatly furnished; there were books and pictures, including the portraits of the Langridge family,—those of Stephen’s sisters forming a galaxy of beauty above the chimney-piece. There were stuffed birds,—Stephen was now a merciless slaughterer of both fish and fowl,—and on a table in one corner was an unfinished piece of wood-carving, which had saved him from the reproach of idleness during many a long winter’s evening.

He finished a chapter, and poured himself out a second cup of coffee. He could hear a sound like the rumbling of distant thunder, but he knew it too well to mistake it for that.

‘There must be a sea on this morning,’ he said, ‘and the wind’s rising. I’ve a good mind to go down to the beach and see the big rollers come in. Well, what’s amiss, old fellow?’

The dog, who had been sitting with the greatest
propriety for the last half-hour, mutely contemplat-
ing his master’s face, pricked his ears, sniffed, and
growled. Simultaneously the other dogs innumer-
able which infested the place barked savagely.
Some one expostulated, and distributed smart blows
amongst the unruly pack, which only raged the
more. There was such a hurly-burly that Stephen
prepared to go to the rescue. He opened the door,
and immediately, without ceremony, the visitor
rushed in.

From head to foot he was soaked and dripping
with water. His hair clung together in thick damp
masses, his face had dried in streaks, he was bare-
footed and only partly clothed. He was a tall,
broad-shouldered man, with massively-moulded chest
and arms; but his face was white and haggard; he
was breathless and exhausted, as if he had just
passed through some struggle which had demanded
all his strength.

‘Hallo!’ cried the astonished Stephen, checking
the pressing attentions of a dog, which would still
hang about and growl at one whom he evidently
considered a mere pariah. ‘Where have you come
from—out of the sea?’

‘I was in it ten minutes ago,’ said the man,
speaking with difficulty, he was so out of breath
with running. ‘Didn’t you hear the guns before
light?’ he gasped; ‘the steamer went on the
rocks.’

‘We heard no guns,’ said Stephen. ‘A steamer
on the reef in this weather! Good heavens! then, where are the other people?'

'They were safe when our boat left. I swam through the breakers.'

'You swam through the breakers!' said Stephen, looking at this modern Hercules with an admiring eye. 'Not many men would like to try that.'

'I had to do it,' said the man; 'no boat could get near. It was a fearful piece of work, though. I've run all the way from the beach,' he added, with a kind of gasping sigh. 'Has no one been here?'

'No man has been here,' said Stephen.

'There was one got ashore an hour ago; at least we thought so. He was to have brought the news to you. For God's sake! as he hasn't, let some one ride with a telegram before more time's lost.'

'I'll send a man this instant,' said Stephen, 'and do you sit down and get something to eat; you look as if a breakfast would do you good.'

One of the station hands happening to pass the window at this moment, Stephen shouted to him, 'Angus, I want you to take a telegram. You have the horses in the stockyard, saddle one directly. Take mine, he'll do it in the least time. Make haste!'

The wondering Angus almost flew to the saddle, so great was his haste. Stephen scrawled a telegram after obtaining a few particulars from the messenger, and the next moment Angus was away at a gallop.
'It's an hour and a half's ride, do what he will,' said Stephen, as he looked after him, 'and the sea must be very heavy from the sound.'

'It's running mountains high,' said the man, 'but she wasn't breaking up when I left.'

'They can't send a steamer down the coast in less than ten or twelve hours,' said Stephen thoughtfully. 'From the Bluff will be the best chance. You're eating nothing, and yet I don't suppose you've had a breakfast this morning.'

'I can't eat,' said the man, and though he was hospitably pressed by Stephen, he would have no more. 'I've no heart for eating or anything else till it's settled. And it's no use putting on dry things. I must go down to the beach to help; I promised I would as soon as I'd got you to know.'

'I'll go with my men, and we'll do what we can,' said Stephen.

All the available force of the station was mustered. Ordering the men to follow, as soon as they had got together what was likely to be of use, Stephen walked down with the messenger.

'You said a man swam ashore before you?' he said to him.

'We thought so; but he wasn't anywhere about when I landed, and as he hasn't been here it's most likely he was washed back again. We didn't think he could do it, though he was so ready to volunteer.'

'Who was he?'

'Oh, one of the saloon passengers; I don't know
his name. Poor fellow, he'd plenty of spirit; but he hardly looked fit for a tussle with the breakers.'

'How is it you didn't see what became of him?'

'We? It wasn't easy to keep our eye on him. We couldn't see much, down in the trough of the wave half the time. We thought he had got on shore, because we heard the people on the steamer cheering.'

They crossed the sandhills, meeting the bitterly cold south-east wind. A mist seemed to hang upon the shore; it was the sand and spray which the fierce blast drove before it. Finer than dust though the particles were they cut the face like a knife.

'There she lies!' said the man, pointing to the reef. 'It will be a miracle if any boat gets nigh her again.'

'Surely we shall be able to do something,' said Stephen; but he looked at the tumult of the sea with a sinking heart.

On the beach they met the few men who had succeeded in landing. Their boat had been swamped in the surf, and had come ashore broken open at the bows. But it was the only boat to be had, and some men were hastily mending it as well as they could with the tools at hand. The other boat, from which the messenger had swum ashore, was some distance out, unable either to communicate with the steamer again or to come near the land.

There was no trace of the man who had been the first to attempt a landing, and all thought he
must have perished. No one knew his name. Those who had been saved were steerage passengers or belonged to the crew. They knew him only by sight; it was seldom that they could tell the names of more than a few out of a numerous crowd of passengers who were leaving or coming on board at each port.

Stephen and his men found that little could be done. They could not launch the boat when it was mended. Short as was the distance between them and the drowning people on the steamer they were powerless to help them. When the shipwrecked men had been taken to the station and fed and clothed, those on the beach only remained there in the hope of being able to rescue some who might be washed ashore, and to watch, as long as there was life on the wreck—a painful but an absorbing task from which they could not tear themselves away. Others joined them, as the day wore on, for the news had flown, as only ill news can, all along that coast. Beside their watchfires they waited, Stephen amongst the rest, till further waiting was in vain.

Now while they sought for that nameless passenger until their search ended in the conviction that the sea had claimed him again, he was struggling farther and farther inland, not only turning his back on the sea but also the house he wished to reach. Some bewilderment of mind, or some change in the appearance of the place since he had seen it last—years before—misled him. There was no house in all the bleak dreary prospect. The grassy plains
stretched as far as the distant ranges without the sign of a dwelling. He saw sheep which fled before him, wild as the wind, but he met with none who tended the flocks. He remembered that for miles on either hand the land was in one large holding; a place for sheep and not for men. Besides the huts of a few station hands, there would be no house over all this wide territory but the one he could not find.

Dizzily and half-blindly he wandered about, first one way and then the other. Conscious hardly of anything else, he was almost maddened by the thought that the duty to which he had pledged himself remained undone, while so many lives were hanging in the balance, lives which might be saved if his message could be sent in time, but which must be lost if he could tell it to no one. A wild thought seized him; he would walk to the telegraph station; he knew the way, miles—miles beyond the bend of the river. Impossible! he could not get there in time. He shouted, but his voice sounded so weak and hollow in his own ears that he could not hope it would be heard, unless some one was very near indeed. His head burned and throbbed; he was not sure where he was, whether near the beach or not. But the sound of the sea no longer rang in his ears, so he must have walked for some distance. 'Why?' he asked himself, as his mind for a moment was clearer—'why am I walking this way? The house was near the beach,' and he turned back. Oh,
weary, weary way! walk as he would, it was still the same.

Sometimes there was a dusty path trodden by the sheep, and he would follow it, because it was easier to his uncovered feet than the sharp-edged grass. He came to a stream, and thinking only of his burning thirst and of the pain with which his head throbbed, lay down beside it, and drank till he was satisfied. Then again he turned back to the path.

It became more like a road, wider and beaten hard. He had forgotten why he was here by this time. He knew he was going somewhere; perhaps it was to the foot of the ranges. He had to look for some one there; he would search through all those ravines, but he would find him. Hark! was that a stealthy footstep behind him? He started back; it was only the bitter wind which followed after. He was glad it could not bring him the horrible sound of the sea any more; he had escaped from that.

Some object, larger than any he had yet seen upon his way rose before him. It was a clump of young pines—a small plantation in the treeless waste. The path led towards it. He went on; there was a hut, and a curl of blue smoke from its chimney. Here, then, was life in the wilderness.

He had no sooner seen all this than it began to melt away again. The nearer he came the fainter it grew. The door of the hut was open, and he
heard a voice, not speaking to him, but repeating sentences in a low monotonous tone, as if reading. Then his feet felt heavy as lead; the ground seemed to rise up to meet him. He fell beside the path, and the voice went on reading in the same measured tones.

The hut was small and low, the walls were built of mud, and the roof was thickly thatched. Inside a fire smouldered; there was a bed covered with a red blanket, one or two small boxes for seats, and a shelf-like table under the window, where sat the man who was reading. He read a letter, and he read it aloud, because if he had gone outside and shouted it forth at the highest pitch of his voice, no one in the world would have been the wiser. In that solitude the sound of his own voice had become dear to him. For days together he neither saw nor heard a human being. If he could not have talked to himself in all probability he would have gone mad.

How often had that letter been read over? It was a soiled and tattered scrap with so much handling. It was only from habit that he held it before him while he repeated the words, for he knew them by heart. It was in a woman's handwriting; a lady's, one might say: the letters were evenly and delicately formed, and the language was not only correct but also such as could not have been used by any but an educated and thoughtful person.

She began by explaining that she had not
written of late because she had been unwilling to
give an account of her unhappy situation. As he
insisted on it, she would tell him all. In the plain
simple language of truth she told how one mis-
fortune after another had fallen on her and their
children (for she was his wife); how loss of their
little all, illness, destitution, and want, had all been
their portion. She described the squalid poverty
of the place they called home; and the reader’s
voice shook, and the veins swelled on his forehead,
as if some passionate feeling struggled under his
control. They had suffered; and without com-
plaining or striving for effect she told him how.
They had worked, slaved, and starved for the last
three years, in which he had heard nothing of them.
They had hidden themselves in the heart of the
great city, where no friend could find them, if friend
still remembered them. Here, where famine and
disease, ignorance and wickedness, hemmed them in,
one after another of their children had sickened and
died, till only one, the youngest daughter, was left.
He had read that sentence fifty times; yet now, as
ever, a cry forced its way to his lips, and the blotched
and stained paper was damped again with tears.
'O God!' he cried, 'is not this my punishment?
Why should it have fallen on them?'

The letter continued. She was out of work, and
the daughter was ill; it was impossible she could be
in health in that place. The winter was coming on,
and she trembled at the thought of it. With their

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poor clothing, without food or fire, except in driblets, how could they live through it? She had been obliged to apply for relief; the bread of charity, though bitter, was better than none. 'Would that we could be together!' she wrote, 'even if it were only to see each other and then die. I know you cannot help us'—he groaned—'or you would. I think if we could get a passage Ada's life might be saved, but I have no hope: they told me yesterday that free passages are not granted to New Zealand now.'

There were other words; the thoughts of a good woman who had forgiven him long ago for a great offence, which had driven him from his family and in the end had wrought their ruin. It had broken her heart; but she had not utterly cast him off. He had her portrait in his hand now. Where was that face?—the face which because of him had grown worn and old before its time. Perhaps it was laid within some nameless grave. What might not have happened in the four months since that letter had been written; in the two months during which he had read it over and over, knowing in his despair that he could do nothing?

'Three years! and I never knew,' he cried. 'I might have saved for them. I might have sent them what I earned every month. Miserable, grovelling wretch that I am! I have squandered it on wickedness while they starved. Oh, if I had known, I would have chained myself here, rather than have taken it where I knew I should be tempted!'
What had been his temptation was written on his face, so that all who chose might read. Long ago that face had been handsome, those eyes had shone with the light of intellect; it was blurred and dim now. The hand, that had once been so firm and yet so delicate in all its work, was unsteady; a light piece of paper trembled in its nerveless grasp. He was only the wreck of a man to whom much had been given—strength, understanding, the power of knowledge,—and all had been broken and trampled upon. Yet something that was noble still remained, as the grandeur of a ruin long survives the shock which overthrew its loftiest towers.

He had not fallen lower than numbers of other men; but few have fallen from such a height; and so much the greater was his offence. Many men sin through ignorance; he had known the enormity and the reward of his sin from the beginning. It had led him to crime; and then he had hated it and himself, and had fled from it into a solitude where he had thought it could not follow him. So, in old times, men went out into the deserts, and hid themselves in caves and amongst the rocks of the mountains; but they found the tempter there. Everywhere, he walked beside them, and his shadow mingled with theirs, and his whisper sounded more clear and loud in the silence of the wilderness.

'I will not read it again,' said the man, putting the letter on the shelf by the window. He knew all the while that he would read it again, for he had said
the same words and made them false many times before. He went out, and a dog which had been sleeping near the door rose, lazily stretched himself, and followed him, jumping up to lick his hand.

'What!' he said, 'are you fond of me? Poor, senseless thing! if you knew how I've repaid the fondness of others, and how much viler I really am than such as you, you would not follow me.'

They turned into the path, and the dog ran before him with his nose to the ground. He stopped and whined piteously, and licked the face of a man who lay there, almost hidden by the high grass he had fallen amongst.

The shepherd knelt down beside him, and with professional adroitness felt his heart and pulse. He raised his head upon his knee, and brushed the dust away from the forehead which had pressed against the earth. Then, with hardly an effort; for he had been a powerful man, and in this emergency he felt his strength return to him, he raised the other in his arms, carried him into the hut, and laid him on the bed. He bathed his face and hands, which burned with fever heat; he washed the dust from the tired feet, scratched and cut all over by the sharp grass. Here was a 'case' for him again, and it had an absorbing interest. In the days which were no more he had never been able to watch over a patient in a half-hearted careless sort of way as some will. He had put himself on the patient's side in the fight against death, and had fought as a soldier who
gives no quarter. He had loved to make an end to pain, to change sickness into the bliss of health, to snatch from death when he might, because he had that love of all humanity without which a physician is but a miserable intermeddler in Nature's affairs.

Now he was glad to wait upon this stranger, and to tend him with a hand which, roughened as it was, tremble though it might, had not yet lost its cunning. He watched him in the night, while from hour to hour he moved his restless hands, and raved—nonsense sometimes, or horrible fancies, but oftener in cries for help for people who were perishing, and entreaties that he might be allowed to go to them. He had exhausted himself when morning came, and was only capable of an indistinct babble, which at last also ceased, when he seemed to fall into a stupor. His nurse did not dare to leave him. At noon—wonderful sight!—he saw a horseman riding across the flat, some three hundred yards from his house. He ran out and shouted, and when the man had galloped up, gave him a paper.

'I wish you'd take that to the station,' he said. 'Mr. Langridge will give you what I want from his medicine chest, and if you can, bring it on to-night again.'

'Who wants medicine, Doctor?' said the man.

They all called him 'Doctor,' and some small practice he had had amongst the station hands had imbued them with a great awe of his knowledge, and a conviction, which had often expressed itself in words,
that his little finger knew more than Dr. Sloman knew in all his parts, from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot. The despised Dr. Sloman was the only doctor within a radius of thirty miles, and yet suffered from living in a country fanned too continuously with the breezes of health.

'You are not down with anything, are you?' queried the man. 'You were in town lately, weren't you?'—this in obscure allusion to habits of the Doctor which were well known.

'It is not for myself,' said the Doctor. 'I found some tramp or swagsman (only he had no swag) just here by the track yesterday afternoon, and it turned out he had brain fever——'

'Fever! is it catching?' said the horseman, leaning to the side farthest from the Doctor. 'I don't want to take it home to Mary Anne.'

'It won't harm you. Can you bring the things to-night, Bailey?'

'I'll try. We're all in a stew up there, chocked up with company. Mary Anne is worked off her feet. I suppose you've heard of the awful wreck?'

'I heard! I hear nothing.'

'It happened yesterday on the reef opposite to our place. Mr. Langridge was on the beach all day with us, helping, and stayed there at night; but the poor souls were washed off before any one could get to them. Twenty saved out of nearly two hundred. Mary Anne has been crying half the time, and I could have done the same, only I'd no opportunity. We
are full up now—all the people saved have quarters with us, and others have come, and will be coming all this week, to look after the poor creatures whose bodies have come on shore, and bury them. We've the police there to keep order, which, goodness knows, is needed, and some uncommonly inquisitive gentlemen, who write for the papers, and who want to know everything that has happened, and a good deal more that hasn't. I hope the master won't go clean out of his senses with all this army, and their bag and baggage to look after, and feed, and bed down at night. We've had to lay in supplies; and Mary Anne is continually getting up meals, and the cook's always baking bread; for these people eat—my gracious! how they do eat. We killed a bullock this morning—sheep are nowhere—and I wouldn't give much for the remains to-morrow. Well, I'll come down as soon as I can, and when we get it I'll send the paper with the account of the wreck—the papers will have something to gorge themselves on now. Mary Anne will put the things together, and some little comforts for you as well.’

‘Thank you, Bailey,’ said the Doctor, going back to his house.
CHAPTER XI.

'Well, keep me company but two years more
Thou shalt not know the sound of thine own tongue.'

Merchant of Venice.

MR. GODFREY PALMER waited on Mr. Gatherall again. He was not so cordially received as on the former occasions, so he only supplied an inferior quality of manners in return for the chilliness of Mr. Gatherall's demeanour. The lawyer's powers of self-control were very great, and he was as sincere a lover of peace and order as an expounder of the law ought to be; but his patience almost gave way under the pressure of his visitor's impertinence. He began to wonder whether there was a polite and dignified way of getting that person out of the room, or whether nothing but forcible expulsion would answer the purpose. However, after Mr. Godfrey Palmer had been no more than exasperatingly ill-mannered for a quarter of an hour, he began to be interesting, and Mr. Gatherall no longer desired to put him out.

'You haven't found that lucky Mr. Randall, who is in such request, my dear Gatherall?' said his visitor.

'Not yet,' replied the lawyer.
'He hasn't been heard of in Sydney, I suppose, or in Melbourne—eh, Gatherall?'

'An active inquiry has been made,' said Mr. Gatherall, 'and from our last reports I do not think he is to be found in either Melbourne or Sydney.'

'Nor do I. I quite agree with you. I've been inquiring. I like to clear up a mystery. I should be invaluable in a private inquiry office.'

'I have no doubt,' said Mr. Gatherall, with a polite inclination. 'From news lately received, I think we shall find Mr. Randall in Queensland.'

'Oh, I dare say,' said Mr. Godfrey Palmer. 'Or in Mogador. Nice out-of-the-way place that for people to get to. Unlikely too. One should always look in the unlikely places first. Queensland, of course—highly probable; very much so in fact.'

'I don't understand you, Mr. Palmer,' said the lawyer stiffly. 'Have you any reason to suppose that Queensland is not a likely place?'

'You have a son, haven't you, Gatherall?' said his tormentor. 'He studies law, doesn't he, and is getting on nicely?'

'Yes,' said Mr. Gatherall.

'Well, I would coach him up, and get him to pass his examination; and then I'd retire in his favour. Youth is active and quick-witted; age is slow and cautious.'

'Very valuable observations, and very true, no doubt,' said Mr. Gatherall; 'but my wits are not
quick enough to detect any connection between
them and the subject of our conversation.'

'Yes, I'm sorry for you, Gatherall. Allow me to ask, did
your Sydney agent (he must be a sharp man that!) hear anything of Mr. Henry Randall between the
20th and 28th of last month?'

'Not that I am aware of.'

'Oh, well, mine did.'

'Yours? Do you mean——'

'He was in Sydney then, and he'll be in New
Zealand before you can get your useless and expensive
advertisements out of the Australian papers—a pretty
penny that; but I suppose it'll come out of the
estate. Pity you didn't advertise for Moncrieff
instead of Randall.'

'Why?' said Mr. Gatherall.

'Because that was his name in Australia. Our
gentleman has two names—Henry Moncrieff Randall,
that's the proper thing—and he chose to drop one
for a time. He has taken it up again lately. Here
is his name in the list of passengers by the Orient
steamer, which arrived at Sydney on the 20th.'

'Is that all the proof you have?' said Mr. Gatherall,
incredulously. 'There may be more than one person
of that name. Randall is a common surname.
There is no second name given here, or initial.'

'Do you perceive any verdure about me?' said
Mr. Godfrey Palmer. 'When I heard you expected
him to turn up in Australia I telegraphed to a
friend of mine to be on the look-out. He was iden-
tified in Sydney by a man who knows him as well as I know you, my dear Gatherall, with all your virtues and excellencies. I can tell you a little more about him; for my inquiries haven't been in vain. He has done pretty well on his own account: he won't be so badly off if he never sees your £100,000.

'I am glad to hear it,' said Mr. Gatherall. 'I hope he has retrieved the past in more ways than one.'

'We can't find out whether he's improved spiritually as well as temporally, Gatherall; but he has made a very nice thing out of music, I understand; and he comes to New Zealand, not to see you, but to marry a lady who is not without fortune.'

'This sounds like a romance,' said Mr. Gatherall.

'It sounds uncommonly like fact to me. I knew he wouldn't die; didn't I tell you so? I knew the heiress would marry him. Some people pretend she forfeits her property by doing so; but I don't believe it; they'll find some way to keep that; some long-headed old family lawyer, like you, Gatherall, will put them up to it.'

'Who is the lady?' asked Mr. Gatherall.

'Miss Desmond.'

'Oh, indeed. The story is rather apocryphal, I should say. I know Randall spent some time at her brother's place; but I hardly think he was admitted to terms of intimacy with the family.'

'I happen to know better,' said Mr. Godfrey Palmer.
'Miss Desmond’s fortune is not her only recommendation. She might marry almost any one, if she chose.'

'So much the more likely to pick up a crooked stick at the last. But, as it has turned out that he’ll have the burden of riches to bear, most people will think the stick isn’t crooked at all.'

Mr. Godfrey Palmer retired after this, leaving Mr. Gatherall to meditate over the news he had brought him. He came again at the end of the week.

'Like to hear any more about our mutual friend Mr. H. M. Randall?' he asked.

'If you have anything from a trustworthy source I have no objection; but I am not desirous of listening to gossip and hearsay about him,' said Mr. Gatherall, darting glances of fire at the unlucky boy who had admitted the intruder.

'Oh, I know his affairs are only a bubble in the ocean of your business,' said Mr. Godfrey Palmer, sitting down in Mr. Gatherall’s favourite chair, and putting his feet up on another. 'But I think it’s time you altered those advertisements if they are in the papers yet.'

'You take a very kind interest in our business,' said Mr. Gatherall.

'So I do, Gatherall. I want to employ you. You’ve been advertising on behalf of Moresby’s executors, now advertise for me. I want Randall as badly as any one. I’m his heir. You offered a hundred pounds reward for information of his where-
abouts, or proof of his existence. Now, for me, offer three times as much for proof of his death.'

'We don't want to give premiums for murder, Mr. Palmer,' said the lawyer. 'I must decline to do business of that kind for you; and excuse me if I say that my time is too valuable to be wasted in such conversation as this.'

'Just so,' said the imperturbable Mr. Godfrey Palmer. 'It can't be charged for. Never mind. I will not defraud you. I only wish to tell you that I was egregiously mistaken when I said this friend of ours would not die.'

'What now?' said Mr. Gatherall.

'What now?' cried Mr. Godfrey Palmer, raising his head from the depths of the easy chair, and returning the lawyer's penetrating glance with a stare and a sarcastic smile which quite abashed him. 'Well, I really am more astonished than ever, and deeply grieved as well, Gatherall, at your ignorance.'

'Mr. Palmer, I really cannot listen any longer to trash!'

'Faith, it isn't trash to me,' said Mr. Godfrey Palmer. 'I was only worth £500 yesterday; I think myself worth £100,000 now. Randall was a passenger by the steamer from Melbourne which was wrecked yesterday. I suppose you have heard of that, Gatherall? you do read the newspapers, no doubt; but you can't read them very carefully.'
‘I thought he was coming by way of Sydney, according to your last story.’

‘Yes, he was; and I dare say you chuckled at my mistake when a Mrs. Randall came by the steamer. That is his mother. He lost his passage, and went round by Melbourne.’

‘Let me see—there were only twenty-one saved,’ said Mr. Gatherall, referring to the newspaper. ‘Yes; you are right; his name is here in the list of the missing.’

‘Some one will have to go down to identify him, you know, if he should be found.’

‘I can send a man,’ said Mr. Gatherall. ‘But he may not be found; and then how do you prove he ever went on board? You have only a name here; who, amongst the survivors, will be able to prove his identity? Probably they never saw him in their lives before he came on board the steamer!’

‘That is easy. My friend who saw him in Sydney was not like your agents, Gatherall; he had something in his brain cavity; so he didn’t content himself with looking at him once: he followed him; and, if need be, he can swear that he went on board the steamer at Melbourne. Besides, his mother and others will know it too. However, I intend to go down to the place. I think I shall know him again.’

‘Of course,’ said Mr. Gatherall; and he thought fit to add some suitable remarks. ‘A sad accident; a very lamentable affair.’
'Yes—for him,' said the heir-expectant.

'He had some fine qualities,' said Mr. Gatherall.

'It is probable (at least I shall always indulge myself in thinking so) that he had outlived his faults. I think if he had ever written to Tревet, and offered any repayment, I should have heard; but very likely he intended to make up for all that on his return. I hope he did.'

'You needn't hope anything about it. What had he to do with Tревet, or what right had your amiable brother-in-law to anything from him?'

'Why, have you forgotten? and you were with him at the time!'

'Well, I tell you what it is, Gatherall,' said Mr. Godfrey Palmer, speaking with an appearance of more openness and sincerity than he had yet shown to the lawyer; 'Randall never touched a penny of Tревet's. The poor fellow's gone now; so one may as well speak the truth of him.'

'And who did, then, if you know he didn't?' said Mr. Gatherall.

'Let Tревet find out, if he wants. Who cares now?'

'If he was not the man he must have known him, or had his suspicions, at any rate.'

'Very likely,' said Mr. Godfrey Palmer, as a mysterious smile merged into his usual sneer; 'but you and Tревet were wandering about in a fog when you pitched on him. Adieu, Gatherall. I leave town to-day on this business of identification. Tell
Trevet what I've just said, and—ha, ha!—remember me particularly to him, will you?'

He went out hilariously, and Mr. Gatherall's eyebrows were raised in horror as a new revelation of the deceitfulness of human nature burst upon his mind.
CHAPTER XII.

'Sorrow breaks seasons and reposing hours,
Makes the night morning, and the noontide night.'

Richard III.

The news that came tardily to Mr. Gatherall in his city office came as with the wings of a dove to that house on the wooded hills where Mr. Wishart and his sisters lived. They knew now that Randall had succeeded in his profession, and was returning at the end of the four years. The letters which told them this had been written while he and his mother were in Sydney. The next steamer would bring them to New Zealand.

The house was astir with joyful excitement. Even Mrs. Meade, who had disapproved of her sister's engagement chiefly because she had believed it would never 'come to anything,' made up her mind to rejoice with the others. After the family, the servants also, by those mysterious means which especially provide for the instruction of servants, got to know what was to happen. Mrs. Grigsby, by virtue of her position, took the liberty of offering her congratulations. The coachman, being a gifted man, wrote some verses on the forthcoming event,

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which were much admired by his fellow-servants. Murdoch, in particular, was so softened by them that he cut flowers recklessly every morning for Maud, and remembered his former grudging parsimony with shame. On that day which was to bring the travellers with its eventide, he made such havoc amongst his roses that all thought he had gone distracted. But he felt he had his reward when he brought his overladen basket to Maud.

'Oh, but she's a nice way of thanking one!' he said to himself, as he went away with the feeling of having been generous and self-sacrificing. 'I thought she would want to deckyrate. If he's a gentleman who has any understanding about horticultural matters, he'll see we're not behind the rest of the world in these pairts.'

Mr. Wishart went to meet the expected guests. 'Of course,' he had said, 'they can't be allowed to stay anywhere but with us—unless Randall shouldn't want to come, Maud, or unless you intend to forbid him to show his face before the very last day of his time of probation. You may expect us at nine to-night; but I need not tell you; you have the time-table by heart.'

But at nine that evening no one arrived or was near, as was evident from the profound silence. Within the house they heard the rush of waterfalls far away, and the night-birds answering one another from side to side of the creek. It was unusually close and sultry, and they sat with open
doors and windows, and the scent of the flowers in the garden was almost too oppressive in the warm stagnant air. The sphinx moth was buzzing from one verbena plant to another, as strong on its pinions as a little bird; and lighter-winged moths, silvery gray or dusky brown, came in every moment from the outer darkness to wheel round and round the lamp. Mrs. Meade was overpowered by the quietness and warmth, and went to sleep over a thrillingly sensational story which she was reading for the fourth time. Harry, also, after a brave struggle against drowsiness, was obliged to resign his prospect of sitting up late that night. Then Maud sat by herself against the window, or walked on the verandah, and listened to the indistinct murmuring sounds of the night.

In the servants' room it was as quiet as elsewhere. For some reason they conversed in whispers, and looked sadly at one another when they heard Maud's footstep on the verandah. Murdoch read aloud from the newspaper which had just come, for in this country place the morning paper arrived in the evening. He had always a lugubrious voice; it was sepulchral now.

'An awfu' Providence!' he ejaculated.

'Who'll tell her, I wonder?' said the cook, with a half-suppressed noise that would have been a groan if it had had fair play.

'I wouldn't—not for worlds!' said Mrs. Grigsby, whose false hair was in such conspicuous disarrange-
ment that it testified to uncommon agitation of mind.

Murdoch said that as it had quite upset him, they might imagine how she would feel it. And Julia, the parlour-maid, cried until Mrs. Grigsby sharply reproved her, and told her she ought to be thankful she had only the troubles of other people to cry for.

‘I’d bu-r-r-n the newspaper, if I were you,’ said Murdoch.

‘What good will that do?’ groaned the cook; ‘will it bring him to life again?’

‘You don’t want her to come upon it suddenly, I suppose,’ said Mrs. Grigsby. ‘I’ve known persons go off in such cases, and never speak more. Suppose she should ask for it, how are you fixed then? But if it’s burnt, we can say it was done by accident.’

Whereupon the cook rose, and with tragic mien thrust the newspaper between the bars of the grate.

‘She can’t get it now,’ she said, and immediately began to cry, and was sympathetically accompanied by the housemaid, Mrs. Grigsby, and Julia.

‘Really, ladies,’ said Murdoch, ‘it does you credit, but it would be better not to give way.’

‘It’s very foolish, Julia, you silly girl, give over at once,’ said Mrs. Grigsby, fiercely rubbing her eyes with an immense pocket-handkerchief. ‘I believe there’s some one come, and not one of us fit to go to the door, unless it’s myself.’
Mrs. Grigsby went half way, and then rushed back again.

'Now, here's a blessing!' she cried. 'It's that dear old Doctor, and we can get him to break the news to her, or persuade her to come in, instead of pacing up and down outside when it's nigh midnight. Mrs. Meade's right enough; she's getting a good sleep in her arm-chair. The Doctor's talking to Miss Maud on the verandah.'

The Doctor was telling Maud how he had lost the last train to town, and knowing his friends would shelter him for a night had walked to Mr. Wishart's from the station.

'I ought to have been here earlier,' he said, 'but I have been losing my way for more than two hours. I have been up hill and down dale, and into holes, and on to stumps and fallen trees, till I felt like a hobgoblin of the night. Then I saw your friendly light, and made for it across country, and by luck, not by knowledge, got into the road. But where are your brother and Mrs. Meade?'

Maud pointed to the arm-chair with a smile. 'Mrs. Meade is there; my brother has gone to meet them: he ought to have been at home now.'

'Them? Oh, I remember; he told me the other day. Aha! this is why a young lady keeps so good a watch on the verandah at midnight. I think I shall make you go in; this flimsy dress of yours is damp with dew.'

'Oh, one cannot catch cold on a night like this,' she
answered, 'and it is so close indoors. But did you see or hear nothing of them on the road?'

'My eyes and ears are not so finely strained as yours are to-night, Miss Maud. No, I saw nothing, and I was selfish enough only to think of myself as I blundered on in the dark—ah-h, how my legs ache! Now, if you won't go in, I will.'

'Oh, I am so forgetful,' said Maud; 'and you must be tired.'

She ran in, and called Mrs. Grigsby, who promptly appeared, settling her hair and cap by the way, and rubbing her eyes till they were redder than ever. Mrs. Grigsby waited for an opportunity, and then, in a deep, solemn-toned whisper, said, 'Doctor, do oblige me.'

'With what?' said the Doctor. 'Not with professional advice, I hope; you look well, Mrs. Grigsby.'

'Oh, no, sir, though I feel like to melt,' said the housekeeper. 'Have you read the paper?'

'Not to-day; had no time,' said the Doctor.

'Ah, we get it in the evening here; so Mr. Wishart hadn't seen it before he went, and the ladies haven't asked for it fortunately,' said Mrs. Grigsby; and then by a few whispered words she shocked the good Doctor very much. 'And what's to be done?' she asked.

'Why, nothing at present. You can't do good; let well alone.'

'Oh, but consider, Doctor, how she's walking
there, and straining her eyes out into the darkness. She's making herself ill. Both Julia and I tried to get her to come in or to take a little of something before you came, but she wouldn't. She's eaten next to nothing all day; she's been too excited.'

'Well, people live on excitement sometimes,' said the Doctor; 'but I must remind you, Mrs. Grigsby, that I can't; I've eaten nothing all day; have you no pity for me?—and I've been working hard all day as well.'

'I beg your pardon, sir,' said Mrs. Grigsby. 'I'll see that you have something at once. Selfish old gourmandiser!' she said to Julia, as they met in the passage, 'much he cares—he wants his dinner, that's all.'

The maligned Doctor went on to the verandah.

'Sister Anne,' he said, 'do you see nothing yet?'

'Nothing,' said Maud, and though she smiled, he noticed a weariness in the tone of her voice. 'It does not bring them any quicker watching here; but I am always fancying I hear the wheels.'

'I can't,' said the Doctor, 'although they say the senses are sharpened by fasting.'

'Oh, have they brought you nothing yet?' said Maud; 'I am so sorry. I told Mrs. Grigsby. I will go myself.'

'Stay,' said the Doctor, taking her hand. 'Mrs. Grigsby has arranged a repast which is only too dangerous in its temptations. But I have one peculiarity. I can't dine alone, not if I were starv-
ing. I might swallow food, of course; but it would be as chips and ashes in my mouth. But if you, my dear young lady, were to sit down with me and take something yourself, I might enjoy my dinner. As it is, I require company and conversation to give me an appetite when I am as tired as I am to-night.'

Then he put her hand into his arm, and laughing, she went with him into the dining-room.

'But we ought to wake Mrs. Meade,' she said.
'I hold it criminal to break a refreshing sleep,' said the Doctor.

He made a very good dinner, but he took care also that his companion should not merely sit and talk with him, and he kept up such a noisy and hilarious conversation, considering that one man was accountable for it all, that Mrs. Grigsby was scandalised.

'Just you hearken how that old Doctor is going on!' she said. 'His head's as hollow as a gallipot, to say nothing of his heart.'

'Bah! you old women wouldn't have got her to take a decent dinner with all your contrivances,' the Doctor said.

'Well, that's a blessing anyhow!' said Mrs. Grigsby, with a mournful sniff. 'Are you going to break it to her?'

'Mrs. Grigsby, go to bed; your brain wants rest,' said the Doctor.

'My brain, thank heaven, Doctor, is as clear as yours, and need be since I take nothing to muddle it,' answered Mrs. Grigsby, who had noticed the
Doctor's patronage of the wine decanter. 'A pint of wine, as sure as I'm a poor widow,' she had said to Julia; 'and that wine's no weak stuff either.'

'If any of you simpletons break it to her, as you call it,' said the Doctor, 'look out for something from my direction. We don't want to run to meet bad news, it comes soon enough.'

He went to the verandah again. Maud was not there, but he saw a ghostly white figure in the garden.

'Come in!' he called. 'This is the time when evil things have power; ghosts walk, kelpies screech, and vampires fly. That's one—yah, you nasty thing! a big beetle's come booming into my eyes. Come, I shall bring you in.'

'Oh, Doctor, don't make me go in,' cried the young lady piteously.

'Yes, I will,' he said, seizing her hand, 'and I think you're selfish. Look at me; I know I've a bad cold coming on, and here I have to expose myself to this damp air on your account. Consider my bald head—I've mislaid my hat somewhere. There! you may know by that sneeze what night air does for me.'

'Listen for a moment, please, and I will come in. I think I hear them now.'

They listened, and heard the carriage plainly.

'That's it,' said the Doctor, 'and you shall go in now.'

She lingered, however, till the carriage was nearly
in sight, and then she suddenly became very much afraid of being seen, and ran up to the house, the Doctor toiling after her.

'I've a good mind to tell of you,' he said.

'I shall not forgive you if you do,' said the lady, 'and you must promise now, before they come, not to say a word about it.'

'I suppose it would be too flattering to the vanity of some one. No one looks out at the gate for me when I'm late, not even my wife. I wouldn't let her if she wanted; she'd have a fine stock of colds, neuralgia, or rheumatism, always ready to my hand. I can tell you, keeping you company has done me no good. I feel a disagreeable tickling in my throat.'

'Mrs. Grigsby mentioned that she had a recipe for colds, which had never been known to fail, a posset which had been invented by her grandmother.'

'No old wives' possets for me,' said the Doctor contemptuously. 'I don't know who first made them; but I wish the secret of their manufacture had died with the inventor. Now, here they are, and Mrs. Meade is going to wake just at the right moment.'

'Why, really, Doctor,' said Mrs. Meade, looking up brightly, 'so you have just come in? I have not been asleep, I think—have I, Maud? only half dozing. I have heard what you've been saying.'

'Would that I had been asleep!' said the Doctor,
'but, for the benefit of others, I have to turn night into day, and yet people think me selfish.'

They went to the door. The Doctor pressed forward, and whispered something to Mr. Wishart.

'We stayed to the last moment to hear the latest news,' he replied. 'There is no hope; he is among the missing. Lost, poor fellow, just two days after his mother arrived here and found his telegram waiting to say he would join her in a week's time.'

'They know nothing,' said the Doctor, waving his hand towards Maud and Mrs. Meade, who were standing in the doorway.

'We came by the last train,' was all the explanation Mr. Wishart gave to them.

'You have not brought Mr. Randall,' Mrs. Meade said, wondering at the strange expression of her brother's face, and the silence of Mrs. Randall, who only pressed her hand without speaking.

'He could not come,' said Mr. Wishart, with a quick glance round him. 'Where is Maud? I thought I saw her.'

'I am here,' his sister answered faintly from her place in the shadow of the doorway. A fear which she could not reason away was creeping over her. She came forward to meet Mrs. Randall, and tried to smile a welcome to her. No answering smile was on the visitor's face.

'I have come alone,' she said, taking Maud's cold hand in her own; 'but it could not be helped. You look tired, you have waited for us so long——'
She could not control herself; the next words were sobbed rather than spoken: 'Oh! I did not mean to tell you like this. It was your face that brought the tears to my eyes. I did not know I had another tear left to give him.'

They went into the house. There were no tears in the eyes of the younger woman, and there was a look on her white face which repelled all effort at consolation.

'I know what you would tell me,' she said, as the others faltered word after word, choking down their own tears lest the sight of them should add to her grief. 'He will never come again—he is dead.'

She left them, and walked steadily to her own room, but Mrs. Randall followed her there, and sat with her until the morning.
CHAPTER XIII.

'Not in the evening's eyes,
When they red with weeping are
For the sun that dies,
Sits sorrow with a face so fair:
Nowhere but here doth meet
Sweetness so sad—sadness so sweet.'

CRASHAW.

In the morning the shadow of her grief had fallen on the whole house. She was the best beloved of all; she had been a friend as well as a mistress to her servants; a helper and a sharer in every joy or trouble of those around her, so now the measure she had meted was returned to her again; they made her sorrow theirs.

They went about noiselessly; they spoke softly to one another; even Harry's noisy play was hushed, as if it were an offence at such a time.

'Why can't I make a noise?' he cried; 'it isn't Sunday; and why didn't Mr. Randall come last night?'

'Hush, hush!' said Mrs. Grigsby, looking fearfully at the open window. 'Miss Maud will hear you.'

She had heard perhaps, for a message came that Harry was to make as much noise as he liked. Poor
Murdoch, not knowing what else to do, cut more and more flowers, ruining the appearance of his garden, and sent them with his 'respects' to Miss Desmond. Mrs. Grigsby, who had lately been lightening her widow's mourning, in anticipation of a wedding in the family, put it all on again, deeper and blacker than ever. 'And never more will I take it off in this vale of tears,' she cried. There was nothing much worth caring for in this life, the cook sententiously remarked, to prove which, she dished up one of the worst dinners that had ever been eaten in that house. 'They'll not mind, poor things, at such a time as this,' she made answer to Mrs. Grigsby's reproaches. 'As if,' scornfully returned the housekeeper, 'people wanted the little appetite they had left to be taken away from them.'

Out of sympathy for his friends, though he had never been known to acknowledge that he sympathised with any one, the Doctor did not go away at once. Mr. Wishart was thankful for this, as he could manage Maud when all others failed. It was the Doctor who would not be said nay when he proposed a walk or a drive, who boldly ordered her out of the house, and himself led her round and round the garden, till the cold wind had brought some colour into her face. He would not allow her to be silent, for he went on pertinaciously repeating his words until she answered him. He rated Mrs. Grigsby for that very quietness which she had thought becoming under the circumstances.
'Quietness!' he cried; 'do you want to drive us mad, to make us fancy we're buried before our time? Let's have more noise; let the girls sing while they work, and bang about in the kitchen as usual. We want to have some life and spirit thrown amongst us. And whatever do you mean by coming out like that, as black as a crow? One would think you'd buried ten husbands. Take it off, that's a good woman, and dress yourself decently.'

'Excuse me, sir,' said Mrs. Grigsby with dignity. 'I did dress to please my poor husband when he was alive, but since he's gone I please myself, and no man living shall order me to wear this or that.'

'Oh, of course, just like a woman!' said the Doctor.

Mr. Wishart was obliged to leave immediately for the place of the wreck. On account of his anxiety about his step-sister he would willingly have remained at home, had he not felt it his duty to go. She had shocked and distressed him by demanding rather than asking to be allowed to accompany him. Mrs. Randall, who had wished the same thing, supported her in this determination. The others reasoned with, and entreated them in vain; they had set their hearts on going.

'Tell Maud I will not hear of it,' Mr. Wishart said to his sister.

'She will not listen to a word I say,' said Mrs. Meade; 'and yet I know she can never endure such a trial.'
Mr. Wishart appealed to the Doctor, thinking to get the weight of his influence on his side.

'Of course she can't have her own way,' he said.

'What's the use of saying that?' replied the Doctor. 'A woman always has her own way. She must have it, or she'll die.'

'But answer me seriously; you don't think I ought to take her to that terrible place?'

'When one of two evils has to be taken choose the lesser one. Perhaps it won't do her much good to go; but you may be sure that keeping her at home against her wish will make matters worse. I am perfectly astonished to hear you, Wishart, a man of some experience (of course you're not married though), talking about not letting her have her own way. I tell you she must have it. It's the sovereign remedy in most cases with which women are concerned; and, if I'm to be candid, perhaps I ought to say in a good many which have to do with men. Not one of all the sorry mixtures and messes compounded since we doctors began to practise on our fellow-creatures' infirmities can compare with it.'

'I won't take her with me,' persisted Mr. Wishart. 'I have another reason which I could not tell them. The place where we should have to stay is quite near the beach. I might not be able to prevent her seeing what she would never forget again as long as she lived.'

'No; you are right; but very soon that danger will be over. Let her and Mrs. Randall join you
there, and you can bring them back. You will find it best to yield so far as that.'

Solitude with all her charms had fled in haste from Stephen Langridge's station. Ever since the wreck his house had been an inn, and he had been as obliging and hospitable a landlord as if to the manner born. Those who know how many guests can be received into a colonist's house, and fed and lodged there, even when the case is not one of pressing emergency, will not be surprised to hear that Stephen found space and food for all comers. The house was full, the verandah was full, the shepherds' cottages, the cook's kitchen likewise, though he resented the intrusion, and every out-shed and building were full. The wool-shed might have been pressed into the service, as Mr. Bailey remarked, and would have sheltered a small army; but it was inconveniently situated, being some distance away.

Seldom could there have been such a strange and heterogeneous mixture of different people from different classes of society housed together and brought together by one event. Gentlefolk, and the roughest and plainest of working-men; people of every trade and calling, and every degree of education or shade of disposition: the quiet and refined whom sorrow had brought there; the noisy and vulgar whose grief was all on the surface, and would speedily effervescce; and with these many who had nothing to do with grief or sorrow, but had come out of mere curiosity, or...
because it was their business or their duty to be there.

Mr. Godfrey Palmer had come, and very becomingly he behaved. His grief was touching in its unobtrusiveness—it was a grief too deep for tears, he said. Evidently these were the words of truth; no one could doubt it who observed his sad countenance, and his quiet and subdued manner. He was so grave and decorous in his conduct that a good minister who was there thought him of all those present the best to hold profitable converse with, and was refreshed in spirit by the soundness of his doctrine. And he spoke so pathetically about the bereavement he had suffered in the loss of one who was no relative at all, but only a friend, that a soft-hearted journalist, who was collecting readable matter, set his affecting words, like gems which were too valuable to be lost, in the middle of an article on the wreck. Like the others, Mr. Godfrey Palmer went to the beach, and looked about there, and was eager in his inquiries concerning those who had been found, and was so anxious to see what was horrible to look upon, that all were amazed at the love he must have borne to his dead friend.

They all walked on the beach. How often was that bleak sandy shore paced from end to end, how vehemently they caught at some little relic—a ring, a handkerchief, a pocket-book—all that ever was found of many of the lost. Still, every day, one by one, as if unwilling to part with them, the sea gave
up its dead, and each lifeless form it brought to land was now a thing which lover or friend could not desire nor see without loathing. Poor mangled ones! bruised and defaced beyond recognition, except by what they wore, they were reverently carried away and buried side by side. There was a graveyard now in this lonely place. Strong in frame though they were, and inured to every kind of hardship, the men who, for many days and through all weathers, worked at this terrible task of recovering and burying the bodies of the drowned, sickened of their duty, and for ever afterwards spoke of its horrors with awe.

No one who could be identified as his friend had been found when Mr. Wishart arrived at the station. On the following day, however, he was suddenly sent for from the beach. A body had been recovered which another gentleman had recognised as Randall’s. The other gentleman was Mr. Godfrey Palmer, and Mr. Wishart met him on the beach.

How he had recognised the featureless form which was laid before them the others could not understand. No one could tell what the disfigured countenance of that dead man had been. His hair was dark, and he had been slightly above middle height. What else was there of which they could speak with certainty? But, fast as ever, on one of the fingers glittered a ring, and Godfrey Palmer pointed to it.

‘You know that?’ he said, significantly.
'Yes,' said Mr. Wishart, feeling sick and faint at the sight, and quickly turning his eyes away.

They took the ring from the white swollen finger, and gave it to him; and that morning another grave was made, and they buried this one also out of sight, and wrote his name above him.

Not many more of the drowned were brought on shore after this. At the end of the week the visitors began to leave the station. Mr. Godfrey Palmer did not go away with the first, although, as his manners were by this time getting very much the worse for wear, Stephen wished that he would. At length he disappeared on some mysterious excursion; he went out and did not return. No one was troubled about this; for the minister and journalist on whom he had worn off the first bloom of his best behaviour had both departed, and other persons had seen too much of him to mourn when they missed him. Mr. Wishart stayed because he expected Maud and Mrs. Randall. Stephen knew they were coming, and had so strictly charged his housekeeper, Mrs. Bailey, to reserve certain rooms, and to do all in her power for the comfort of the visitors who were to occupy them, that she was very curious to know who these might be. They came late one evening, two ladies in deep mourning, and closely veiled; but even through this disguise Mrs. Bailey knew the face of the younger one again, and understood why her master had been so anxious and exacting.

'As lovely as ever,' she said, 'though she does
look so pale and worn. The other lady is poor Mr. Randall’s mother.’

‘Ay,’ said her husband; ‘she takes after her son uncommonly. I mean, he was her image. Poor things! Yes; one can see now why Mr. Langridge was in such a fidget.’

‘He hasn’t got his old fancy out of his head yet,’ said Mrs. Bailey; ‘but he needn’t bother himself; she takes little enough notice of him.’

‘Well, I thought she spoke very friendly to him,’ said Mr. Bailey, ‘and I shouldn’t wonder, Mary Anne, at them making it up together yet.’

On the first morning Mr. Wishart showed Mrs. Randall and his sister all he had to show them—a ring and a grave. He took them to the beach, and because he was asked to accompany them, not because he wished it, Stephen went as well. There was nothing now to be afraid of on all that long stretch of sand, and the surf was less noisy in its rage than it had been for weeks. The heavy rollers from the ocean came slowly and majestically towards the shore, and receded again as if they were loath to leave the land. Surely this was the sorrow of the sea. So quiet, so solemn, who could bring against it the record of deeds done in its wrath, when it had lashed itself into milk-white foam, and broken great beams like splinters upon the rocks, and buried the helpless bodies of men in abysses dark as night? Or was not that another sea? not the one whose voice was now so soft and mild that it only breathed
consolation to these poor women for the wrong it had done them.

And it was all clear green as an emerald near the beach, where it washed on the white sand, and all blue as heaven beyond the reefs, where it seemed smooth because the eye lost the distance between wave and wave. And beyond the blue, a broad band of light lay like a golden bar between sea and sky, because there the glory of the sun hid the horizon line. It reddened and reddened in the west, as the sun went down, till streaks of fire were on the crests of the waves, and the blue became purple, and the green flashed with colour like an opal. Ah, beautiful traitor! the same cruel heart throbbed beneath all this.

A chilly gray mist began to creep up from the sea, and they turned back again. It had done them good to see this place, though it had renewed their grief. Because he would not intrude upon this, Stephen had left them, under the pretence of talking with one of his men. But when they walked back to the house together he saw that tears stood in the eyes of one of them, and she either forgot his presence or was not ashamed that a friend should see them. Of the two reasons he had rather it were the last.

His guests ought to have set off on their homeward journey the next day but one, and it was Stephen's fault that they did not. He was tempted to prolong the visit by fair means or by foul, and he was scarcely honest in his exaggerations of a
flood in the river, which, he persuaded them, would either prevent the coach which had to take them to meet the train from crossing, or would make the crossing an uncomfortable business. They stayed; and instead of matters being improved on the next day it was raining; no contemptible little drizzle, but a good, heavy, continuous downpour.

Now of all the diversity of climate which blesses the islands of New Zealand, this part had very nearly the rainiest. There is only one other place—the western coast of the same island—where it rains heavier or rains oftener. In that favoured clime, so inhabitants of other parts declare, it has been known to rain for fourteen consecutive days, and this could have been nothing out of the way, for the people neither expected a second Deluge nor set about preparing arks. On this occasion it rained for a week at Stephen's station, and whether the roads were passable or not before the rain they certainly were not when it ended.

This meant further delay. The foolish Stephen was not sorry. That he had returned to his old delusion would have been plain to more than Mr. and Mrs. Bailey, had not the others been absorbed in their own affairs. He was no nearer perfection than the most of us. Who can guard himself against foolish hopes and fancies, or mean little thoughts which worm and wriggle into the mind by forgotten clefts and crevices, while it is trying to bar them out? The one who had stood in his way was
removed. He was not glad that he had gone—oh, no, he thought with a shocked surprise at such an idea. But now he might hope that sometime she would forget one to remember the other, sometime she would give a different answer to that which she had given him twice or thrice already, without offending him, or discouraging his patience. Yet, as he would have hated that she should have suspected him of such a thought, which to himself he reproached as the quintessence of meanness, because it had gained admittance to his mind too easily and too soon, he kept out of her sight, as if it were not the very thing he desired.

It was unfortunate for his own good that this made her better pleased with him than she might otherwise have been. In reality he had chosen a demeanour as agreeable as any he could have shown to her. She thought it delicate consideration and kindness on his part that she could be as much to herself as if the house were her own. If he had tried to be in her company he would have wearied or offended her before long. But only seeing him when it was absolutely necessary, and only hearing of him when he had done something to oblige her, she began to think what a pleasure it was to have found a friend in this place to which she had come in such trouble, and how different it might have been with only curious strangers around her. So, being grateful to him for a hundred little kindesses, she herself was dangerously kind, and he knew with
a sort of exultation, or thought he knew, that she liked him better than ever.

He was aware that she and Mrs. Randall intended to stay in Dunedin for some time before going home, and he deceived himself into thinking that it was necessary he should go there also. It was true that he had business in the town, and that Mr. Wishart, knowing this, had suggested that he should bear them company; but he knew that the business was not of a pressing kind, and that it would be better for him to decline the invitation. He vacillated over it in his thoughts, not liking his own idea sometimes, but always returning to it again, and knowing perfectly well that it would conquer him at last.

The day of departure was fixed, not to be altered this time; for Stephen being of a mind to accompany the travellers, said nothing of floods, and, wonderful to relate, there was no appearance of rain. It occurred to Stephen, however, that before he went station affairs must be put in order, and he spent a whole day in looking into matters which, for a fortnight since the wreck had been neglected,—for the first week because he had had no time to spare; and for the second, because the station, and all his flocks, and most other sublunary things had been far below his notice.

His inquisitorial visits brought him the knowledge of a thing which he did not remember having heard of, that one of his shepherds was occupying himself with nursing a sick man, a tramp, Mr. Bailey said,
who had come to his hut no one knew how, and was
like to die there.

'Why didn't you tell me before?' said Stephen.

'Why, bless you sir, I told you all about it. I
came for some medicine.'

'You're right. I remember now. Those other
things have driven it out of my head. Is the man
very bad?'

'The Doctor hasn't much hope for him,' said
Bailey. 'You know what a strange fellow he is, Mr.
Langridge; well, having this poor creature to wait
on seems to make him quite happy. I don't know
whether it wouldn't be a mercy to leave him alone
and let him die in peace; but he goes on trying to
keep the life in him.'

'I'll go and see him,' said Stephen.

He rode there that afternoon. The Doctor heard
his horse's footsteps, and came out before he dis-
mounted.

'You have some one sick here, Bailey tells me,'
said Stephen.

'Yes; he found his way here,' said the shepherd,
'and I could do no less than take him in.'

'It was good of you,' Stephen said, 'and it was
fortunate for him he was found by a person who
knew how to attend to him.'

His eyes had just recovered their power after
coming into the dark hut out of a brilliant sunlight.
He saw clearly now, and he saw enough to make
him give a gasp and a great start, which was not
observed by the Doctor, who was looking at his patient.

Altered as the face was, wan and thin, with pinched sunken features, and with what looked like the fixedness of death upon them, he knew it again. They had buried this man more than a week ago—how came he here? And how came that mark of a ring upon a finger of his left hand, just as he had seen a mark on the finger of that horrible thing they had drawn from the sea a few days ago. But this was he; for he knew the face as well as he knew his own.

'When did he come here?' he asked in a thick voice.

'A fortnight on Monday,' said the Doctor; 'the day the steamer was lost.'

'Was there nothing upon him to show who he is?'

'Nothing at all.'

'If you want anything, send to the station,' said Stephen. 'Take care of him.' Then, with a searching look at the shepherd, he added, 'There has been a ring on that finger. Have you taken it off?'

'Sir!' said the man, with a flush of indignation on his face, 'there was no ring on his hand when he came here. If there had been I should not have touched it. I could as soon rob the dead.'

'I did not mean to offend you,' said Stephen. He went out, the Doctor following him. 'Will he recover?' he asked, as he got on his horse.
'I do not think so,' was the reply.

'Do the best you can for him,' said Stephen, as he turned his horse's head towards the open plain and rode away, with enough to think of for some days to come.

He had found out his own guilt, and was shocked at it; but all the while he called himself hard names, and persuaded himself that he was mourning over his own depravity, he was playing with temptation, and listening to it. A thought crept into his mind by some obscure back way, as all vile mean things do, and in the faintest whisper suggested to him that he need not tell what he had seen. Oh, base thought! but it came nevertheless, and he hearkened to it. If we could think what is good at pleasure; if evil thoughts could be driven away, and men could govern the workings of their own minds, the mystery of wickedness would soon be ended.

He might call himself a wicked wretch, because he had felt something which was not gladness in his heart when he had recognised the sick man. What difference did that make when he went on thinking such thoughts as these? He could not recover; no one would doubt it who saw him. Where then was the good of telling them, only to plunge them into grief again after a few days? Could they bear to lose him twice over, as it were? He would not suffer more because they did not know; he was as well and kindly attended to as he could be anywhere. If it had been his own case he would rather have
died there unknown to them than have caused them to shed another tear for his sake. Doubtless if Randall knew how things were he would say so himself.

Now if he had reasoned a little closer, and gone down into his own heart a little deeper, he would have known that the real motive which guided him was none of all these. It was not a wish to save others from pain but a selfish desire of advantage for himself. But he had resolved to deceive them, and for the sake of his own peace he must justify his conduct to himself.

He said nothing when he saw them again, though even so soon as that he had terrible twinges of remorse. Not all his casuistry could quite free him from those. He said nothing as they travelled to Dunedin, and the one whose good opinion was so precious to him was friendlier, kinder than ever, and talked with him as freely as with her own brother, little suspecting what deception he was practising. And as, day after day, on one pretext or another, he was still in her company, and could not make up his mind to leave it, he kept his secret. Once, when some expression of sympathy pleased her very much, she took his hand in a natural, almost childlike manner, and said, 'I shall never forget how good you have been, Mr. Langridge, never!' And with a sudden remembrance of how 'good' he had been, he actually rushed from her presence. 'Oh,' he cried, 'if she should ever know!'
CHAPTER XIV.

'We know not, we, what this may be,
The mystery of ages,
Which, day by day, writes lives away
On unremembered pages.

'But calm at least they watch the east,
For victory or disaster,
Who firmly hold the best the old,
And faith alone the master.'

It has been said that Mr. Godfrey Palmer had suddenly disappeared from the station; not before his new acquaintances were tired of him. It was supposed by the more charitable that having gratified the yearnings of affection by a last look at the remains of his friend he had gone home again to forget his sorrow. But they were slightly mistaken in these conjectures.

He had gone forth one morning with some vague purpose of seeing a little of the country, and of enjoying himself, meanwhile, with thinking glorious thoughts of the great fortune which recent events had brought within his grasp. Wonderfully, indeed, had the wheel turned with him. He might well walk with erect head and elastic step, as if in
the joy of his heart he could bound along for miles on that even plain. He might well cast all care to the winds, and sing occasionally, in a voice good enough to rejoice the ear of one who was not too close at hand, and could not distinguish the trashy words of the song.

The day itself should have been sufficient to make him glad. The country was renewed in beauty and freshness after the rains, the sunlight transfigured everything, and the atmosphere was so pure and clear that the miles and miles which lay between him and the hills on the verge of the plain seemed but a little way. But he thought neither of the sweet fresh air nor the blessed sunlight; he exulted and revelled in reflections which, though certainly of the earth earthy, had nothing to do with the beauties of the world around him.

He walked farther and farther, because exercise was pleasant on such a day, and he was curious to see more of the place. When he discovered that it was all alike, unless he went as far as the bush on the distant ranges, he thought of turning back. Suddenly, however, he noticed, a little in front of him, beside a plantation of young pines, a thatched cottage. He struck across the flat in a straight line for it, and reached it in a few minutes. The door was closed, there was no smoke from the chimney, and everything was as still as death. Evidently the owner was out; and looking round for him, he was seen going towards the stream with a bucket in his
hand. Mr. Godfrey Palmer thought he would go inside to rest, and wait for his return.

It was dark within, the window being small; but it was cool and clean. Things were arranged neatly, as if the occupier of the house were more fastidious in his habits than most shepherds. Some of his clothes were hanging on the wall, and these, though rough and common in material, were also very clean. There was some cold meat, some bread and tea, on the table, and Mr. Godfrey Palmer, feeling the awakening pangs of hunger and thirst, especially the latter, emptied the teapot, and paid some attention to the mutton. He attended to another thing; he read some letters, and a little of a manuscript book lying on the table; purely for diversion—he was fond of reading other people's papers. These were laid on an old newspaper, and some verses in it caught his eye. He paused to read them.

'They say that poison-sprinkled flowers
Are sweeter in perfume
Than when, untouched by deadly dew,
     They glowed in early bloom.

'They say that men condemned to die
Have quaffed the sweetened wine
With higher relish than the juice
     Of the untampered vine.

'They say that in the witches' song,
     Though rude and harsh it be,
There blends a wild mysterious strain
     Of weirdest melody.
'And I believe the Devil's voice
Sinks deeper in our ear
Than any whisper sent from Heaven,
However sweet and clear.'

'And I believe you are not far wrong, friend poet,' he said, with one of his strangest smiles. 'You knew something of mankind. But what——'

Something moved and rustled at the other side of the room. All at once he saw that some one was in the bed opposite to him. A hand was feebly moving to and fro on the coverlid, and what a hand! He had never seen one so like a skeleton's; the white skin seemed to be merely stretched over the bones. It could not rest, that poor, wasted hand. The head moved about, too, on the pillow; but slowly and languidly. Was there any consciousness of his presence in those dull black eyes? He stared at the face until his own eyes began to look fixed and glassy with the intensity of his gaze. Stare as long as he could, it made no difference to the unheeding eyes, and it altered not the startling conviction, which had burst upon him like the lightning flash, that he knew the man.

'So!' he said, crouching down in his astonishment on the floor close to the bed, 'the sea didn't drown you? You've turned up again, have you? But—and he narrowly observed the face—'I don't think you've gained much by your escape. I hope

1 Written by A. L. Gordon, an Australian poet,—shortly before his death by his own hand.

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your affairs are in order, for I don't think you'll have another chance of attending to them. What—you're going to speak, are you?'

Something actually was said, indistinctly at first, then plainer. Poor fellow, he saw things which were not; for he rambled on about the hills where the bush was so thick in the ravines that the sun had never seen the gushing streams which ran within them. Oh, for a draught of that ice-cold water! They would not let him go, and it was only a little way. He could see the house among the trees—they waited for him—he had promised—he must go.

'I can hear the waterfalls,' he said, and there was a change on his wan face, a pitiable sort of a smile. 'Not there; not by the road; let us go through those green fields. Don't you see them?' he asked so quickly and distinctly that Mr. Godfrey Palmer answered, 'No, I don't.'

'I see them,' he went on, in a faint voice, but one that expressed rapturous content with his imaginings. 'They are so beautiful—so green and smooth. Why are there fields here, in the midst of the bush? It is not far—I cannot go any faster—'

'Excuse me, you're going fast enough,' said Mr. Godfrey Palmer,—'to the Elysian fields. No occasion for farther hurry.'

The eyes, glittering now with fever light, turned towards him. 'I know you,' their owner managed to articulate.

'Well, I know you,' coolly returned Mr. Godfrey
Palmer, 'though you're hardly the Adonis you used to be, my dear Henry.'

'You are the man who made me come here,' the other began to speak hurriedly and thickly. 'You keep me here—you want my life—my life!'

And though the voice hardly rose above a whisper, from its intonation one could tell that had the strength been there it would have been a piercing scream.

'Your life, you poor creature!' said Mr. Godfrey Palmer, with contemptuous pity, 'what is it worth now?'

'There is another like you on the other side'—and the head dashed frantically on the pillow—'he is just like you—you whisper together.'

'Got to seeing double, have you?' said the listener. 'Ah, that's a bad sign, a very bad sign.'

'You tried to kill me long ago,' moaned the one on the bed; 'but I got away—you followed me—and oh, I cannot get away from here!'

'I am afraid not,' said Mr. Godfrey Palmer. 'This is your last stage.'

'What are you doing here?' sharply demanded some one behind him. 'Get up at once and come away from him!'

Mr. Godfrey Palmer was so taken aback that he could not answer directly,—an unusual thing with him. He sprang to his feet, and turning round saw that the shepherd had returned, and was looking at him with glances of indignation.

'What am I doing here?' he said, as soon as he
could collect his most plausible manners, 'why,—begging your pardon for an intrusion on your domestic sanctities,—I've walked several miles; I was fagged when I saw this house, so I thought I'd come here to rest, not thinking any one would object to that. Being hungry as well as tired, I helped myself to some lunch, as you'll see, and enjoyed it too.'

'You're welcome to that; but you need not have disturbed him,' said the Doctor.

'Disturbed him? I think he disturbed me. I was shocked at his appearance. You have set up a fever hospital, it seems, and your patient is in a bad way.'

'Yes, very bad,' assented the Doctor, who was laying cold wet cloths on the patient's head.

'Do you know him?'

'No; he came here by accident, in the wanderings of his mind, I suppose. I found him at my door, and he has never been able to give any account of himself.'

'And never will, I think. You may guess what he has been from his ravings?'

'I can guess that he has been leading an anxious life lately, and that he is no common man; that is all.'

'Does he mention names, and what are they?'

'Sometimes; but I don't feel bound to repeat what a man says in the delirium of fever,' said the Doctor, displeased with Mr. Godfrey Palmer's inquisitiveness.
'You've been a doctor, haven't you?'

'How do you know what I've been, and what is it to you?' sharply asked the Doctor in return.

'Oh, I've heard of you at the station; I'm staying there,' carelessly replied Mr. Godfrey Palmer, who had found all he knew in the Doctor's private papers. 'This man reminds me of a young fellow I used to know, that's why I looked at him so closely. His face interests me.'

'Yes, it is rather an interesting face,' said the Doctor more calmly.

'Now, I should like to know one thing, Doctor, if you don't mind answering the question. Do people in these fevers become sensible before death, or do they often die without recovering their consciousness?'

'Very often,' said the Doctor shortly.

'Then he will not be able to tell you who he is?'

'How can I tell? I hope he won't die of this.'

'There is a possibility then? I thought it was a hopeless case.'

'There are very few cases which are altogether hopeless. More often, in such as this, no one can say long before the end which is to be the issue—life or death.'

'What is the use of all your boasted knowledge, then, you men of medicine, if it does not enable you to speak with certainty?'

'When a man is very positive in such things you may reasonably suspect him of ignorance. Our
knowledge, in spite of all that has been done,—and
great things are being done every day in our science
—has taught us one thing, better than all the rest—to
understand the immensity of that which remains
to be known. And I think—though of this also
no one can be certain—that some things we never
shall know. I can tell when I have done my best
for this man, and it will not be my fault if he dies,
but I cannot tell you yet whether he will die or not,
because no one can measure exactly the strength of
the little thread by which such a one holds to life.'

'Do you know,' said Mr. Godfrey Palmer, be-
coming confidential, 'you and your patient interest
me so much that I should like to see the end of this.
I think I shall come again.'

'Do so if you like,' said the Doctor indifferently.

'How far is it to the township? I don't think I
shall go back to the station, as I have come so far.'

'Ten miles from here—fully.'

'Pooh, what is that to a man who's in training?
Good morning.'

'Good morning,' answered the Doctor, going back
to his duties, and thinking no more of his visitor.

The same thoughts that had made his misery
days ago, when he had found the sick man, were
with him yet. His wife had said she would not
write again unless she had better news to tell him,
and she had not written—was not that proof that
they had found no help? What was it to him that
he was safe here in this quiet place? it was only as
if he stood on some rock, and saw them perishing in the flood beneath, and could not so much as stretch forth a hand to save them. They might have been relieved by the charity of some one, but he knew how, in that great city where they were, thousands die, and are huddled into paupers' graves, and the crowd whirs by, unheeding, and happy in its ignorance. He could imagine how it might be—once he had dreamt that he had found his way to their place, and they were dead. He watched the agony of his fever-stricken patient with a greater agony in his own heart. Sometimes he could not keep it in; he must talk aloud, and when the other cried out also of his imaginary woes, or murmured confused recollections of what he had felt long ago or passed through, their passionate ravings mingled together in the saddest, strangest manner.

But his patient did not talk much now. The fever was leaving him too weak for that. His mind grew no clearer, but seemed to ebb away into a death-like stupor, from which perhaps he never would awake. The Doctor hoped against hope, because he had grown fond of him, with tending him so untiringly, and because his cries to those who were far away, and his frequent mention of names that were dear to him, struck on the chords of his own heart. He had tried to piece his history together bit by bit, out of the wild words of his delirium. Was it anything like his own?—had he offended and broken the hearts of those whose names were so
often on his lips? But there was no word of guilt such as his, and if guilt had been there, it must have found speech at such a time.

Mr. Bailey came to see him again, bringing various presents and comforts from the thoughtful Mrs. Bailey. Mr. Bailey, from the first, had had such a dread of infection from the Doctor and his patient that he had not been inside the hut since the latter had come. Now, however, his curiosity prompted him to dare the danger, and he was emboldened by remembering that his master had been none the worse for his visit. So he went in, and saw the invalid, and wondered and pitied. He did not recognise him. Mr. Godfrey Palmer had had little difficulty in doing so; but his memory and his eye had been quickened by a jealous fear of his rival's reappearance. He had wanted him out of the way so much that even when he believed him in his grave he had hardly been able to assure himself that he had gone; it was a thing too good to be true. Mr. Bailey, who was in charity with all the world, and had always been of too little account to have enemies, had not the sharp eyes of jealousy or hatred. He saw only a stranger.

'Well, poor fellow, I hope he'll get through,' he said. 'Mr. Langridge seemed quite cut up by the sight of him. He can't be used to such things. He ordered me to see after him and you, and left some money in case you should want anything.'

'I can't do much more for him,' said the Doctor.
‘It was very thoughtful of Mr. Langridge, though. Have you any one staying at the station now?’

‘Not a soul,’ said Mr. Bailey, ‘and Mary Anne and I feel like pelicans of the wilderness, now that they’re all gone, and the station’s fallen flat again after such a racket.’

‘There was some one here who said he was staying with you, a well-dressed, fine-looking man, but disagreeable in his manner.’

‘Oh, I know who you mean. Palmer, they called him. Blessings on him! he’s gone at last. Mary Anne and I were sick of the fellow always poking and prying about. Hallo! though—talk of such creatures, and they’re sure to be about you. There he is.’

‘I believe he spoke of coming again,’ said the Doctor.

Mr. Godfrey Palmer came up on a hired horse in good style, dismounted with a jaunty spring, and tied up his horse. Mr. Bailey went out to greet him, and also to prevent his own horse from kicking Mr. Palmer’s, for whom apparently he only cherished scorn and contempt.

‘And well he may,’ thought Mr. Bailey, ‘if the horse is in any way like the fellow who rides him. My powers! Mr. Palmer,’ he cried by way of salutation, ‘are you in this place yet?’

‘Well, don’t you see me, or do you want to feel me as well?’ said Mr. Godfrey Palmer.

‘Thanks; no; I suppose it’s you. I don’t expect
to meet another like you. But what are you after here?'

'Why, the fact is I'm too susceptible. I can't tear myself away from the spot. The loss of a friend shook me a good deal, as you must have seen; and then this poor man, who reminds me of another dear friend—both combine in keeping me here, though I've suffered so much in this place.'

'I never met any one who was so fond of his friends,' said Mr. Bailey. 'I suppose if you heard of a third one in the same spot you'd be like to go clean distracted.'

'I believe I should,' said Mr. Godfrey Palmer. 'This second case I couldn't bear over again,'—and here at least he was sincere. 'Friendship—true friendship is a rare thing, my good Mr. Bailey.'

'So it is; uncommon,' assented Mr. Bailey, and though he meant nothing personal by this, somehow Mr. Godfrey Palmer did not like it, and looked at him closely.

Mr. Godfrey Palmer wanted to stay some time, and particularly wanted to outstay Mr. Bailey. But that person likewise was in no hurry to go away; he wished to retail all the gossip of the district, and his budget of news was no paltry little thing which might be emptied in a few moments; it had gathered of every kind at a great rate, while there had been so many visitors at the station. So both stayed, until the dark clouds which had been hanging over the earth for several hours, in portentous warning of a
great storm, began to discharge their contents. The rain fell in torrents, and the wind howled across the unsheltered plain in such fury, that Mr. Bailey determined not to face it. Besides, there fell all at once, and as it seemed a full hour before its proper time, such a pitchy darkness over the whole land that, having stayed while it came, he was so dismayed by it as to declare he would not move from where he was before morning. Mr. Godfrey Palmer said the same thing; so they ate their supper with the Doctor, and in the breaks of conversation listened to the noise of the tempest, and were thankful for their shelter.

They talked of many things. He could talk well, when he liked, that sly, cat-like man who leaned towards the Doctor, and to emphasise a word sometimes, moved his white, cold hands gracefully, or who laughed now and then; not a loud laugh: he was never noisy: everything with him was smooth and soft and plausible, when he was working for some end. Just as he had unhesitatingly stolen this man's secrets, and seen all the anguish of his heart by reading his papers, so now he craftily probed and poked at the wound he knew of. He had power over him, and he was prepared to use it.

By and by Mr. Bailey began to be left out of the conversation, save for an occasional remark. The truth was, the words which he heard struck horror into his simple trusting soul. All that was sacred to him was in the eyes of the other two a delusion
or a fable. They had long ago cast off all faith in
what they had learnt at a mother’s knee. Godfrey
Palmer spoke of religion as cant and hypocrisy, and
inveighed against it with all the insolence of the
most disgusting of all cants—that of atheism. The
Doctor gloomily confessed that he believed in no
creed.

Somehow,—and it seemed a mockery of their
own condition, unless they had forgotten what they
themselves were, they began to talk of such instances
of mispent lives and wasted talent as were familiar
to them. Mr. Godfrey Palmer knew a great many.
It was astonishing how many young friends had
pained and grieved him by falling away from the
promise of their youth. The Doctor talked of no
one in particular; but a less shrewd man than his
companion might have divined that the bitterest of
his words were aimed against himself.

‘Perhaps he is some castaway of that kind,’ said
Godfrey Palmer, waving his hand towards the bed.

‘Very likely,’ said the Doctor. ‘He must have
been an educated man; that cannot be mistaken.
Who knows where, or who his relatives are? They
little think, and perhaps they don’t care, what has
become of him.’

‘It’s very probable they don’t care,’ said Godfrey
Palmer. ‘In most cases your righteous members of
a family care very little what happens to their scape-
grace. Overboard he goes, as soon as he begins to
trouble them, or hurt their tender respectability; and
then, who cares where he lies down to die, or how the earth is rid of him?'

'Yes; it may be so,' said the Doctor; 'and yet he has earned it. Would it not be better for every one if such men were thrown overboard at once? What right have they to poison the joy of a whole family? Sometimes do you not see a man who has dragged all his family down with him, because their affection would not let the miserable wretch go? He did not deserve it; he only soiled whatever he touched, and ruined every chance they gave him. If they had cast him off what suffering would have been spared; —yet that is what people call hard-hearted,—refusing to sacrifice the innocent to those who are beyond salvation. Oh! I have known and seen this'—and his face worked with emotion. 'Some men are like an open sepulchre into which everything has been cast—love and treasure, and faith and hope, and all has been cast in vain. They are not to be saved by any sacrifice which blind affection can make for them. God only knows why they exist; why they ever came into the world; or why, being there, men do not set some mark upon them, and chase them out into a desert place where they can do no more harm.'

Godfrey Palmer looked at the speaker, and said in his thoughts, 'You are mad, or nearly so.' 'Can men help being what they are?' he answered. 'Did I make myself, or did you make yourself?'

'I do not know how much I have made myself what I am,' said the Doctor; 'but the thought that
distracts me is, why are these things permitted? Why is evil always to triumph, and to tread the good in the dust? Why is there so much suffering and so little joy? I do not believe—I cannot believe—that all this turmoil and anguish, this fighting and struggling against things which always bear us down in the end, are means of leading mankind to some sublime perfection. If each one suffered for himself and bore his own punishment I might think it was justly ordained; but here we see the sinless crushed by the weight of sins which others have committed, and the reward of wickedness falling on the pure and good. And people tell us this is foreordained and prescribed! They tell us there is One who sees and knows it all, and yet His hand is never stretched forth to save or to destroy. No; it cannot be true! Is it not incredible that One infinitely merciful should allow wickedness to riot on the earth, and should permit such unutterable sorrow to fall with heaviest force upon those who keep His commandments?'

Mr. Godfrey Palmer's lips curved a little; he would have smiled mockingly, but for the terrible earnestness of the other's face.

'There is nothing left for us to believe in,' he said. 'Creed after creed has been argued away, and one religion has been broken upon another, since the world began. We are here, that's all we can be certain of; if people were honest most would say the same thing.'
'She believed in it,' muttered the other man—he was thinking of mother or wife.

'Women generally do,' said Godfrey Palmer. 'It suits their indolence to take things for granted, and their emotions are easily worked upon. That is the reason why all new religions and sects owe much to women. There are several religions in the world which but for them would not exist. Religion is a sentiment or a tradition, and women are fond of sentiment and tradition.'

'I suppose you had a mother, Mr. Palmer,' said Bailey.

'Yes, and a religious mother, if you wish to know, Mr. Bailey; but please don't bring my mother into the question.'

'Ah, it's strange now,' said Mr. Bailey, 'that however a man may go on against religion he wouldn't like it to be said that his mother had none of it, and he wouldn't have an unbeliever for his wife; how's that, Mr. Palmer?'

'How can I tell you? I don't understand such things; and, as I said before, there is nothing certain about religion.'

'Oh, the most terrible thing of all is that we are certain of nothing!' cried the Doctor. 'The people who have a belief, false though it may be, are happier than we. Even savages believe in a Paradise where they will have all that has been denied them here. But we cut ourselves off from all hope. If we are to have nothing—nothing but this
mad world, life is not worth living. Oh, if we only knew! If one could come back from the grave and tell us!'

'Ay, if one did come back,' was the unexpected response from Mr. Bailey, 'do you think he'd be believed? People would shut him up in a gaol or a madhouse. He wouldn't convince you, Mr. Palmer, not if he came in his grave-clothes.'

Godfrey Palmer paid no attention to this. 'You don't know what you believe,' he thought of the Doctor; 'it would be a wonder if you did, after your life.'

'After all,' he continued, 'religion of one kind or another is necessary for the world.'

'Well, I'm glad you've the grace to say that,' put in Mr. Bailey.

'But it has no right to bind us down with hard moral codes, and to fetter us with commandments which we cannot keep. Why should perfection be required of us when we are not perfect? There are times when we should do well to get rid of the whole thing.'

'Get rid of the ten commandments, do you mean?' asked Mr. Bailey. 'You'll be justifying murder next.'

'Well,' said Godfrey Palmer coolly. 'Look you, Mr. Bailey, I can even make out a good case in favour of murder. What is it? The removal of one or more human beings from this earth by another or other human beings. There's nothing moral people are more squeamish about than this—
so squeamish that they are almost afraid to hang murderers. Yet every one knows that it would be for the great good of the world if men who only run a muck in it were put out of existence. There are whole nations which ought to be killed off, and if all the worthless incapables who stick in the way of better men were removed I think this would be a tolerable world. And killing is an old law of humanity. Kill or be killed is the alternative when men crowd one another. It is the same in all states of society and all countries; but some do it in a more refined way than others. And religion, my good Bailey, religion has sanctioned murder many a time. The godly have murdered a pretty number in the most pious manner. What is war but murder, on a large scale?—and what is the most horrible of all wars?—why, a religious one. The finest soldiers—that means, men most expert in killing—have been religious enthusiasts. Have we not all heard of a very religious emperor who thanked heaven because his soldiers had shot and hacked to pieces thousands of their fellow-creatures, and who was accustomed to pray fervently for a continuation of such good fortune? Why, Te Deums have been sung for murder!

'For God's sake,' said the Doctor, shrinking away from him, 'talk of something else!' His eyes were fixed on Godfrey Palmer's face, as a helpless bird might gaze at the serpent that had fascinated it.

'No, I have not finished. Why need you care? I have said nothing yet about physicians.' The

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other man winced as if some one had struck him on the face. 'Besides,' continued the speaker, 'I want to look at it in another way;'—his voice softened now, and his manner, which before had been flippant or satirical, became grave and composed. 'Why shouldn't life be taken out of mercy? Isn't it cruelty in a physician to allow his patient to linger on and on, while disease eats away his strength by inches? He knows that life is nothing, and can be nothing more than a torture, yet he does his best to prolong it. Would it not be a mercy if that which you've just made that poor fellow swallow was something to send him out of his misery for ever?'

'Our business is not to take life,' said the Doctor; 'not even when we see it at the last extremity.'

'No, you are not sufficiently merciful. The greatest anaesthetic is death, and it is the only one you never use. You do not believe in Euthanasia.'

'No,' said the Doctor; 'it is you who do not understand. If you had ever had a man given into your hands to save from death if you could; if you had been with him day and night, and traced the progress of his disease inch by inch, and felt that he was as helpless as an infant in your hands, you would as soon wish to put the knife to your own heart as to give him into the power of his enemy. Life is a thing that is too precious, and—strange as it may seem—too dear, even to the most tortured wretch, for us to dare to meddle with it. We have no right to lift a finger against it.'
'And I wonder whether Barrington held those opinions,' said Godfrey Palmer. His face was calm, expressionless even; but there was triumph in his eye, as he laid his sacrilegious finger on that which had been dead and buried for years.

A spasm of fear and horror convulsed the features of the man who sat close to him, but he forced himself to answer, 'What has it to do with this?'

'Why, don't you remember Barrington? It's not so many years ago. I remember the case perfectly well'—Mr. Godfrey Palmer had refreshed his memory, during his sojourn in the neighbouring town, by reading about the case referred to.—'Barrington, you know, played false with a patient of his. He was a clever doctor, a splendid fellow altogether; there was nothing he might not have been if he could have kept within bounds; but he was wild and unsteady. When people knew that he was an habitual drunkard they scouted him, his practice was ruined, and he got into debt and all kinds of disgrace. Well, after all that, he was called in to attend an uncle of his; because, though like every one else he knew of Barrington's failings, he was so fond of him he would have no other doctor. It was not a dangerous illness, but the uncle died, and Barrington was his heir—now, do you understand?'

He paused, for at that moment the thunder of the storm burst right above their heads. Instantaneously a terrific flash filled the hut with a white light, and
in that awful moment one of the men called on the name of the One whom he had denied, and fell on his face with his hands raised above his head, as if their little strength could have saved him.

'Put something before the window,' said Godfrey Palmer coolly, looking at his awe-stricken companions with a contemptuous smile. 'We are in the midst of it. Has it blinded you, Doctor?'

'No,' said the wretched man, staggering to his feet; 'but would it had done worse than that!'

Godfrey Palmer hung a cloth before the window, and began to speak again.

'It was a world's wonder, that case of Barrington's,' he said. 'Some thought he had poisoned his uncle, others said the uncle died of natural causes, and others that it was done in mistake when Barrington was not clear-headed enough to know one drug from another. They never could decide exactly upon it, especially as—and his cold glance fastened on the Doctor's bloodless face—'Barrington was never even tried; he escaped, and defied all their attempts to bring him to justice.'

The lightning-flash shot between them again, and in its intense brightness the features of one of the two men were white as marble, and seemed as calm and immovable, but the other hid his face again, and cried, 'Lord, have mercy on me!'

'I thought you said you believed in nothing a little while ago,' said Godfrey Palmer. 'Of what are you afraid, then?'
'May the Lord have mercy on you both!' said the poor trembling Mr. Bailey, in heart-felt tones. 'The storm is going over,' said Godfrey Palmer. He drank something from a little flask, and offered it to the Doctor. 'Have a little,' he said; 'this has upset you.'

The Doctor took the flask from his hand with a fierce clutch, and the next instant it crashed through the window into the blackness outside. Then he turned, and opening the door, rushed out, as one who flees for dear life,—out, out into the terrible night. Silence fell on the others, except that the sick man moaned and moved on his pillow.

'Your friend is mad,' said Godfrey Palmer, recovering from his surprise, and laying his hand on Bailey's shoulder.

Bailey pushed him away, and with a look of intense disgust, as if he were removing himself from some abominable thing, got up and went to the farthest end of the hut, where he lay down and pretended to sleep. Godfrey Palmer made no pretence; refreshing slumber soon came at his call, and his face seemed angelical in its tranquillity when it was revealed now and again by a sudden gleam of lightning. But soon there was no other light than the dim glow of the fire; the storm rolled over, and it was still.
CHAPTER XV.

'To foster and ripen an evil thought
In a heart that is almost to madness wrought.'

Longfellow.

For a long time Mr. Bailey lay awake, unable to sleep for the unusual activity of his mind. He had never been suspected of possessing very brilliant parts; he was usually spoken of as a harmless simple kind of man who had no more understanding than sufficed to guide him quietly along his own common way of life. But his moderate intelligence shone clear enough on one point; by its light he had been enabled to keep the two greatest of all the commandments. Now, since his simple heart must needs concern itself with each neighbour of his who suffered, he thought of the Doctor and his patient with pity, and of Mr. Godfrey Palmer with a great fear and suspicion that would not have allowed his eyelids to close had he been twice as wearied. He had a strong belief that such a man was not spreading his nets for naught, nor practising his subterfuges merely for amusement. He had not understood all the conversation he had overheard; but he thought he saw, under Mr. Godfrey Palmer's disguises, the
sign of some hidden purpose which, springing from such a heart, could no more be a good one than sweet water can gush from the ocean's bitter waves.

'He's a wicked man, and he's after something, or he wouldn't be here,' thought Mr. Bailey, as he simulated sleep, and occasionally opened an eye to see if Mr. Godfrey Palmer was yet in the only state of innocence he ever knew. 'He's a man who wouldn't stick at murder. Now what has he to do with the man lying ill here, or what does he want with the Doctor? It's one or the other he's plotting against. It wasn't because of grief for his friend that he hung about the beach so long and looked at everybody that was brought up. I know one or two said at the time he was so very anxious to see his friend's dead body that it looked as if he'd much rather have it than the living one. And he appears to wish that this man should die; at least he's always talking about it, and saying it would be as well if he was put out of his pain. And it's plain enough he knows plenty about the Doctor, and could tell it if he didn't choose to keep it back, hanging above his head. You're up to something, Mr. Palmer; but I'll keep an eye on you, and cut in when I see your game.'

Reflections such as these soon proved too much for Mr. Bailey, and, in spite of all the strength of his will, he slumbered. He half awoke some while before day, and then he knew that the Doctor had come in again, and that Godfrey Palmer was talking to him.
The power of sleep was too strong upon him to be altogether broken by this; but now and then a word or a sentence reached his dulled ear, which he remembered with horror, when he thought of them afterwards with an understanding which was wide awake. For a long time—and he fancied he was dreaming—he heard Godfrey Palmer's low, even-toned voice tempting the other man to something; what he could not tell, for they whispered. Once, quite plainly, the Doctor answered, 'No, I don't think so now; he will recover;' and was it the other who said (or did he dream those words?), 'A thousand pounds, or what you like, if—' If what? He tried to wake, but could not, and comforted himself with the idea that it was only a dream. A long while after, it seemed, but probably it was only a few seconds, the Doctor cried out something; but he could not tell what was said, though at the voice he started in his sleep, and he felt that they turned and were quiet, while they watched him for a moment. One of them—it was Godfrey Palmer—said, 'He is asleep;' and then they turned to look the other way, where the unconscious man lay upon the bed, and knew not that they bartered for his life.

He awoke. It was dawn, and there was Godfrey Palmer wrapped in a rug, sound asleep, and looking as if he had never moved or spoken since he had lain down in the same place hours before. The Doctor was giving his patient something to drink. Was it his guilty thoughts that made him avoid Bailey's
glance? The colour had not yet come back to his face; his sunken eyes had a wild glare, and his hand shook so that he could scarcely hold the cup steadily. Mr. Bailey went out, and never had he been gladder of the pureness of the open air and the uncurtained heavens than when he closed the door of that hut upon the two other men.

He walked about and thought over the words which he had heard, till their meaning grew fearfully plain. At breakfast something prompted him to ask the Doctor whether his patient would recover. The Doctor held down his face while he answered, 'No.' Yet in that dream which had been no dream he had heard him say that he would.

He went out when he had eaten as much as he had appetite for; and the others, supposing he was going home, wished him good morning. He did indeed mount his horse; but he rode him to the back of the hut, where there was no window, and then, after letting him drink at the stream, led him into the very midst of the plantation of pines. Here, where there was a small open space, he tied him again, giving him a length of tether which allowed him to graze, and lay down beside him to wait. 'Now, Mr. Godfrey Palmer,' he said to himself, with an exultation in his own craft which the other more accomplished deceiver would have laughed to scorn, 'I don't stir from here till I see the end of this. If you want to do anything, just begin, and I'll be ready for you.'
He watched all day, sometimes stealing round the house and furtively peeping in at the window, to assure himself that all was as before. Godfrey Palmer did not go away, and Bailey almost made sure of one thing which surprised him much more than this—that not one word passed between the Doctor and his companion during the whole of the day. But, had he only known it, there was no need of words. What though the tempted man had cried out in abhorrence of the thing which had been hinted rather than proposed?—he had heard, and he could not forget. The other knew that the poison was working, and let him alone. But at nightfall he spoke again, because that which is evil rears its head highest and speaks loudest in the hour of darkness. In the morning, while they had shunned each other, he had read more of the Doctor's letters and of his diary, which, as diaries but seldom are, was a confession that never flinched from the truth, and followed the most inward windings of the writer's thoughts. That any eye but his should see those words was a sacrilege. The one who had read them by stealth held the key of a human heart in his hand, and when he pleased could force it to show him all its agony. And even through its best affections he purposed to ruin it.

He spoke, and the other listened, sullenly as despair itself.

'What has the man done that you should hate him so?' he asked.
'Nothing,' said Godfrey Palmer; 'and I don't hate him; but he is in my way.'

'It would be murder,' said the Doctor, with pallid lips.

'Hush! that is a dangerous word. No one could call it that if it were not known.'

'They say,' said the Doctor, with his head sunk on his breast, and his hands working one inside the other, 'that it always cries for vengeance, till it is brought to light.'

'They say so because they only know what has been found out. If it had always cried, ever since the world began, there are places where every stream and tree and every foot of ground would have a voice. Why, don't you know that men have done it and have gone amongst other men as before, unsuspected, and have died in all the odour of sanctity at the last? Don't you know of some who have escaped vengeance—don't you know of one?'

'Man!' cried the other, bursting out of the apathy in which he had seemed to be wrapped, 'what is it you want of me? You have found me out,—I do not know how—you have torn my secret from me, why do you madden me with always pointing at it, and bringing it up before me? Oh! was not once enough—enough for my ruin? Must I sell my soul a second time? You know the money tempts me for their sake—those who are not lost and beyond mercy as I am. But for them I had never listened to you. And you think I have escaped vengeance?'
Never, never! There can be no punishment greater than that I suffer—have suffered for years. It is here already'—he struck his hand upon his breast;—'the fire that is never quenched; the worm that never dies.'

'You are raving,' said Godfrey Palmer, and before his coolness the other's passion subsided, exhausted with its own violence. 'Yes, I know you are anxious on account of your wife and child,' he continued in his low musical voice. 'If he'—and he looked towards the lighted window of the hut—'should not recover, they shall be well provided for. You are very tender over one life which is nothing to you, and will no more be missed than a bubble which bursts in the sea; you can see two other lives, dearer to you than your own (so you say), perish because you are afraid—afraid of what? of soiling your pure reputation, of lowering yourself, or afraid of things you have said you don't believe in? You say I tempt you; was it I who tempted you eight years ago?'

'It was the same temptation. If you are a man, if you can feel like one, do you not understand it was for them I did that? They dragged at my heart then, and now again—I cannot tell whether you said it, or whether your words put it into my mind; but something whispers, whispers always, that, lost already, I must go down still deeper that they may be saved through my ruin. Will nothing deliver me from you? You have shown me your
hand; are you not afraid to put yourself in my power?'

'In your power!' Godfrey Palmer smiled. 'My friend, it is not yet too late for Dr. Barrington to suffer the extreme penalty of the law. Oh, no, I am not afraid of you, though we are alone, and you are a little violent in your temper sometimes, Doctor. I have a very useful friend here in my pocket. You are in my power, excuse me, and there you will remain, till I have no more need of you.'

It seemed like the last cry of despair that answered this. With a furious gesture the Doctor waved the other away from him. 'Let me alone,' he said in a changed voice, the voice of a man who has committed himself to a course from which there is no escape. 'Leave me—out of my sight! I was bad enough before you found me; but you have made me like yourself.'

All this had been said outside. They dared not, even Mr. Godfrey Palmer dared not, say such words as these before the man whose life was at stake, though his eyes and ears seemed to be closed to all that was around. The blackness of that night, without a single star, without a gleam of heaven, was fittest for their work. They stood in the shelter of the pines as they talked; and close to them, so close that their faintest word did not escape him, listened Mr. Bailey. And sometimes he heard the beating of his own heart in the fearful silence between one voice and another, and sometimes it seemed to stand
still, horror-stricken at the deed which one suggested and the other almost consented to.

They separated, but not to go inside. Now was his opportunity. Like an arrow he darted into the house. A light burnt low in the socket of the candlestick on the table, dangerously near to a pile of papers and a cloth which was hung from the wall so as to shade the light from the eyes of the invalid. Mr. Bailey saw with a quick glance that he was in the same state, no one had harmed him as yet.

‘Hush,’ he said, speaking as if it were some little child, when the large eyes turned to him out of the deep hollows which sickness had worn around them, with what was like a supplicating confession of helplessness in their gaze, ‘hush, I’m not going to hurt you.’

He knelt down on one knee, and putting his arms round the other, bedclothes and all, raised himself with an effort that took all his strength; he swathed the clothes more tightly round his burden, pushed the door open with his foot, and staggered out into the darkness.

It was no easy task, he found, to carry another man who was two or three inches taller than himself, and, besides, was wrapped in a good many pounds’ weight of cumbrous and flapping bedclothes. It would have been perfectly impossible if the man had not been wasted by illness to a mere skeleton. As it was, Mr. Bailey struggled and gasped for breath before he had gone more than a few yards.
'Merciful goodness!' he half ejaculated. 'I won't leave him, not if it kills me; but I don't think I can get as far as my horse without putting him down. If I fall in with either of those two rascals, I'm done for; I can't run with this load. I don't know what he could have weighed when he had flesh on his bones, but he's mighty heavy now.'

More by accident than sight he made his way to the place where his horse was tied. If it had been dark outside the trees it was beyond all conception darker here. He could see nothing, and he only found the horse by the sound of his breathing.

'I'll never get him on his back,' groaned Mr. Bailey, 'for if I could lift him up I couldn't keep him fixed there till I got on myself, and I can't hold him up and lead the horse as well.'

He rested his burden partly against a tree, and thought. Necessity, as usual, stimulated invention. He remembered that there was a fence round the plantation, and that near the slip panel by which he had brought his horse inside, a stunted pine had thrust its crooked branches between and close above the rails, forming a kind of cradle. He stumbled on with his burden to the place, and straining himself to the utmost, raised it high enough to get it into the cradle, partly propped up by the branches and partly by the top rail of the fence. Then he got on his horse, and rode him close to the fence. The horse was like his master, of a good, sober, steady disposition, as Mr. Bailey gratefully thought at the
moment, 'none of your high flyers for me,' he said. 'I should be in a nice quandary now with a spirited horse which wouldn't let himself be mounted. This shows the worth of one you can get on anywhere, and that'll stand like a rock when you're in such a pickle as this.'

He reached out his arms, now that he was on a level with the big bundle of clothes in the tree, for such it seemed, and took it before him, tucking the coverings about the form within as well as he could. 'And now,' he said, all in a hot glow from his exertions, and with a face bedewed with perspiration —'now I have you, let them get you if they can!'

In the intense darkness of that night no living eye could have told where to draw the line between the earth and sky. All was one great cloud in which every landmark had vanished. Whichever way he turned it was all alike, so Mr. Bailey sensibly left the business of finding the road home to his horse, and dropping the reins upon his neck gave all his care to the form laid across the saddle bow.

'I hope he won't go too fast,' he thought, as the horse trotted on without hesitation, 'if he gets into a quick canter it's all up or rather all down with us both. But it's growing lighter, I believe, and that can be neither sun nor moon.'

It was lighter. There was quite a red glow behind him, which of a truth was from neither sun nor moon. As he cautiously turned to look, a column of flame seemed to burst from the very
ground, just where the hut ought to have been. He gave but one glance, and then in deadly fear urged his horse on. 'Was that how they meant to do it?' he thought in horror. The horse broke into a canter, but he would not have minded now if he had galloped. He clung to his seat somehow, and held to his burden with both arms, and the good horse, though he must have thought himself strangely caparisoned with a number of flowing garments, neither took heed of them nor slackened his pace until the station was reached.

The two men who had been left near the hut saw the flames break through the roof at about the same time as Mr. Bailey. As the sudden glow of red light startled them, they rushed against each other in the path to the house.

'Is this your humanity, Doctor?' cried Godfrey Palmer, giving utterance to his suspicions. 'What are you after? Come back!'

'You have done this!' fiercely cried the Doctor. 'Let me go; he shall not die like this!'

'Are you a fool?' said Godfrey Palmer, holding him. 'Nothing can be living now in that flame. He is dead already; but you might have found a kinder way.'

'I will go!' the Doctor shouted, wrenching his hand away. 'I don't care if I die too. I will bring him out. I did not do this; it is your work.'

'You are not going;'-and his companion threw his arms round him and dragged him back. 'You...
can do no good; his sufferings are over. This is clever acting, Doctor; this would make good evidence at an inquest.'

His taunt remained unanswered; but he quailed before the terrible face of the other man, who made no more attempts to rush into the burning house. The thatched roof burned as rapidly as any heap of straw, and in a few minutes the fire consumed everything, down to the bare ground. Godfrey Palmer leaned against the fence to watch it; the Doctor threw himself face downward on the earth, and lay there like a dead man, till the morning came.

A little while after dawn some one touched him with a cold smooth hand. He rose to his feet. Godfrey Palmer stood there. 'I am going,' he said, 'and this is yours. You shall have the rest; I always keep my promises.' He held a purse towards him, and as he did not speak or move, dropped it into his hand. The frenzied man looked at it for a second; then hurled it in the face of the other with all his might. There was a mark on the white smooth forehead to the last day of its owner's life, for the sharp-edged clasp of the purse cut through skin and flesh to the very bone. 'As you will; it is all the same to me,' said Godfrey Palmer, quietly wiping his forehead, and turning from the spot. He mounted his horse and rode away, for his business in that place was finished.

As he rode away towards the river and the hills the heavens flashed and glowed with the coming of
another day, and the jewelled gateways of the east opened wide before the sun. But to him, throughout all the years, these witnesses have cried aloud in vain. It will be so to the end. Carelessly he passed out of sight, like a shadow moving from the place, and the day seemed brighter when he had gone.

The man whom he had left still lay in the same place. He had said that he did not believe, and yet the night had been but one prayer, and now that it was morning he felt unworthy to look upon the face of heaven. When at last he raised his head he saw a woman coming towards him, by the white-worn path across the ridge of land beyond which ran the stream. He did not go to meet her; but she came to him, and put the hand which he dared not touch into his; and her face, from which ineffable pity and forgiveness shone upon him, seemed as the face of an angel. It was his wife, and her black dress told him why she had come alone. A friend had found her in her distress, and had given her money; so that she had been able to join him. She had walked many miles that morning from the town; but she was not tired now she had found him. Why did he shrink away from her? why tell her she ought not to have come? To whom else should she come, now that, one by one, her children had been hidden in the grave?

Like a man brought from death into life he felt the darkness roll away. There was healing in the tears upon his face, and he knew that he was saved
from himself. But they must leave that place; he could endure it no longer. There was room for a new life in the far country beyond the hills; he would work for her there amongst strangers who did not know their past, and she should lead him back to God. So, hand in hand, they took the path towards the purple hills, and went out from the shadow of mourning into the sweet peace of that Nature which has not lost the joy of innocence. There, on either side of the way, the lofty trees blossomed in their pride, and the streams gushed clear and pure as the tranquil happiness of a good life; and clearer, purer still, rose the song of birds, like the incense of praise, to the unclouded heaven.
CHAPTER XVI.

'Time's glass is filled with varied sand,
With fleeting joy and transient grief;
We'll turn, and with no sparing hand,
O'er many a strange fantastic leaf;
And fear not but, 'mid many a blot,
There are some pages written fair,
And flowers, that time can wither not
Preserved, still faintly fragrant there.'

Mr. Bailey rode away from the light into darkness again, and it was still dark when he arrived at the station. He found the gate, or rather his horse found it, and he managed to open it, though afterwards he was not very certain whether his invaluable steed had not done that also. He rode through and then halted, for an apparently insoluble problem had assailed his mind. How in the world was he to get down? getting up was as nothing to that. He saw at once he could not do it without assistance, and began to wonder whether he would have to sit on horseback all night, holding another man before him. He might have called Angus, whose sleeping-room he had ridden past; but he objected to being seen, and also questioned, by any of the men.

'I should have to explain everything to them,
and I've no mind to do so,' he thought. There was no one to whom he could turn in this strait but Mary Anne, and his experience of Mary Anne reminded him that, like all hard-working women, she slept very soundly. 'I shall have to smash the window to wake her, and if I do that I shall have Angus out too,' he reflected,—'stand then, stand still, my beauty,—this to his horse, who was beginning to tire of Mr. Bailey and his extraordinary burden.

Seeing that Mary Anne must be aroused at any cost, Mr. Bailey rode his horse close to the window of the room occupied by his wife, and putting his face close to the glass cooed as loudly as he dared. As this did no good he thumped on the side of the house, and immediately Mrs. Bailey demanded, 'Who are you?' and also opened the window, being pretty sure who it was.

'So you're here at last, Sam,' she said. 'Wherever on earth have you been? I sent Angus to look for you; we were getting quite concerned.'

'No time to talk now, my dear,' said Mr. Bailey; 'tell you all afterwards. I'm in a pretty fix here. I want you to help me down.'

'Help you down!' said Mrs. Bailey, her voice getting shrill. 'Why, you've been out then in all this storm, and you're half dead with cramp or rheumatism. I'll call Angus in a minute.'

'I say, just leave Angus alone,' commanded Mr. Bailey. 'I'm all right, but I've got some one here who can no more stand on his feet than a baby.'
'Gracious! whatever have you been doing? I'll be out in a minute.'

'I don't think you need come out,' said Mr. Bailey, after a moment's thought. 'Just push up the window as far as it will go, and wheel the sofa underneath; then I'll manage to let him down on it.'

'Well, did ever one see the like of this!' exclaimed Mrs. Bailey, as directly the window was opened Mr. Bailey began to push through it something more like a mummy than a living man, only it was swathed in more clothes than ever mummy wore.

'Let it alone till I've put the horse out,' commanded Mr. Bailey; 'get a light and a bed ready in one of the rooms, for he'll want some nursing, I promise you.'

He came in himself by the window, to save further trouble, and then the invalid who had so strangely arrived was carried into another room, and laid in a clean comfortable bed. His eyes were closed, and he hardly seemed to breathe. 'Who is he?' said Mrs. Bailey, looking at him with motherly compassion, as she put a soft pillow under his head.

'I know no more than you do,' said Mr. Bailey, exhausted with yawns, 'and I really can't say or do any more till I get some rest.' And saying this, he dropped into an arm-chair as he was, booted and spurred, and immediately fell into a sleep that lasted till the next day's sun was several degrees above the horizon.

Mrs. Bailey woke him then, or perhaps he might
have slept out the twelve hours. 'Come and get your breakfast,' she said. The poor woman was dying of curiosity.

'That I will!' said Mr. Bailey. 'I've had neither bite nor drop since yesterday morning.'

While he had breakfast Mr. Bailey related his adventures, to the great wonder and admiration of Mrs. Bailey. He was a hero in her eyes; and for his part, he, who had always esteemed his Mary Anne as a woman of superior understanding, thought more highly of her mental gifts than ever, when she manufactured a theory from what he had told her which accounted for it all.

They gave all their thoughts to nursing their invalid into health and strength. It was long before they could see any improvement in his state. He was so deplorably weak that the good people almost cried over him at times, and more than once believed he was dying. He was a wearying charge; night and day they waited on him, administering food in such homœopathic doses as he could take, watching and tending incessantly. He slept, or appeared to sleep, most of the time, until it seemed as if he would never awake. Mr. Bailey mourned over this as a sign that he was drifting away from their care. Mrs. Bailey was more acute; she prophesied that he would awake soon with a clear mind.

But one day Mrs. Bailey made a great discovery, and hurriedly sought her husband, with a mysterious look upon her face.
'Guess now,' she cried, 'who we have here.'

'Has he told you his name?' questioned Mr. Bailey.

'No, I've been thinking for days I knew his face, and now I tell you, I don't care whether he's been drowned or buried or both; it's either Mr. Randall or his double.'

'Bless me! I believe you're right,' exclaimed Mr. Bailey, rushing to the bedside, whence he was immediately pulled back again.

'Don't wake him. You may see the reason of it all now, Bailey. Don't you remember hearing that Mr. Randall had been left a fortune, and that Mr. Godfrey Palmer—horrid man!—was the next heir?'

'But, Mary Anne!' cried Mr. Bailey, 'if this is Mr. Randall, why, then, Mr. Langridge knew it and kept it to himself. That's why he was so shaken when he came back from seeing him, and that's why he left money behind and charged me so particular to look after him. Well, well, we're amongst queer folk, I think.'

'I'm ashamed of you,' said Mrs. Bailey, who was partial to Stephen. 'Why should he hush it up? He was no wiser than you were.'

'I don't know about that. He was strange, I thought at the time; and why has he gone off for nothing at all, if it wasn't to follow Miss Desmond about?'

'You ought to be ashamed of yourself,' said Mrs. Bailey, refusing to be convinced. 'He wouldn't
think of such a thing. At least not so soon,' she added.

A day or two after this their patient began to speak to them in a strangely feeble voice, and to ask where he was, and what had happened to him. At first they would not encourage him to talk, and put him off as if he had been a child, but when he had grown a little stronger he insisted, with the irritability of most invalids, on being attended to.

'I am sure I know you,' he said, after his eyes had languidly rested on the round pleasant face that was opposite to him, when Mrs. Bailey drew up the blind, and let the sunshine he had not seen for weeks come into the room; 'I believe you are Mrs. Bailey.'

'I believe you are right,' she answered, smiling at him.

'This is not your house,' he said, looking round the large room, and as his eye wandered to the window, seeing outside a flat grass paddock that seemed to have no end.

'This is Mr. Langridge's. We keep the place for him.'

'Langridge?' he repeated.

'Yes, don't you remember young Mr. Langridge? He has this place of his own, and you've been here since you were taken ill.'

'How did I get here? What has been the matter with me?' he asked, curiously examining his attenuated fingers.

'Well, I don't know exactly,' said Mrs. Bailey.
'You don't want to tell me.'
'I think you're not well enough to talk much.'
'I feel quite well,' he said, lifting himself a little, and immediately dropping back again in a manner that belied his words. 'How long have I been ill?'
'Oh, ever since'—she had intended to say 'ever since the wreck,' but stopped, not liking to remind him of that so soon.
'Ever since what?' he insisted.
'Oh, dear, never mind,' said Mrs. Bailey.
'Is that the day of the month?' he asked next, tossing on his pillow, and trying to get a sight of the newspaper Mrs. Bailey held in her hand. 'Why, it was March when I was in Melbourne, and I remember nothing since—yes, I remember being on the steamer.'

He was silent for some time, and Mrs. Bailey, not caring to leave him alone for very long, brought her sewing, and opened the window so that the sweet fresh air wafted through the room. Suddenly Randall spoke, with astonishing firmness and clearness of voice compared with his previous efforts.
'Bring me some paper, if you please, Mrs. Bailey, and pen and ink. I will write a letter.'
'Dear me, Mr. Randall,' said his nurse, 'wait a bit. I'm sure you're not fit to bother yourself with writing.'
'I shall get them myself some time, if you don't,' he said, 'if I can only crawl for them.'
'Let me write for you,' said Mrs. Bailey. 'I sent word to your mother yesterday.'

'No, I'll write it myself,' obstinately said the invalid, 'then they will know I am quite well.'

'Quite well!' said Mrs. Bailey. 'However, you shall just try, Mr. Randall.'

She brought writing materials, and then he tried to sit up and scrawl some kind of a letter. But the pen wriggled about in his hand as if it had life, and though it left traces of its progress on the paper they were more like some secret cypher than plain letters of the alphabet. Or when, by extraordinary care and firmness of will, he did make a letter, it was such a feeble, broken-backed thing, and with its comrades had such a strong tendency to run into one corner of the paper, or to hook itself on to some unmeaning blot or long trailing scribble, that he himself did not know when he had done with a word or when he should begin another. 'There!' he said, worn out before two sentences were finished. 'I can't! Take it away; you're right; I'm not fit for it or anything else.'

Mr. Bailey came to sit with him in the afternoon. His wife, who knew him to be more indulgent than prudent in his nursing, cautioned him not to allow Randall to talk much, nor to tell him anything that was likely to disturb his mind. Mr. Bailey was of the opinion that the best way of putting off undesirable questions, or preventing Randall from exhausting himself with conversation, was to do all the talking
himself. He caught at the first question with avidity, it being a harmless one.

'I can't make out why you and Mrs. Bailey are here by yourselves,' Randall said. 'Where are all the children? It is very quiet.'

'If ours were here you'd hear them soon enough,' said Mr. Bailey. 'Yes, we are by ourselves; we're "without encumbrance," as they say in advertisements.'

'But what have you done with them?'

'Well, we haven't massacred the innocents,' said Mr. Bailey; 'they're all alive yet; but you'll remember how hard put to it we was to bring them up. It seems to be this way; those who have most children have least to give them. My brother, now, who is pretty comfortable, has none, and has always cast an envious eye on ours. I believe he'd have taken the whole seven if he could have got them. We were regularly starved. You know what kind of a place ours was; we couldn't have ploughed it, unless we'd first cut down the gully sides and torn out the stumps with steam-engines. We was blocked up with timber. Things got worse and worse, till that year you went away I dreaded the winter coming on. I don't know whether there really is less money about in winter than in summer; but it's a fact that one season is twice as hard as the other to pull through. I got desponding, and began to dream of money night after night; of enormous fortunes, and gold-mines, and millionhairs, and such-
like. I'd got into my old Mammon-worshipping state of mind, and nothing but money would suit me. Well, one day I borrowed the paper, and as I read it through—for in the bush, you know, we read every bit of a newspaper—I came to the column of Wanteds. "Now," I thought, "here's a power of people wanted, men, women, and children, does no one want us?" So I lit upon one which began, "Wanted, a man and his wife without encumbrance." The man was to have experience of station work and the woman was to keep house. "I'll back Mary Anne against the colony for house management," I thought, "and haven't I spent a number of years on a sheep station before I was married?" Mr. Langridge, who advertised, knew me so well I felt sure of getting it if I asked. But without encumbrance—there was the rub!

'I should think so,' said Randall.

'But I cast my eye on the Wanteds again, and I saw all the way down such as this:—"Wanted, a smart active boy," or, "Wanted, a respectable girl." "Well," I said, "why not ours? I can testify they're smart and active, and respectable too, as they ought to be, with their bringing up. They'll have to work somewhere; they'd better work for themselves than all hang on with me to a barren hillside, and hack at logs that would tire out a giant." I told my thoughts to Mary Anne; and, as is the way of women, she made a great outcry, mostly because it was a new idea. She didn't like to "scatter," she
said. "When you've no money to scatter," I said, "you'd better scatter in search of it." Then she made much of leaving the children. Of course that stuck in my throat bad enough; but I'd convinced myself it was for their good as well as ours. "We can trust our children anywhere," I said, "and as for the two who are not old enough to take care of themselves, there's my brother, he's been bothering us ever since they were babies, to give them to him; he may have them now, while we can look round ourselves. Show me another way," said I, "to get a hundred a year clear, and keep the children, and I'll go in for it." I brought her round to my way of thinking at last; and we'd no difficulty in dividing ourselves among the people who wanted helps. My brother was glad enough to take our youngest; so there, you see, we were: no encumbrance at all. It was hard on us, though, and it seemed queer for an old married couple to start off by themselves and look after a place, as if they'd never had chick nor child. You should have heard old Mr. Langridge roar with laughter when we said we were without encumbrance. But he engaged us though, and sent us here with Mr. Stephen. Now, Mr. Randall, just look at the results. We've all of us—children as well as ourselves—money out at interest. Mary Anne and I save nearly all we get; for we've only our clothes to provide, and one doesn't want many, whatever fine ladies may think. Perhaps a year or two more will make us able to come together again; for one
wearies for one's boys and girls. We'll get a farm somewhere that's level, I hope, and has more soil than timber on it. I don't know, though, whether my brother won't keep those children we lent him altogether; for he's always harping on it, and it won't be like losing them after all. Yes; we've got on well, and we ought to be thankful. I know I'm glad we're here for one thing, to take care of you just now.'

'Bailey,' said Mrs. Bailey, coming into the room, 'how you do talk! I've heard nothing but clatter, clatter. Much rest you give Mr. Randall. Somebody's coming; you had better see who it is.'

Bailey went to the door, and could hardly believe his eyes when he saw Mr. Godfrey Palmer, graceful and self-possessed as ever.

'My good Bailey, how are you?' was his greeting.

Mr. Bailey was blind to the seductive attractions of the slim white hand which was offered to him. He came out, shut the door, and stood with his back against it.

'Your hospitality is somewhat cold,' said Godfrey Palmer, with a slight smile.

'I like to keep out vermin,' said Mr. Bailey. 'If there's anything to be said, let's say it in the field, where maybe the fresh air will neutralise the poison you have about you.'

'All right. You are sarcastic: the reason why, I cannot tell. I only came to ask after that interesting person, Mr. Bailey. I heard a strange report that
he had got into your charge, by some means, and I felt as if I should like to be certain of its truth, and to know whether he were recovering. I am still riveted to this spot by the bonds of friendship.'

'Oh, you want to know if he's recovering, do you?' said Mr. Bailey. 'Very kind of you, very kind indeed, Mr. Palmer.'

'Well, is there anything surprising in that?' asked Mr. Godfrey Palmer, who did not know what to make of Mr. Bailey's manner.

'Perhaps not, seeing as it comes from you,' answered Mr. Bailey. 'Nothing would surprise me from that quarter. You'll be glad to hear he's doing well, now that he's out of the sphere of your friendship.'

'You're rather obscured, aren't you, Mr. Bailey? or I must be very dull. I can't understand your dark sayings.'

'I'll make something clear to you. Look here; I won't have you prowling about the place. You have the impudence to come and ask after the health of a man who would be buried now if you'd had your way.'

'What has got into the poor fellow's brain?' queried Mr. Palmer, with a comical expression on his face. 'Strong beer, whiskey, or what? You are wandering, Mr. Bailey. You are an enigma to me.'

'I don't know what an enigma is, Mr. Palmer; but I know what I am now; I'm master here while my master's away, and if you don't leave of your own VOL. III. 56
accord, two of our men will turn you off the place. The bonds of friendship may be pretty strong, but I guess they'll have to give way in such a case.'

'So you're master here, Bailey,' said Mr. Godfrey Palmer mockingly. 'Verily, it looks like it. You're dressed in a little brief authority, so you're putting on airs. Perhaps your master won't be pleased when he finds whom you've smuggled into his house. He mayn't quite approve of your success in the body-snatching business, though it was cleverly done, Bailey—very.'

Mr. Bailey was one of the mildest and meekest of men. Bad-tempered he could not be; angry he had seldom been, except with wrong-doing, and things that were hateful and mean. As a boy, he had disdained to fight with other boys; as a man, he would rather have seen his hand fall helpless at his side than have laid it unkindly on a fellow-creature. But now, suddenly his face darkened, his fist clenched, his right arm was extended, and simultaneously Mr. Godfrey Palmer plunged madly backwards, and sank among the tussocks.

Mr. Bailey stood speechless for a moment, amazed at what he had done. It had only seemed a little tap, yet here was a man bigger than himself ingloriously overthrown, his hat crushed beneath him, and his feet some inches higher than his head. 'Are you hurt?' he said, actually feeling a little frightened.

'Oh, dear, no!' said Mr. Godfrey Palmer, whose complexion, however had a somewhat sickly hue.
'Not at all.' He rose, and shook the broken grass stalks and leaves from his coat. 'Your friendship is oppressive, Mr. Bailey.'

'Take care it doesn't oppress you again,' retorted Mr. Bailey, whose mild blue eyes glittered yet with unwonted fire. 'Are you going, or are you not? D'ye see the high road there? If you're not on it in ten minutes, I'll have you carried, but you shall go.'

'I'm almost inclined to wait to be carried,' said Mr. Godfrey Palmer, furbishing up his hat, 'I feel so bruised and battered.' But he did not wait; he prudently withdrew before the expiration of the ten minutes. 'Farewell, kind Bailey,' he cried; 'though your hand has been heavy upon me I respect your principles.'

Mr. Bailey drew a long breath of relief, and hastened to tell Mrs. Bailey of the little engagement. He was much elated with his victory.

'You should have seen him go down all in a heap, Mary Anne,' he chuckled; 'and when he was down he looked so common and mean and contemptible, I almost felt ashamed of having touched him. Ha! I'd like to tell Mr. Randall of our scrimmage.'

'If you do you'll be very foolish; you'll have to tell him all then. Better not disturb his mind with such things. He oughtn't to know them, or be reminded of what he's forgotten, till he's stronger.'

'Then I mustn't be with him much,' said Mr. Bailey, 'for he's getting very particular in his
questionings. He'll have the whole lot from me as soon as he begins to ask how he came here and what's happened since.'

'You're not obliged to tell him everything he wants to know,' returned Mrs. Bailey. She judiciously satisfied Randall's desire to know all that had taken place during his illness by telling him a part.

At last the weary time was near its end. He was so far recovered that his nurses thought he might venture to leave his room. They dressed him in some of Stephen's clothes (Bailey's, from their shortness, being altogether out of the question), and leaning on an arm of each, and almost surprised to find that he could walk, he was led into the sitting-room. Just as they had brought him to the haven of an arm-chair Bailey, who had directed an idle glance towards the window, gave an exclamation of joy. 'Well, here's a sight I'm right glad of! Mary Anne, here's the master.'

'And not before time,' said his wife, as, leaving Randall, both hurried to receive Stephen.

There was a cloud upon his brow, he looked wearied and anxious, and, though he spoke with his usual kindness, there was that in his manner which did not encourage them to ask why he had tarried so long.

Somewhat to their surprise his first question was about the invalid who, when he left home, had been in the Doctor's charge.
'Is he there yet?' he asked, with an eager anxiety which the others could not understand.

'Oh, no, sir,' said Bailey; 'he's——'

'What?' interrupted Stephen, faltering over his words in a strange way. 'You don't mean—surely he is not——' He seemed unable to finish the sentence.

'Dead, sir?' said Bailey, supplying the blank. 'I'm thankful to say he's likely to live as long as most of us. He's here in your house; that's what I meant to say.'

Stephen gave some indistinct ejaculation, apparently one of thankfulness. 'I am very glad,' he said.

'And who do you think he's turned out to be?' cried Mrs. Bailey.

'How can I guess?' said Stephen, with an uneasy laugh.

'My word, you'll be astonished,' said Mr. Bailey.

But he was so little astonished at the news that Mrs. Bailey began to be suspicious; it looked very much as if he had known it before.

'Just like you two good souls,' he said. 'You did right to bring him here. I ought to have done it myself.'

Mrs. Bailey looked at him with innocent wonder, and he could not help changing colour, which did not tend to allay her rising suspicions.

'I expect Mrs. Randall never got my letter,' she said, 'or you would have known all this before.' She
has never answered me. I thought she might be coming instead of writing.'

'Mrs. Randall—how should I know about your letter?' replied Stephen. 'I suppose you addressed it to Mr. Wishart's, and none of the family are at home: I don't know where they are now, but I don't think they've gone home yet.'

'Oh, I beg pardon, sir,' said Mrs. Bailey, seeing he was annoyed by her remark. 'I thought you had been with them.'

'No, not lately,' said Stephen, colouring still deeper at the thought that his servants had discerned his folly. 'You and Bailey have been very good to nurse him so well,' he added, still thinking of Randall.

'Why, dear me, sir, what else could we do?' said Mrs. Bailey, more puzzled than ever by his manner. 'Any one would have done the same.'

'Some one didn't,' said Stephen, half to himself.

'Would you like to see him?' said Mrs. Bailey. 'He's sitting up to-day.'

'Oh, no, no; not now,' Stephen answered hurriedly, and went out.

'He knew then,' was the reflection of his housekeeper. 'Oh, the deceitfulness of men in things like this! And never told them!'

No, he had never got so far as that during the time he had spent with his friends in Dunedin. Though he had soon repented of his fault, he had never had the moral courage to acknowledge it. Sometimes the sight of the mourning which Maud
and Mrs. Randall wore, or sometimes a word in remembrance of the one whom they believed to be dead (for they could bear to speak of him now) had touched him so that he was enraged with himself because he could not tell them what would have turned their mourning into joy. But every day made this more difficult, until it became well-nigh impossible. What! tell her he had deceived her for the meanest, most selfish purpose, and then, as a necessary consequence, lose her esteem for ever? Now at least he had her friendship; but if she knew how little he deserved it what would he be in her eyes? It came to this at last—he was so uncomfortable in her company and Mrs. Randall's—continually reproached by their friendliness and unsuspecting confidence—that voluntarily he tore himself away from the happiness he had schemed for. Mr. Wishart pressed him to accompany them on their journey; they were going to several places before returning home. It was the very thing Stephen had desired; but he would not allow himself to have it. 'No, I won't practise falsehood any longer,' he thought; so excusing himself, he stayed behind in Dunedin. It was some time before he could make up his mind to go home. He was afraid of the man whom he had left lying ill in his shepherd's hut; afraid to look him in the face if he should be alive; and much more afraid to find him dead. Oh, surely he had not wished that; never, never! If that had happened, could he ever forgive
himself? could he ever be certain that, removed to a more comfortable place, with every possible attention, and with the tender care of those whose heart would be in his recovery, the sick man whom he had ridden away from, ignored as a stranger and left to his fate, might not have been saved? He no longer wanted him out of the way; no, it was his wish that he might live.

He came home determined to do what was right, which meant in this case doing all in his power for his invalid guest. There was nothing he would not do to ensure his recovery or win his friendship. And though he had set himself a hard task, to be friendly to a man whom he had never liked, in the end he was surprised into some kind of regard for him. But they were only learning to know each other when Randall began to get better in good earnest and was impatient to go away. He had been hidden too long; it was high time those who still wore mourning for him should know that he had not died. The letters which had been sent must have failed to reach them while they were absent from home travelling about, and now it was of no use to write; a letter would not find them any sooner than himself; nor would he startle them with a telegram. He would go and tell them he was alive.

So one morning he said good-bye to Mr. and Mrs. Bailey. These old and tried friends, who had nursed him so devotedly, were almost ashamed
of being thanked. 'It was not much to speak of,' Mr. Bailey diffidently said. 'It is so much I shall remember it all my life,' Randall answered, as he shook hands with them. There were tears in their eyes. Good people! however far he might wander he would never find kinder hearts than theirs.

Stephen drove him to the railway station, thirty miles away, because it had been determined that he would travel more comfortably in the buggy than in the lumbering and crowded coach. He did not leave him at the station either. As he had gone down with Maud and Mrs. Randall to Dunedin, with all kinds of foolish hopes and unreal visions in his mind, so he went down with Randall, as the last kindness he could show him. He could not help feeling a little saddened, as he returned to his lonely desolate place; and as our way is, when things have gone as we would not have them, sketched out a long vista of years before him, all alike in their monotonous solitude, and none brighter than the gloomy present. He came home; how quiet it seemed, how far from the rest of the world! Again he sat alone at his meals as of old, with a book propped up before him, and only his dog's meek brown eyes resting upon him. But a dog is faithful if he is nothing more, and faithfulness is the better part of friendship.
CHAPTER XVII.

'None are all evil—quickening round his heart
One softer feeling would not yet depart.'

_The Corsair._

Mr. Wishart had brought Maud and Mrs. Randall back to his own house, and had been glad to reach home after a dreary and somewhat harassing journey. But a few days only had passed since their return when he was in town again. After an absence of some weeks he had business to attend to: there was one thing, in particular, which he had promised Mrs. Randall should not be delayed.

There is, in the midst of this town, hard by the busiest and most crowded thoroughfare, as if it had been placed there to remind men of their mortality, a stone-mason's yard, full of monuments and tombstones. Mr. Wishart had designed to visit this place, for he walked quickly towards it, without turning to the right or the left, and went inside the yard. Shortly after he had entered another gentleman, who had been slowly walking up the street, stopped here also, not to go inside, but to lean against the wall; to rest himself no doubt, for he had the appearance of one who had only lately recovered from a serious illness.
He had his back to the wall, and did not alter his position, although he soon became aware that one of two voices which he heard was not that of a stranger. The monument-maker, a man of solemn countenance, as befitted his trade, with also the venerability of a bald head, a long gray beard, and beetle-browed, deep-set eyes, was showing Mr. Wishart round the yard, and expatiating on his stock in trade, a large one, which, he assured his visitor, comprised almost every kind of monument, bearing every imaginable emblem of mortality.

Men have written their own epitaphs, and ordained their burials beforehand. They have chosen a place of sepulture, some even have prepared coffins for themselves and treasured them for years; but it has been given to very few to hear their gravestones ordered. The conversation among the rows of tombs held the listener outside spell-bound, as altogether the strangest thing that had yet greeted his ears. He felt like an impostor, or as if he had no right to be alive.

'It shall be attended to as soon as possible, sir,' said the man of monuments, copying the order into a pocket-book. 'Yes, yes,'—and he read over part of what he had written,—"In remembrance of Henry Moncrieff Randall, only and beloved son of Margaret, widow of the late Henry Randall." A sad case, Mr. Wishart,—cut off in his prime. These things ought to make us think of our own ends. I may say I have mine always in view. This, now, is what I've
prepared for my own monument; that one with the weeping angel is for my wife. Oh, not the identical ones, sir; they're only patterns; they've been sold over and over again: but I always have them in stock, and when we're gone our son will know what to put over us. We people who have a great deal to do with things that remind us of dying look on it more cheerfully than others. The sight of that monument, now, is a comfort to me when trade's bad and I'm low-spirited. I know I shan't be troubled by such things when I'm under it.'

'I can well imagine that,' said Mr. Wishart. 'Can it be done by the end of the week, Mr. Sculthorpe?

'Well, really,' said Mr. Sculthorpe, covering his head with a scarlet silk handkerchief, as he remembered that his baldness was exposed to the most penetrating glances of the sun. 'We have our hands full just now; but I'll try to do it. But you won't think of having only a plain headstone. There's this one, which we supplied the other day for just such an afflicting case as yours,—a broken column with a few fragments lying at its base, or this,—a palm-tree, the stem snapped in the middle. These things may seem poor trifles to you, Mr. Wishart; but they're a consolation to the bereaved. If I'd lost my son I should like to set up my best over him; I shouldn't be satisfied with a common thing, or scamped work. This one, now, is a touching and elegant design; I've had a many orders for it; and here's an original idea
of my own,—a full-length figure, the face turned away, the hands clasped, and a broken lyre lying at its feet. It would be suitable for the poor gentleman, as he had a genius for music. Sometimes, I assure you, sir, I feel quite affected over these monuments, and when a new one has been executed that we've put our best work into I get nervous about it and anxious to know the sort of person its been ordered for, as I couldn't bear the idea of it standing over the grave of some unworthy despicable man. I wouldn't part with that particular one there for all the world holds for a man I didn't know anything about, or of whom I knew rather too much. We ought to be conscientious in these things.'

'If every one were as cautious as you, Mr. Sculthorpe, there would be an amazing difference in tombstones and epitaphs, and some difficulty in getting suitable ones for certain people. I hope you'll esteem me worthy of a monument some day, though I don't expect to deserve your best.'

'Time enough yet, sir. That will be a business for my son; but you can order it whenever you like,' said the obliging Sculthorpe.

'Thank you, as I shan't see the effect myself when it is set up, I think I'll leave that to some one else,' said Mr. Wishart.

'My son Leopold,' said Mr. Sculthorpe, 'has a queer fancy about monuments. He says he's so wearied with seeing 'em here by hundreds, and with working at them every day, that when his time
comes he'll have nothing over him but the turf. He's sure, he says, his ghost would walk if there were a great pillar or stone, with maybe some hypocritical epitaph on it, above his grave.'

'I should think it would be more likely to keep him down,' said Mr. Wishart.

Just then, for a reason which suddenly disclosed itself, Mr. Sculthorpe gave an ejaculation, and swerved from his balance backwards against a tombstone, stricken with awe and surprise, while Mr. Wishart irreverently leaped forward amongst the crowded monuments, and laid hands upon the apparition which had startled them both.

'I see I need be in no hurry about this order,' were the first words of Mr. Sculthorpe when he recovered his composure. 'Well, well, life and death are strangely mingled together. We've plenty besides on our hands.' And he erased the order in his pocket-book most vigorously.

Randall was fated to astonish many more persons that day. People began to recognise him from seeing him in company with Mr. Wishart, and very unwillingly he became the object of much attention. Mr. Gatherall waylaid him in the street, took him into his office, and told him a story of which he had already heard a garbled version from Mr. and Mrs. Bailey, whom it had reached by many devious windings. Mr. Wishart also had found time to say something about it to him; so he was neither overwhelmed nor overjoyed, as Mr. Gatherall had anticipated.
'Had Mr. Moresby no near relatives?' he asked, almost sternly.

'He has left money to his nephews,' said Mr. Gatherall. 'No doubt he had just reasons of his own for not giving them a larger share in his property. You will observe that to the clause which refers to you, Mr. Randall, there is a proviso attached. You do not inherit absolutely without conditions. Mr. Moresby never relinquished the idea that his son might have been saved. If he should be found all is to be his; and, in any case, during the next ten years only the income of the property can be used.'

'I shall never use a penny of it,' said Randall.

'Isn't that going too far?' said Mr. Gatherall, reproachfully. 'He had reconciled himself to you; this will proves it; and I think you should accept the bequest in the same spirit of forgiveness, if, as I suppose from your manner, he offended you at some time.'

'Whatever he did I do not think of now. It is over and done with. We are reconciled; but for all that I will not take what I have no right to. I know why he made this will; it was in remembrance of my sister. I have something to do for her sake as well.'

'Do you refuse it on her account?' said Mr. Gatherall. 'I can't understand why you should do that.'

'I refuse it because I believe that her child may
be found,' said Randall. And then he told Mr. Gatherall what he had heard in Sydney.

Mr. Wishart had been studying Randall's face all this while. A curious fancy came into his mind. Why was it that Harry and Randall were so much alike? He did not believe in unaccountable resemblances; there was a reason to be found for them. When little tricks of gesture or expression were common to two people what did it mean? when the same disposition or the same bent of mind reappeared, what did that mean? He was still thinking of this when they had gone out again and Randall had turned to cross the street.

'Where are you going now?' he asked him.

'To Mrs. Sherlock's; I have a portrait of my sister to show her. It is just possible she may have been at her house; she was recommended to go there.'

'If it is to Mrs. Sherlock's that your clue leads you, I can tell you as much as you will hear there. I don't wish to be precipitate; all things must be put to the proof; but I think you'll find the boy you want in my house, not in Mrs. Sherlock's.'

'In your house?' said Randall, and then, with a sudden light breaking upon him, he cried, 'Harry!'

'Of course,' said Mr. Wishart. 'Do you know how I guessed it?—for it was only a guess;—it was with looking at your face just now. Harry has the advantage of you, in most respects, I must say; but he's only an improved copy. And I found him at Mrs. Sherlock's, though I believe I never told you how.'
They went together to Mrs. Sherlock's, and she shed tears at the sight of the portrait.

'I always said I'd know that face again,' she said. 'I remember how it looked that morning—ah, dear, dear! And to think that you should have been in my house too and never have known of this!'

'Have you nothing of hers to show me?' asked Randall.

'I have everything,' said Mr. Wishart. 'It was given into my hands when I adopted Harry. Alas! your gain is my loss. I have lost my boy. I had such splendid dreams of his future. I was going to train him up in the way he should go, to give him my name—everything I had, in the end,—and it has all come to naught.'

'No; he belongs to us all,' said Randall.

He did not leave Mrs. Sherlock's that day. Mr. Wishart advised him to stay where he was for the present.

'You have done enough for one day,' he said, 'and you must not frighten them at home by suddenly coming on them like a spectre. I felt it rather too sudden a surprise when you interrupted me in my dealings with Sculthorpe. I shall send word that you have come to life again, and you had better not leave town till to-morrow.'

'And if you stay at any house but mine, Mr. Randall,' said Mrs. Sherlock, 'I shall take it very much to heart.'

'My dear Mrs. Sherlock,' said Randall, 'I should VOL. III.
not think of staying at any house but yours.' He noticed her black dress and widow's cap as he said this, and Mrs. Sherlock answered his inquiring glance.

'Yes, I've lost poor dear Sherlock just lately,' she said. 'I get along but poorly without him. He often spoke of you to the last, and wished you were here to talk politics with him. Mr. Borage was not a good hand at that.'

Randall afterwards heard from another source that politics had slightly clouded Mr. Sherlock's brain for a short time before his death, and that he had died in the full belief that he was Sir George Grey. This, however, had not prevented him from giving his family some excellent advice, which Mrs. Sherlock now repeated to Randall. He had exhorted them not to forget how he had worked for their support, and how they owed everything to his exertions,—exertions which they should emulate in the bringing up of their own families.

'Which was true enough,' said Mrs. Sherlock, still cherishing the delusion that her husband had been a remarkable man. 'He was wonderfully gifted, as you know, Mr. Randall, and it's owing to him that all our children have got on so well. There's James,—you remember James?—He's foreman now at the works, and very clever in his trade. It's done him a world of good being jilted by Miss Spowers. I never liked that flighty girl; Mr. Borage is welcome to her.'
'And does James go to debating classes yet?' said Randall.

'He belongs to the Mutual Improvement Society, as they call it, though I can't see it's improved some of the members, either in their minds or their manners. I don't care to talk against politics now, because Sherlock liked them, and they remind me of him; but all this debating of young men seems only to make them wise in their own conceits, and so much talking of things they don't understand lets out the little sense they have in their heads.'

Mrs. Sherlock, who persisted in considering Randall a very weak and fragile person, entreated him to think of nothing but rest for the remainder of the day; but it seemed he had come to her house to hold a levee instead of reposing in quietness. Somehow,—who can tell how news flies?—people found him out one by one.

Professor Crasher came, slightly stouter than of yore, but just as beautifully dressed, and quite as impeccable, as he soon informed his friend.

'My dear Randall,' he said, squeezing Randall's hand between what felt like two soft pads of flesh, 'is it you—actually you?'

'Why, I think so, Professor,' said Randall, 'though there is not quite so much of me as there used to be.'

'You are a shadow,' said Professor Crasher, 'an ethereal image of your former self. I have heard of your success, my dear fellow; you have done better
than Virchow, after all. And I—ah, behold me here yet, pressed hard on all sides by Mr. Emanuel Paul Peters, the scamp!—he gets all my pupils from me. He gives fortnightly concerts now. I shall give weekly ones. I wonder if your friendly assistance might be counted on?’

‘Certainly,’ said Randall; ‘but isn’t there a fear of overdoing the thing with Mr. Paul Peters’ fortnightly concerts and your weekly ones?’

‘I want to overdo it,’ said the Professor. ‘I want to overdo it so much that no one will go to his. It enrages me to listen to such a travesty of music as he offers to the public. No wonder their taste is depraved. He has no soul in his music; it is all key and pedal work. Now I have a thing in my pocket which he calls a composition. Faugh! the fellow smokes the coarsest tobacco;’—the Professor showered fragrance upon the paper from a scent-fountain. ‘Not much in it, is there? but listen to it to know how poor it is.’

The Professor bounced to the piano with an elephantine tread which shook the furniture of the room. The bangs which he dealt upon the keyboard soon after shook everything again. While he was pounding vigorously, with his sleeves rolled away from his wrists, and his false cuffs, which he had taken off, resting on a chair beside him, and with his face growing redder and shinier every minute, Mrs. Sherlock came in, and in a moderate but decided tone requested him to cease.

‘I’m sorry to interfere, sir,’ she said, ‘especially
as you're a friend of Mr. Randall's; but the piano's a hired one, and I don't want to have to pay for damages, as I shall have if you go on like that.'

'Say no more, madam,' said the Professor. 'I have finished. What flimsy, poor things one meets with in pianos, Randall. I thought so; some nobody; Grigwold and Son. Whoever heard of Grigwold, or his son either? No; give me a good, sound Broadwood grand, which will roar like a tempest in the bass, and be soft and sweet as an angel's song in the treble. Now this has no more tone in it than a gong.' Here the Professor's hands descended on the keys with terrific force.

'Sir, sir!' cried Mrs. Sherlock, in a tone of entreaty.

'Pardon me,' cried the Professor. 'I had forgotten myself. I must go. Pity me, Randall, I have to give eight music lessons. So very, very glad to have seen you. I would ask you to visit us; but, alas! we have a visitor at present, a fellow who came of his own accord—you understand?—sad, very; but it can't be helped. We kept him out for three days; but he got in last night through the pantry window. Mrs. Crasher feels these things; she has not my buoyancy, my indomitable spirit. I am astonished at it myself, when I consider how I have borne up against the assaults and buffets of evil fortune. I need only show you this,'—Professor Crasher turned a limp purse inside out,—'and you see how it is with me. No, no! I really could not,
my dear, generous friend; but rather than offend you, I will acknowledge that a little assistance just now, a trifle of five pounds or so, while I can hunt up those stingy parents and make them pay me for torturing my life out over their children, would be very acceptable. But only as a loan; I tell you that at once, if you should want to give it; my spirit cannot brook that.'

Professor Crasher's spirit brooked more than he had thought it could, and rose all the higher for the obligation laid upon it. He gave place to Mr. Borage, who blundered in, and hit his head against the gas-lamp, which was hung a little within his altitude of six feet three. He made a great effort to address Randall in words appropriate to the occasion; but he could only get out an assemblage of disjointed phrases and ejaculations. Mr. Borage seemed improved in health, and joyfully acknowledged it in answer to Randall's inquiries.

'Yes, I feel perfectly splendid,' he said. 'That buzzing in the head has left me, and I sleep like a—Top. The fact is, I've something to do now. My father has been speculating a little too much, and he sent me word I should have to look out for myself. So I was thrown on my own—Resources, and it cured me. I've gone into business. I'm a land agent. There are a good many already—in fact I'd no idea how many there were till I started myself—but I don't know why there shouldn't be room for another. I think I shall—Get on. I'm glad you have suc-
ceed, but of course we all knew you would: it is a great thing to have—Talent.'

'It is a great thing to have friends, I think,' said Randall. 'When you lend books, are you still in the habit of interleaving them with bank-notes? I have that book of yours yet, and I don't know whether I shall ever return it. I should like to keep it in memory of the kindness of a friend.'

'Oh—the book,' said Mr. Borage, colouring at being reminded of his generosity. 'Do keep it, if you like; I wish you hadn't returned something else, for it's pleasanter to give than lend.'

He grew more and more confidential, and showed Randall a portrait of the fair Miss Spowers, and observed how surprised he had been that such a bright and beautiful creature should have accepted him with all his imperfections. 'I don't stay here now,' he said. 'Mrs. Sherlock made it so uncomfortable, I was obliged to go. She never forgave me for cutting out James. As if I could know what James wanted, or help being preferred to him! Thanks for your congratulations; I really think myself very fortunate. I don't mean to wait much longer—only while I can see the—Business going ahead.'

Mr. Borage only stayed a few minutes. Business must be attended to, he said; he was obliged to hasten back to the office. Mrs. Sherlock showed him out with a cold farewell. It was perfectly true that she had not forgiven him for the advantage he had obtained over James, notwithstanding she said
so often that Miss Spowers was no favourite with her.

Scarcely had Mr. Borage's tall attenuated figure vanished, propelled by his new stock of energy at the rate of four miles an hour, when two other persons made their appearance, walking arm in arm. Such an odd couple had seldom visited Mrs. Sherlock even, and she was in the way of seeing odd people. At first sight Randall could not imagine who they were, although both appeared to know him very well. If he had known the lady he had forgotten her. She was of all the ages; her bonnet and her hair were decidedly youthful, her brown silk dress was of a middle-aged type, and her face—with no intention to be disrespectful is it said—was old. The gentleman was not old; but from head to foot he was altogether new. It would have been safe to stake a large amount that nothing which he wore had greeted the sunlight more than once previously. And, though it was a horrible suspicion to entertain, there was a new look about the shiny cleanliness of his face and hands, which seemed as if soap and scrubbing had done all that was possible for them, and had brought them into a state of purity to which they were as unaccustomed as their owner was to his new clothes.

Randall looked from one to the other of his visitors, as the lady smiled and the gentleman did likewise, and both together made a profound obeisance.
'Why, Smithers!' he said, after a pause, during which his memory had furnished him with a duplicate of the shaven and scrubbed face before him; a duplicate, however, which was several shades darker in complexion, and had several inches more of hair around it. 'I could not think who you were at first.'

'Right, sir, quite right,' said Smithers. 'You yourself are not what you used to be when you drove that injin for Mr. Palmer after he'd turned me off. He soon took me on again, poor gentleman, ho, ho! I shall never forget the way he had. Mrs. Smithers, Mr. Randall.'

'Mr. Randall will remember me better as Mrs. Sligo,' said the lady, with a fascinating smile.

'I remember you very well now,' said Randall, submitting to a vigorous shake of the hand from Mrs. Smithers—formerly Sligo.

'We met Professor Crasher,' said Mrs. Smithers, 'and he told us you were here; so we ventured to call in remembrance of old times. Poor dear Mr. Palmer! We were mutually attached to him.'

'Ay, that we were,' said Smithers. 'It was a shame, Mr. Randall, that the fire should have done for all his machinery. I'd a kind of feeling for the old injin. I meant to buy it at the sale; but it was a good deal injured by the cattastroke. I'm still at injin-driving. I'm third on the Tapanni; a good berth. She's in harbour to-day; so I and Mrs. Smithers have been enjoying ourselves. We took a cab and drove out to the old place.'
'It was affecting to see it again,' said Mrs. Smithers. 'The old willow trees are left yet, and I could tell where Mr. Palmer grew his vegetables. I remember he rooted up my flowers and planted cabbages in the place. He was very peculiar; but he had a heart under it all.'

'So he had,' said Smithers, 'and though he did blow us up awfully, we liked it. I see him now as he used to come galloping along when we were out threshing, and how he'd take the fence rather than go round to a gate, or take the gate if he couldn't get it open at once. You don't find such a man more than once in a lifetime.'

'No, Smithers, you don't,' said Randall, meaningly, as he remembered other things of the man who had been so good a friend to him.

'Mr. Palmer was a little hard on me,' said Mrs. Smithers. 'The way he spurned my offers of assistance when he was ill nearly broke my heart. He would suspect me of unworthy motives. I don't know why, I'm sure. I felt it very much.'

'I am sure he did not mean to hurt your feelings, Mrs. Sligo—I beg pardon,—Smithers,' said Randall smiling.

'No need to apologise, sir,' said Smithers. 'The fact is, people have got so used to calling my wife Mrs. Sligo, along of her being a faithful widow for nineteen years,'—'Nine, my dear,' corrected Mrs. Smithers,—'that they don't take kindly to her new name. On my word, I
believe I'll have to call myself Sligo to suit them.'

Mr. and Mrs. Smithers were in no hurry to depart. They would not be satisfied with less than a full account of Randall's adventures. They were profoundly agitated by this, Mrs. Smithers having recourse to her pocket-handkerchief very often. Their parting grasp of his hand hurt Randall so much that he began to wish his levee were at an end.

'Well, she's trapped some one at last,' was Mrs. Sherlock's uncharitable remark, as soon as the lady she referred to was out of hearing. 'Poor fellow! fifteen years younger than his wife, if he's a day. After this, no old woman need despair: diligence will be rewarded. My patience! Mr. Randall, here's some one else.'

The next visitor was easily recognisable. People generally remembered him. When they found it convenient to forget he had no diffidence in asserting himself. He saluted Mrs. Sherlock with a cool self-possession which disgusted her.

'Of course I know you, and you know me,' he cried; 'don't pretend you've forgotten, Mrs. Sherlock. I am not likely to forget spending twenty-four hours very pleasantly in your house. In mourning! poor Sherlock gone? I am so sorry; a sad bereavement; but, pardon my remarking it, you look uncommonly well; nothing so becoming as widow's mourning.'

Mrs. Sherlock walked before him, with her head held so high in scornful disdain that it was a wonder
her cap did not fall off. 'Mr. Randall,' she said, opening the door of the sitting-room, 'here is some one who calls himself your friend. If he speaks the truth I'm sorry for you.' With this she waved Mr. Godfrey Palmer into the room, and retired with stately composure.

Why Mr. Godfrey Palmer had come hardly admits of explanation. Perhaps he himself did not know. Generally, indeed, he had motives for all his actions; but now his mind was in an unsettled state, and he was the prey of a devouring curiosity. He appeared restless and fidgety, and—a very unusual thing with him—was a little embarrassed when alone with Randall. His best behaviour made no impression; his congratulations were coldly received. Perceiving that fine manners were utterly thrown away upon his companion he became at once more natural and less polite.

'And so you've baffled the Fates,' he said. 'I told Gatherall you would turn up all right. Really and truly, I had some faint suspicion, even when assisting at your obsequies, my dear fellow, that we hadn't seen the last of you. I knew your tenacity of life. You are too buoyant, you can't be kept down. It must gratify you to see how your unexpected reappearance has delighted us all. Your escapade will be a nine days' wonder. Odd, isn't it? to think you've been buried down there in that place by the sea; at least there's your name above a certain little mound.'
'But I'm happy to say I am not under that little mound,' said Randall. 'How long were you at the station?' he suddenly asked after a pause. He had been looking at Mr. Godfrey Palmer, and wondering why he had indistinct recollections of having seen his face recently, in a very different place, and with a very different expression on its features.

'Well, I went down to take a last look at you,' said Godfrey Palmer, with a quick, suspicious glance. 'That was all my business. Why?'

'Because I've a strange fancy that when I was ill in that shepherd's hut you were there also.'

'And nursed you devotedly, offering cups of cold water, and smoothing your pillow. Well, I might have done all that; but I didn't.'

'No; I don't suspect you of it. In my fancy,—a delirious one, very likely,—you crouched at the bedside and taunted me.'

'My dear fellow, if you are going to tell me all your delirious imaginings you will have me out of this room in five seconds. There are some things I—even I—can't endure, and of those, hearing any one tell his mental wanderings or his dreams and nightmares is the most distractingly unbearable. I stand by your sickbed and make a mockery of your sufferings! What a wretch I must be!' After this fervid avowal Mr. Godfrey Palmer looked relieved, and thought to himself, 'He is in a blissful state of ignorance.'

'But don't you think it strange I should imagine
it? asked the other, who was now convinced that what he remembered was a fact, not a trick of the imagination.

'Not at all. You were always imaginative. In a brain fever, with all your ideas turned topsy-turvy, who knows to what wild heights your fancy might soar! But why turn such a gloomy countenance upon me? You've no business to be sad; you've got through your troubles, and made a name and a fortune; that is, one has been given you. Nothing to do now but enjoy yourself in luxurious ease. I wonder, will it ever seem rather slow? will you ever wish yourself out of it? Perhaps you'll look back with regret to the old time when you weren't always certain of a dinner, but when at least there was the excitement of change, though it might be from bad to worse. As, for instance, when, for all that others would have cared, you might have let yourself drop from that bridge we stood on—do you remember?—and quietly floated away into the ocean of the unknown. But that's all done with. No more thrilling adventures for you; no roaming about the country; no tuning up your old violin in the depths of the wood; no playing the vagrant any more; that delightful time is gone. You'll have to be a dull, respectable kind of fellow now. There will be the burden of your immense property to keep you awake at nights; you'll have to go into society—for it will be so fond of you that it won't let you alone;—and oh, how you will be bored!'
‘My immense property, did you say?’
‘I believe I made use of those words.’
‘You are not well informed. I have made something during the last four years;—more than was expected;—but I have no property that can be called immense. What my brother-in-law was pleased to leave me I have no right to, and never should have used. Besides, it is mine no longer. Mr. Moresby’s son is found, and of course inherits everything.’

Godfrey Palmer was seldom taken by surprise. If he did not know all things, it was his policy to appear as if he might have done so. But he could not help starting and changing colour at Randall’s words.

‘Oh,’ he said, ‘is that it? Rather a sudden blow for you. Thought you looked melancholy. Never mind, your tum-tumming in public is so profitable you may be comfortable without legacies. Well, I must leave you again.’

‘Stop,’ said Randall, as Mr. Godfrey Palmer arose from his chair. ‘You have had most of the conversation so far; now listen to a few words from me.’

‘With pleasure,’ said the other; but he looked distrustful, and wished he had gone before.

‘You have not denied that you were with me in that hut, and I know you too well to be deceived by your manner. You were there; and from what I have heard at one time or another I know why you stayed so long at the place. Well, I don’t care to
speak of that; it matters little now that you wanted something to happen which, though you did not know it, would not have advantaged you in the least. But all this reminds me of a promise I made your brother when he was dying. I owe a great deal to him; he was my best friend, not only when I was with him but even after he had gone; for I couldn't forget his words, and they helped me. In his place let me do something for you if I can. Why need you ruin yourself?'

'What does that matter to you?' returned the other quickly. 'You've chosen the right way to get rid of me, Randall. Do something for me? No! I don't want anything from you; neither your help nor your advice, and least of all that crowning insult you would-be-righteous put upon men like me—your forgiveness. You promised something to my brother, and you owe much to him, you say. Could any one know him well, and not be his debtor? Poor John! I wish you hadn't died first. What!'—and he angrily dashed his hand to his eyes—'am I going to be babyish before you? Don't speak of him; say no more. Let me go my way, and you may go yours—you to be happy, I suppose; I to be—well, what half the world is. Good-bye. Oh! don't be afraid; I don't want to take your hand.'

In an instant he was out of the room. In the street he was once again cool and composed in manner. 'Godfrey Palmer,' he said to himself, 'you were thought clever; people imagined you had talent.
Don't lay that flattering unction to your soul any more. You are a simpleton—an idiot. A lucky chance has saved you from a most gigantic blunder. You were going to get rid of a person in your way, and there was another ready to step into his place! Next time you are tempted to break the sixth commandment, be more particular in your inquiries. Be sure of a recompense for laying such a load on your conscience. But you'd better not meddle with the commandments. Keep them if you can. Be moral: morality pays.
CHAPTER XVIII.

'The precious jewel of thy home—return.'

The last page of his sister's history had been turned before Randall's eyes. He had known what would be written at the end; he had felt that his search could only lead him to a grave, but he had not thought to find her last abiding-place so soon, or that her path had so nearly met his own. They had been very near to each other without knowing it.

He went to the cemetery, whither she had been carried over five years before. It was not far away, and his road led him through the town, by a gradually ascending path. When he reached the highest part he saw all the glittering expanse of the harbour beneath him; the islands resting like clouds upon another heaven, blue as the one that was spread above; the vessels lying at the wharves, the white-winged sailing-boats slowly moving before the breeze, and, on the shore, street above street, where the crowd went to and fro, and whence all the cheerful sounds of a busy port were rushing on his ear.

It was the voice of life and its endeavour that spoke to him; another voice murmured amongst the saddened trees and flowers of the cemetery. When
the first dead were laid in this graveyard it was an open place, where fern and wild-flowers grew, and trees clothed the banks of the stream flowing by. Streets hemmed it in now, and the living encroached upon the dead. Some time, perhaps, when they were forgotten, it would no longer be a place of tombs. There would be nothing then but nameless dust, and people would step lightly over it, ignorant that they trod on the sepulchres of the past. But, meanwhile, many sleep soundly here, and their home is as fair a one as long wanderings could have found them.

He found the grave without much difficulty. It was not unmarked: there was a headstone (placed there by Mr. Wishart's orders), and on it initials and a date. People strolling among the graves had often noticed this one, and wondered why there was no name. He flung himself down beside the mound, and thought there in the silence of the place, which was quiet amidst the uproar of a city,—thought how often he had gone down that street near by, and had never dreamed that any of his lay buried here.

After an hour Mr. Wishart came to him, and they went away together. Mr. Wishart protested against going home in a commonplace prosaic manner by the closed-up clattering train. 'No,' he said, 'we will drive: what are fifteen miles? In the good old times they would have made a triumph of such a return as yours. We ought to have outriders, and a long cavalcade following after us; there ought to be
arches raised before us, and if Murdoch has any spirit he will have made one.'

They drove therefore. As they passed down the street one of the crowd on the side-walk recognised them, and nodded gaily, as if it rejoiced his heart to see them. It was Mr. Godfrey Palmer, and it testified to the wisdom of this gentleman that he was never heard to repine at the sudden caprice of Fortune which had dashed the cup from his lips. He gnashed his teeth in private, however.

Onward they drove, as if the horses were glad as themselves to go—westward, away from the town, with the river flowing on their right hand, and the hills before them. And first the houses were near together, and stood in the midst of gardens, and then they shunned each other, and stood among the fields, and then it was the sweet country which only lately had been vexed with the vulgar bustling traffic of the railway, and scored across with telegraph lines. Then they toiled up the hills, in the midst of the forest, and within hearing of the murmur of streams. An old road—they know it by heart, and at the end of it is home.

Yes; at last! If ever house spoke, this speaks to them now. It smiles a welcome from every window. Its parterre of flowers flashes like a ring of jewels in the sunlight. And there is actually an arch, which Murdoch has made in fearful haste, and which, therefore, is flimsily built, and sways before the breeze. All the house-folk are outside to meet them,
the servants drawn up in a respectful but imposing phalanx in the background. On the verandah there is a little group of three—Maud, Mrs. Randall, and Mrs. Meade. When the carriage stops one of these runs before all the rest to meet her son, and clasp him in her arms. For he is her only child, and death has so nearly parted them. And then—but it need not be told, for we know how the lost are welcomed when they are found again, and how, after toil and travel, after wandering and waiting, one moment on the threshold of a home is worth it all.

It matters nothing now to the wanderer returned that the way has been long, the labour hard, that health is broken and years of his life have gone. No, those are churlish indeed who pause to count the cost when they have won their heart's desire. This is what he has worked for, to come home again with a name free from reproach, with fortune and with fame honourably earned. Not all the world's vain gauds and toys, not all the flattering praise of crowds, but this—this is success.

Since the evening of the day before this return had been expected, and since then the whole household had been disorganised, if not demoralised, with joy. One may be quiet under the pressure of great grief; no one accepts tidings of great joy with quietness. They could not rest for it; they had not been able to sleep for thinking of it; they had not cared to eat for joy, and there was little need, for one may live a long while on this same ambrosial food. In this
state of general upheaval, when even the pillars of
government were shaken, Harry, who was now a big
boy of eight or nine, but not less unruly than he had
ever been, had taken advantage of a relaxed discipline
to run riot everywhere, working such mischief as had
not previously been heard of, even in his career. He
was found and captured, just when the carriage had
come in sight. Mrs. Grigsby wanted to see the
arrival herself, but was determined not to neglect
Harry's salutary punishment, so, according to her
favourite plan, she thrust him into an empty room,
and turned the key on him.

He had often been in this room before, and he
had wondered each time why two locked trunks
stood there, and what they contained. He had
asked, as he was in the habit of asking about every-
thing that puzzled him; but had never had a satis-
factory answer. He conceived the bold idea of
opening them. They were locked, but in his eyes
this was only a trifling circumstance. Had he not
broken open a box in which Mrs. Grigsby had locked
up all his toys, because, as she said, he did not
deserve to have them? Had he not also, when she
had confined him in a dark closet, cut the bolt out of
the door with his right trusty knife, which fortunately
had been in his pocket? He had a more wonderful
knife with him now—his average use of knives was
twenty-five per annum. Besides three blades, sharp
as razors, it had a file, saw, gimlet, and tweezers,
hooks and corkscrew—in fact, it was a compendium
of useful tools. He inserted first one and then the other of these into the keyhole, he worked round and round, he scraped and tugged, until at last something snapped. He worked again, and was satisfied by the sounds that the flimsy lock was broken. Then he tilted the trunk a little, took hold of the handle, placed the copper-plated toe of one little boot just under the edge of the lid, steadied himself on the other foot, and with a violent pull the box came open. He was up to the arms in beautiful dresses, richer and handsomer than any he had ever seen. Some shone like gold, some were of delicate tints, or clear ivory white; some were black, and heavy with deep laces or fringes. There were shawls, and he put one on, and looped another round the waist like a sash. Deep down in the trunk he found a little case which he managed to open. It was full of jewellery. He panted with delight. What a glow of colour! What a beautiful soft brilliance from these precious things, each resting on its cushion of blue velvet! He put rings on his fingers, and clasped bracelets of jewelled serpents on his arms. The rings would fall off, so instead he took a necklace that had stones set in gold, some milk-white, some blood-red. There was a glass in the room, and he climbed on the trunk to look in it, and, child though he was, admired his own dark Oriental beauty, heightened by the splendour of gold and jewels, and the Indian shawls he had looped around him. Something came to him like the dim memory of a half-forgotten dream.
Once he must have seen that necklace beneath another face, like, but not exactly like his own. He wondered whose these beautiful things were. If they were Aunt Maud's, why did she not wear them?

He played with them a long time, parading the room with silken trains yards long dragooned after him, veiling himself with lace scarves, or making turbans of the shawls. He grew tired, and no one came to let him out. Wearied of his fanciful play, he sat down on the floor beside the ransacked trunk, and his head began to bow a little, and his eyelids to droop, till at last he fell asleep.

They were talking of him then, and Mrs. Grigsby was ordered to bring him. She went to his prison, and feeling sure from her long experience that his silence was very ominous, quietly opened the door a little way and peeked in. What she saw made her rush back again. 'Do just come and look,' she entreated them; 'it's like a picture.' They all went, and were not ashamed to sit down on the floor round the sleeping child, admiring him. When he woke Mrs. Randall had him on her knee, and Randall was unclasping the bracelets from his arms. 'I haven't hurt them,' he said, a little frightened, for he expected to be reproved for the mischief he had done. 'I looked in the box, because Mrs. Grigsby said there was nothing in it, and I knew'—darting a glance at the housekeeper—'that was a story.'

And no one even said he was a naughty boy. Harry could not understand it. Instead of that, first
one petted him and then another, and they tried to explain that something had happened which made him dearer to them than ever. He was half-pleased, half-bewildered, at having two new relations thrust upon him. 'But you are my aunt yet, aren't you?' he asked, looking wistfully into Maud's face.

'Of course she is,' said Mr. Wishart slily, 'an aunt elect, Harry, if you know what that means.'

He was enthroned by them, and throned so high that he almost cast the other Harry into the shade. 'If that precious child wasn't spoiled before,' said the sagacious Mrs. Grigsby, 'he will be now.' But are children really spoilt by such unmeasured kindness? —who knows?—or is it by other things not counted by their unwise guardians? Whether it were for his good or not, one child's heart held a heaven of happiness that night which did not seem less real when he slept and, once again, dreamed of his mother.

And the others sat on the verandah until it was late, talking of things new and old. They watched the sky darken till the planets beamed on high, and the pall of night came down. It falls between them and us, and we see them no more.

'Long have we fared together, thou and I:
Thou hast grown dearer, as old friends must grow:
Small wonder if I dread to say good-bye.'

There must needs be an epilogue. We would fain pry into the future of those of whom these pages contain the most veracious history likely to be
written. And we have a crystal, truer than necromancer e'er put faith in. It shows us, as we gaze into its translucent depths, that Harry was duly proved, even to the satisfaction of lawyers hard of belief and prudently averse to conjecture, to be Mr. Moresby's rightful heir, and that his uncle had more pleasure than perhaps any one supposed in changing places with him. But he was trustee and guardian still, though Mr. Wishart put in such a touching plea, on the score of having had possession of the said Harry long enough to give him indisputable rights, that no one could have had the heart to disallow it. And then he pleaded for another thing. 'Why should I be left alone in this large house?' he said. 'Why should it be turned into a monastery of one friar? My sister is leaving me'—Mrs. Meade had decided to return to England; 'Harry will have to go soon to school or college; and now you and Maud will go. I am left to mope and pine in solitude. It is all very well to smile at one another and suggest a remedy—no, no, my bachelorhood is too firmly imbedded in the cake of custom.'

They stayed with him, and though they did not promise to stay always, he guessed shrewdly when he foresaw that the place would become their home as much as any place could be. For Randall had not lost all his old restlessness. He could not altogether give up his fondness for travelling, nor was he likely ever to renounce his profession and lead a life in which it had no part.
It had been said oftentimes of him that he was something of a genius, and we know that people who suffer from that incurable complaint cannot be expected to live as those who are hale and well.

Our crystal shows us other things. By it we are assured that, after three or four years, Stephen committed himself for life to the care of a lady who must have been both fair and wise, for she was the oracle of her mother- and sisters-in-law, and admired by all her husband's kinsfolk, even to remote degrees of cousinship. She was truly a charming, sensible woman, and she believed (having no reason to believe otherwise) that no other woman had had a chance of becoming Mrs. Stephen Langridge.

There is another picture as pleasant as this. It is that of the home of the Bailey family,—a most enviable farm, whose fields change every year from green to gold, and whose garners and rickyards overflow with fulness. Although, as old Mr. Langridge still says, 'farming does not pay,' Bailey, mysteriously enough, has prospered with his farm. And all his boys and girls have done well in the world; indeed one or two of them have done so very well that discretion prevents us from telling you where and what they are now. They might be ill-pleased with such officiousness. Some people, dear friend, though you may wonder to hear it, would rather have you believe that they were born to greatness than that it has been the reward of their energy and talent.
Professor Crasher still continues to thump at concerts and drawing-room entertainments, and to ruin pianos, with great benefit to the trade of Broadwood, Brinsmead, and their compeers. As long as he is in life he will be in debt; but no one, except perhaps his tailor, will like him less for that. He has beaten his rival, Emanuel Paul Peters, out of the field, and since that signal victory has grown perceptibly stouter, and has dressed more gorgeously than ever. Peace to him, and also to his tailor, unhappy wight, who now builds his hopes on the future success of Miss Adelaide Crasher, who promises to be a fine singer.

Mrs. Sherlock no longer keeps open house for strangers and pilgrims. The good lady has retired from business, and finds life somewhat dull without it. No one knows (at least we do not) how many shares in the Bank of New Zealand she holds, how many in companies of good repute; but this is certain, she holds to nothing which does not pay a fair dividend. She reveres the memory of Sherlock, and for his sake occasionally reads a leading article in the newspaper, the parliamentary news, or—rare sacrifice this!—the speech of some wordy colonial politician, ‘because, poor dear man, he understood politics, and was so fond of them.’

Do not expect to hear that Philimore has retired from business. Such a man must die in harness. He is always yoked to some genius or other, or on the trail, hunting down men of talent, and when he
has caught them, running too and fro with them over the world. Familiarity with genius has not made him less fond of it; no, for he knows what a fine thing it is in the world’s market; but it no longer dazzles him. To him writers, orators, musicians, actors, men of science even, are only common everyday fellows. He knows them all: he knows too much. He is like a lighted shell, a torpedo, or any other deadly explosive which may burst without a moment’s warning, only—what a blessing!—he does not go off. But lately a horrible suspicion has been awakened in the breasts of those who are at his mercy. It has been whispered that Mrs. Philimore keeps a diary, that she has a box full of manuscripts—sketches, anecdotes, memoirs. Alas,—alas!

And what became of Godfrey Palmer? What does become of such men? Men who live luxuriously and fare daintily to the last, on the fruit of another’s labour; who are free from care, they say, because they are not burdened with wife or child; who can be happy, they would have us believe, without love or friendship, without honour or respect: who have a sneer for the faith and reverence of other men; a doubt or a scoff for their beliefs. What becomes of them, when age chills them to the heart, and they are left alone with the only thing they profess to believe in—their own? There is a road which leads to bitterness, darkness, despair, and they have chosen it. There is a coldness,—wealth
cannot warm it, poverty itself does not freeze so hard,—and they feel it. There is a laughter on lips that never smile, a joyless mirth that comes near to madness,—and they know it. And somewhere—have you not seen such a one? neglected, forgotten, dishonoured—there is a grave; no tear has ever fallen on it,—and it is theirs.

One other figure shows itself faintly to us. That poor Doctor who tended Randall in his illness was not forgotten by him. He employed Bailey to seek for him, and to do whatever a friend might in his behalf. But he seemed to shrink from accepting kindness from Randall, though he was much comforted to hear that his life had been saved. He refused all assistance; he was able to maintain himself and his wife, and he sought for nothing more. Of him it may be said that he won some way back towards the peace that he had ruined; but never to the happiness which had once been his, for that was impossible. A crime may be expiated, but can never be forgotten. There are scars on the soul which only an eternity can cure.

And even of the others who have borne company with us so long, we do not find that they were ever so fortunate or so happy as they wished or expected. It is human to desire always a greater happiness than that which we possess. It is human to be surprised and offended when, instead of happiness, care shows her face, as if it had not been proclaimed, ever since earth was young, that we must have fellowship with both. And this happiness is a very subtle creature,
who hardly lets her hand rest long enough in ours
to be tightly clasped, and will smile in our face
one moment, to vanish from our sight the next.
But, after all, most men may say that she comes
as often as she goes. There is no country so
desolate that her enchantment may not make it a
paradise; no saddened, toiling wayfarer so forsaken
that once at least she has not smiled upon his path.
And the magic of that smile is remembered long
upon the weary way; the heart is fed with hopes that
at the next turning he will find her, that she waits
for him by the styles, in the quiet lanes and by-paths
of life. Ah! when she comes, flowers will blossom,
and springs gush forth in the barrenness of the
desert. Yet there are those, the strong and firm of
purpose, who will not tarry for her laggard steps,
who never look back or falter from their aim because
she has gone. For them another leads the way,
whose face though grave may soften to a smile divine;
who, even while she chides whispers sweet counsel in
the ear, and whose wreath can never wither on the
brow.

THE END.

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