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MY UNCLE THE CURATE.

A Novel.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "THE BACHELOR OF THE ALBANY,"
AND "THE FALCON FAMILY."

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MY UNCLE THE CURATE.

BOOK I.

Reader. "Pr'ythee, good author, no humdrum commencement now; something dramatic—startling—new—or, at least, not *very* old."

Author. "I think I shall hit your fancy. 'It was a fine October morning, and a solitary horseman was seen slowly pacing up a hill—'"

Reader. "Oh!—oh!—oh!—that dreadful morning—that eternal horseman—that everlasting hill!"

Author. "Well, what do you say to two horsemen, and an inn-door! one of the horsemen masked; time night; the moon in the last quarter."

Reader. "Off, off, off, horsemen and moon both,—that moon has been in the last quarter since the Great Cyrus was written."

Author. "The fire blazed on the hearth; an old couple basked in the kindly light; a kitten sported with a terrier on the rug; the table was covered with wine and biscuits."

Reader. "*Mi pardonate*, gentle master, do not a ton of novels at least commence with wine and biscuits?"

Author. "You may have walnuts, if you please, and I would undertake to provide nut-crackers. Any thing in reason. I have an account with the fairies' cutler, and a pair of nut-crackers is neither here nor there."

Reader. "Pray do let us have a new beginning,—is the request so very unreasonable?"

Author. "The most unreasonable request in the world; if your ladyship were a *writer* of fiction, you would know how hard it is to turn up any thing new."

Reader. "Being a *reader* of fiction, that is a truth I don't want the writers of it to tell me."

Author. "Then ought you to be the more charitable. Time was when readers were gentle in truth, now they are only gentle by courtesy,—the fairest of you are unfair,—no allowance for an author's difficulties; no gracious oversight of his little short-comings; and then, like the Athenians of old, you keep always calling for something new, as if a writer's brain was like the shop of a Parisian *modiste*."

Reader. "Very monstrous indeed!—to expect something new in a novel!"

Author. "Now, suppose the novel were an Irish one, to have nothing novel in it would be quite in character."

conduct minor talents to eminence, while great abilities, unstrengthened and unsustained by them, are often destined to shame their possessors and disappoint the world. If Vivyan escaped these dangers, it was owing to the force of circumstances. Had he been left to be the architect of his own fortune, it is probable the fabric would never have been raised.

Vivyan was the younger of two brothers; he had lost his mother early, and his father (an imprudent man) some years previous to the present period. You will easily believe that in point of fortune he was no Crœsus; his havings in money, like "his havings in beard," were a "younger brother's portion." A small Irish property, yielding something under two hundred a year, had descended to him from the maternal side,—a revenue sufficient, with sharp economy, to maintain him in the position of a gentleman, but totally insufficient to support the expense of the least costly form of university education. For this advantage, therefore, Frank was necessarily a dependant upon friendly aid. It was not from his brother, however, he received it: his brother, Sir Godfrey Vivyan, was a selfish and dissipated man, who, having inherited his father's extravagance along with his estate, found his available income much too limited to supply his own frivolous or licentious pleasures. The benefactor of Vivyan was a distant relative, a wealthy merchant, resident in the south of Spain, whom the young man had never so much as seen. It was of course, therefore, no feeling of personal affection or esteem that stimulated the munificence of this gentleman. Its origin was of a more tender, indeed of a romantic nature. In his youth he had formed a passionate attachment to Vivyan's mother; inexorable circumstances had not only prevented their union, but united the lady to another; time passed away, and with it the first bitterness of blasted prospects; but what can "raze out the written troubles" of the heart,—"pluck from the memory the rooted sorrow" of frustrated love and hope blighted? The rapturous fascination of Mr. Everard's youth continued to be the tranquil charm and innocent solace of his old age. Having heard by report how strongly Frank resembled his mother, and that he had been left but poorly provided for, Mr. Everard was irresistibly impelled to promote his advancement in the only way that seemed open to him; and he proceeded to the attainment of his object with a delicacy and frankness that left the young man no alternative but to accept the kindness ingenuously, or inflict an ungracious wound through a mistaken feeling of independence.

Vivyan had a cousin, named George Markham, four or five years his senior, generous, brave, cordial, and manly, heir to a handsome fortune, and already in the enjoyment of so large an allowance as to place all the pleasures that became a gentleman liberally and lawfully within his reach. Virtuously more than intellectually educated, his tastes were happily innocent and healthy,

> "——— not of the courtly train
> Or city's practice, but the country's innocence;"

he was passionately fond of rural sports, indeed of rural life in every respect, and spent the greater part of every year at his father's seat, a place called Manor Oakham, in the neighbourhood of Southampton, except when he went to Scotland in the grouse season, made a pedestrian tour through the Alps or Pyrenees, or even ranged the world as far as the banks of the Jordan, and the cataracts of the Nile. He was an ardent lover of natural beauty, as most sportsmen are, particularly anglers, and Markham was as

renowned with the rod as the gun;—indeed, the books he was mo addicted to, if not the only ones to which he had ever paid much attentio were old Izaak and his fly-book.

Vivyan had not seen or known much of this relation of his until som short time after he was established at Cambridge. An accidental circu stance then brought Markham to that part of England, and he did n omit paying his fair cousin a visit. Nobody was so winsome as Fran Vivyan; he was all openness, benevolence, gentleness, courtesy, and goo humour. Markham was charmed with him: he perceived his menta superiority, but the perfect artlessness and modesty, nay the very supin ness, of Vivyan's character, prevented that superiority from being di agreeably felt by any body, even by those who were in the position of h intellectual rivals, which was not the case at all with Markham. Fran upon his part was an easy conquest. He gave his cousin his affectio almost in the first hour of their acquaintance; and embraced his invitatio to Southampton without one thought of Legendre, or Mr. Peters h tutor.

The life to which his cousin introduced him was delightfully idle. A the forms and varieties that ease and idleness ever took in a country-hou were at Vivyan's disposal from cock-crow to sunset. There was not a wo on mathematics in the library to remind him of his deserted studies, or grave academic face at the table to recall the image of Mr. Peters.

Markham was not motherless; but his mother, an eccentric woman fashion, lived entirely between London and Paris; and his father, also oddity, and an invalid to boot, was drenching himself abroad with all t waters of Germany. The house was thus abandoned to youth, and ple sure, which is youth's business. Vivyan's modes of enjoyment, howeve differed in many respects from his cousin's. Markham was active a athletic, full of animal spirits, as eager at every thing he engaged in as his life and fortune were staked on it, habitually an early riser, a man catch the larks asleep in their nest, and to make chanticleer crow if neglected his duty. Vivyan, on the contrary, was addicted a little to l couch. He had probably, like most of us, witnessed in his time ma more sunsets than sunrises. It is only metaphorically that men in gene are much given to worship the rising sun.

At Manor Oakham, Vivyan scarce knew how the time passed, only th it passed agreeably; it was like dreaming;—or imagine swimming witho an effort down a bright stream that flows over sparkling pebbles, betwe banks of flowers. Markham adapted himself to his friend's tastes a strength; he shortened his rides and moderated his walks to suit hi For the first time in his life he became something of a saunterer, and cost him some trouble to become one; he was so used to rapid a energetic movements. But he always took his gun with him. Frank, t carried a light fowling-piece for a few days, but he found the encumbra greater than the amusement it afforded; he loved loitering in the woo for the mere love of the woods and the loitering; and he was no great s either, just enough to frighten a pheasant now and then, or hit a h couchant. His sportsmanlike essays made Markham and his compa smile, but when they smiled, Vivyan himself laughed, and made livel hits at his own misses than they did. It is only affectation that is e ridiculous; and Frank, far from affecting to be a shot, did not even assu the garb and externals of a sportsman.

CHAPTER II.

PREPARATIONS FOR A "VOYAGE PITTORESQUE."

'Tis a rare fortune, but of inestimable solace, to have a worthy man, one of a nd judgment, and of a temper comformable to your own, who takes a delight r your company in your travels. I have been at a very great loss for one in mine. such a companion should be chose, and taken with you from your first setting There can be no pleasure to me without communication: there is not so much sprightly thought comes into my mind, which it does not grieve me to have pro- l alone, without one to communicate it to. But yet it is much better to be alone a in foolish and troublesome company."—MONTAIGNE.

THE visit referred to in the previous chapter was made in the vacation ceding that when our story properly commences. Vivyan had given rkham a general promise to return to Manor Oakham whenever his dies and other arrangements should admit of it; but such promises are considered very binding unless when the memory of them is kept fresh enewed invitations. Vivyan, however, had never heard from his cousin ce his return to Cambridge, and was under the impression that he had e abroad, when, as he was occupied watching the swallows in the nner already described, his servant entered, and delivered the following ter:—

"Manor Oakham, Southampton.

"MY DEAR FRANK,

'The Circe is mine. You remember the boat we saw at Cowes last otember, and which we both admired so much. I have bought her, and ve a grand scheme in my head of a "voyage pittoresque' to Ireland and otland—a kind of romantic survey of the coast, islands, sea-ports, &c. at say you? Recollect you are an Irish landlord, and ought to look er your property. You have nothing more agreeable on hand, have you? ill bide your convenience, but sail with me you must. You can bring ir books, and make a scientific as well as a picturesque tour of it, if you disposed to combine the *utile* with the *dulce*. Would Mr. Peters join —as you please, only do not fail.

"Yours ever truly,
"GEORGE MARKHAM.

P.S. Don't trouble yourself about a sailor's dress—I can rig you out. ve been at Constantinople and Grand Cairo, and all over the gorgeous t, since we met last."

This letter enchanted Vivyan, who really had no such love for his college o prefer a summer in his chambers to such a summer as Markham ited him to spend. Yachting, too, was an untasted pleasure; it could fail to be charming, particularly with his books! He perfectly recol- ed the Circe—there was sorcery in the very name; but the notion of iting Mr. Peters upon a party of pleasure of any kind, with his grave,

allow, quadrilateral face, his fluxional eyes, and his blue spectacles,—it sounded like asking my Lord Primate to dance a polka.

The Circe, that idle argosy, chartered to trade in midsummer amusement, lay at anchor, waiting for sailing orders, within two hundred yards of Manor Oakham, whose fine old woods extended to the very margin of the sea, the outermost trees dropping their branches into it. The yacht was manned by three able seamen, and there was a good cargo of champagne and claret in the lockers, with other stores to correspond; for Markham, though an enthusiastic sailor, and as fond of the sea as Byron, was not the man to neglect victualling his bark, or to be content with pickled pork, biscuit, and grog on a voyage.

It was a lovely, still, gray evening, and the sea lay polished as a mirror, and blue as the sky overhead, save the spaces immediately in the shadow of the impendent trees; and there it was so sombre, that at first you were not aware how lucid it was at the same time. The moon was just risen, and promising to repay the world with a flood of silver for the loss it was soon to experience of the sun's golden rays.

The house was a little in disorder. Pieces of sail-cloth, spars, telescopes, compasses, chronometers, fowling-pieces, and even cutlasses, were scattered over the hall and dining-room, in odd association with busts, bronzes, vases, and candelabras. In one corner of the hall lay a small anchor, a swivel-gun, and a marlin-spike, while a billiard table in the centre was covered with flags and streamers of as many kinds, as if the little Circe had been a line-of-battle ship. The young men themselves were about to sit down to their last dinner on *terra-firma;* a small table was placed close to a window commanding a view of the element to which they were soon to commit themselves; it was no doubt the situation they would have deliberately chosen, but in point of fact the perplexed servant had selected it as the only part of the room unencumbered with nautical implements, naval stores, sailors' jackets, charts, and fishing-tackle, books, cigars, and powder-flasks. A chart of the Channel was spread on a sofa, Markham was examining it carefully, while Vivyan, immersed in the most luxurious chair he could find, was turning over Spenser's "View of the State of Ireland," when they were both summoned to dinner, which had been laid on the table without exciting their observation.

"This time to-morrow," said Markham to his friend, as he helped him to soup, "we shall dine in a less spacious apartment, but in point of dinner we shall probably be better off than we are to-day; we shall be unlucky if we do not take some good fish, and there is a case or two of champagne in the lockers for which I can answer, if there is any faith in wine-merchants."

"You think we shall sail to-morrow, George?" replied Frank, caring little about the fish or the wine, but bent with all his soul upon the voyage.

"Certainly," said Markham, "if the wind is as steady as we are, and some letters arrive which I am expecting. As to the weather, there is no sign of change at present, nor any likelihood of it. The barometer is rising; the moon looks well. I have great faith in the moon as an oracle of the weather; you cannot see her where you are sitting."

Vivyan changed his position to do homage to the queen of the woods and floods, for both her titles were recalled by the delicate splendour which was just beginning to steal over the tops of the oaks, and beyond them again, in a tremulous line of light, athwart the water.

"Is she not beautiful?" cried Markham; "to-morrow night she will be

nearly full, and a moon-rise by water is a magnificent spectacle. I saw glorious one on the Sea of Galilee."

Markham loved nature; not ideally, like Vivian, but heartily an honestly, nevertheless. He was a true sportsman—and all true sportsme love the moon, though not many see her rise on the Sea of Galilee.

"Observe the effect of the light upon the Circe's shrouds," said Vivyan, returning to his seat.

"Two blunders," said George, good-humouredly. "Frank, I fear you will always be what we sailors call a land-lubber."

"But how have I blundered now, George?"

"Why, in the first place you insult the Circe by mistaking that clumsy fishing-smack for her; and secondly, you talk of the shrouds when you mean the sails; though I have told you some dozen times that the shrouds of a ship are the ropes, not the canvas."

"How precise you are," said Vivyan, laughing; "but you will see how I shall improve in nautical lore during our cruise. By-the-bye, are we to make for the Irish or the Scotch coast first?"

"You shall decide," said the good-natured Markham.

"Then I am for Ireland," said Frank; "let us give the more distant expedition precedence; we can run up the Clyde, or visit the islands later in the season, if there is time, after our Irish adventures."

"Content," said Markham; "but we shall incidentally see something, too, of the Scottish coast, as our course will lie between that and the Irish; that is, if you have no objection to proceed northwards, and commence our researches after the picturesque along the shores of Donegal."

"What I desire of all things," said Vivyan, "I have heard such accounts of the wild beauties of that part of Ireland; my only wish is, that the long vacation were longer by a couple of months."

"We shall make it last as long as we can," said Markham, "and if it should outlast our stock of champagne and our other sea-stores, we must only take in a fresh supply at Belfast, or in Dublin, where we must put in for a day or two, to see the bay which they compare with Naples, and taste the herring for which it is so renowned. But tell me, Frank, how does it happen that you have never visited your Irish estate?—small as it is, it may be worth looking after."

Vivian smiled, and said that it was the Irish usage to do everything by proxy, and that he only conformed to the custom of the country.

"What will surprise you more," he added, "my agent has never seen my property any more than myself. He employs a sub-agent, who resides in the neighbourhood, and collects the rent, which he transmits to his employer in Dublin, who in turn transmits it to me."

"Probably the sub-agent keeps a deputy also," said Markham.

"Most likely," said his cousin.

"I feel no small curiosity," said Markham, "to see a country that is managed in that sort of fashion."

"Depend upon it," said Frank, "we shall see a great many curious things in Ireland."

"We shall keep a list of Irish anomalies,— but in what part of Ireland is your property situate?"

"In Donegal or Enniskillen, I believe," said the young poco-curate absentee.

Markham laughed heartily.

"Enniskillen is not a county, Frank."

"Not a county!—are you certain?"

Markham was not certain, so they called for a gazetteer to settle the question. They then became exceedingly merry at their own expense over a bottle of claret, much merrier than if they had been perfect masters of Irish geography, so that "ignorance was bliss" in this instance, as in many other cases that occur in life.

"At all events," said Vivyan, rising from the table, "I shall be back to my college and my business in the beginning of November. We shall see a great deal of anomaly in three months."

"Of course," said his cousin, "you must not forget your business, but it is no harm, believe me, to lay in a good stock of health and spirits in the long days; a man returns to his books with such force after a little relaxation."

Markham had much more experience in relaxation than study, and so indeed had his cousin also, though he was not in the habit of unbending himself in the same strenuous way.

The arrival of the expected letters closed the evening. Amongst them was one which particularly interested them, with a view to their project of invading Ireland. It was from a nobleman, a distant relative of Markham's, who possessed a considerable property in the same county where Vivyan's small estate was situated. Markham had acquainted Lord Bonham (that was the nobleman's name and title) with his intentions for the summer, and his lordship now wrote to place his house in Ireland at his friend's service, and give him one or two introductions, which he might possibly find it useful or agreeable to avail himself of. As not only Lord Bonham himself, but the persons mentioned in his letter, will be found involved (some in no small degree) in the course of the events to be related in the sequel, it may not be amiss to place the letter at the disposal of the reader.

"My dear Markham,

"I am both surprised and pleased to hear of your projected cruise. Ireland is worth a visit, and I sincerely wish it were in a state to make it more inviting to visitors than it now is, or probably will be for a longer time than it is agreeable to think of. You are no politician any more than myself, and so much the better for your peace and comfort. As to Ireland, I fear I am no great patriot, but then, as I am not an Irishman (though I have some property there), I neither feel myself bound to wear a green coat, nor to hold green opinions. Should your voyage lead you to the north-western coast, you will find much romantic attraction, and you will be in the neighbourhood of my more picturesque than profitable patrimony, where my lodge (for it is no more) will be heartily at your service, with the liberty of unlicensed shooting and fishing over some six or seven thousand acres of moor and loch. You will find the fishing good. I am not so sanguine about the shooting, but there will probably be grouse enough for a pie. You will find hospitality whenever you choose to land, but in the part of the country I speak of there are not many people to exercise that good old virtue, which it is the modern fashion to call a barbarous one. I have one excellent friend, whom if you fall in with, you will not fall out with me for introducing you to. His name is Spenser; he is rector of the parish of Redcross, and as great a curiosity as a fly in amber, for he is a liberal parson in the Orange province of Ulster. I hope you will visit him, and I know you will like him if you do. He is not particularly well off in point of wife, as you will probably find out for your-

but he has two daughters, against whom I would caution both yo
your friend Mr. Vivyan to be on your guard, if your object is mere
ce the beauties of Ireland, and not to carry any of them off with yo
of the Miss Spensers is a particular friend of Lady Bonham; you ha
haps seen her with us; if so, you will not have forgotten her, eve
ugh you have since been in the East, and seen Georgians and Circassians
wever, be of good courage, and visit Redcross. I send you a letter o
k to my good friend the clergyman, and wish you a fair wind and every
er blessing that man or yachtsman can desire.

"I remain, my dear Markham,

"Very sincerely yours,

"BONHAM.

P.S. I knew the father of your friend Vivyan, and I had also an old
uaintanceship with his amiable and eccentric friend in Spain. By-the-
, my private accounts state that poor Mr. Everard is declining in health
mingly. If Mr. Vivyan has not heard this intelligence, pray do not
ntion it, as it is possible my information may be exaggerated."

'I can answer for myself," said Markham, as he conducted his friend to
bed-room, after reading all the foregoing letter to him, save the post-
pt, "I can answer for myself, that I have no design on Bonham's
table beauties."

'Nor I, unquestionably," said Vivyan, laughing; "but do you recollect
lady his lordship commends so highly?"

'I do not," said Markham, "I fear I have been sadly inattentive to the
ik of beauty; but as she is a favourite of Lady Bonham's, I have no
ibt she is very good and very sensible, as well as handsome."

'Quite a dangerous female character," said his cousin, bidding him
id-night.

CHAPTER III.

THE CIRCE SAILS.

"Fair laughs the morn and soft the zephyr blows,
While proudly riding o'er the azure realm,
In gallant trim the gilded vessel goes;
YOUTH on the prow and PLEASURE at the helm."

GRAY.

THE barometer kept rising, the moon was constant to the promise of
previous evening, the morning rose without a cloud on her forehead,
the cousins (almost as early) with minds equally serene and brows
e cloudless. Much of the nautical lumber which we described as so
uisively encumbering apartments never intended for the uses of dock-
ds, had been removed on board the night before. What remained was
nsported at dawn of day, and before the clock in the cupola over the
ces struck six, Markham and Vivyan were on their way through the

with omens from the ravens, hawks, and pigeons, losing no opportunity, however, afforded by the windings of the path, the undulations of the ground, and the breaks in the forest, of catching a glimpse of their gallant" vessel, and vieing with each other in encomiums upon her. Markham was followed by the two inseparable attendants of his excursions by land or by water; Lawrence, his man, looking prematurely sea-sick, and Pedro his dog, in riotous spirits. Lawrence was a native of Britain; Pedro claimed Newfoundland as the country, not of his birth, but of his vantage. Ashore there is no doubt but that Lawrence was the more serviceable of the two vassals, for he was a faithful, intelligent, attentive domestic as ever served a master. But afloat it was another matter. There Pedro shone to infinitely more advantage; his tastes and delights were so aquatic, his spirits so exuberant, his appetite so keen, his affections so warm, all his doggish virtues so developed, while Lawrence was absolutely good for nothing, not even in "summer seas," except when their surface was smoother than glass itself. It was indeed a proof of his strong attachment to Markham that Lawrence followed him even in his cruises: nothing was to him so inexplicable as how his master, or any body else, could take pleasure in a treacherous, nauseous element, connected in his mind with every image of terror and danger, with sharks, corsairs, shipwreck, hurricanes, and the hideous spectre of the Flying Dutchman. He was everlastingly afraid of being boarded, or swamped, stranded, or water-logged, without any distinct idea of the differences between those several disasters. He had heard tales of Spanish privateers, and fearful anecdotes of Kidd and Paul Jones; but in fact such was Lawrence's horror of the high seas, that every name he heard mentioned by his master, or Frank Vivyan, with any degree of awe or suspicion, became associated in his mind with piratical ideas. He was not without apprehension of being captured and sold to the Algerines by Daniel O'Connell (whose political exploits were then in the mouth of everybody); and fancy dressed up William Cobbett for him in a fierce cocked hat and a blue coat, with a pistol in one hand and a cutlass in the other.

Admirable studies Markham and Vivyan would themselves have made for a painter, who wanted a pair of handsome young corsairs for a wild sea-piece. Markham was tall, athletic, muscular; his figure would have been a model of manly beauty had it not been a little too robust (inclining to the Milo more than the Antinous), but his bearing was graceful and gentlemanlike, which, combined with good, open, manly, though somewhat rigid features, the complexion of vigorous health, a good, cool, daring eye (more that of a sportsman, however, than a poet), made him altogether a very handsome man;—and so he was considered by maid and matron for many miles round Southampton, in which neighbourhood the greater part of his stirring life had been spent. His nautical costume became him well, and he wore it with the air and ease of a sailor by craft; for, though a young man, George was an ancient mariner, scarcely remembering the time when ropes and cables were not as "familiar to him as his garter."

A shout of welcome and triumph burst from the little crew, with whom he was highly popular, when Markham, followed by his cousin, and the ghastly Lawrence, jumped with a cheer on the snow-white deck of the Circe. For a few moments he engrossed all eyes and all admiration, but Frank Vivyan was not long without receiving his full share of attention and applause. He looked an Adonis in his sailor's dress, or a Paris setting out to make a Helen his booty, and perfectly bewitched the rugged tars

with the radiance of his countenance, and the singular elegance of his slight person. He was such a contrast to his cousin, of such a different style of beauty; yet his present attire,—the loose blue jacket, the cap with its gold band, the chequered shirt, the black ribbon, the white vest trousers,—had the advantage of taking something from the delicacy of exterior, and giving him a manlier air than he had yet attained to. In short, you have only to imagine Don Juan following Lambro's profession, to form some notion of the picture which Vivyan presented that morning as he came on board, in the sinecure capacity of first-lieutenant to his cousin.

"*Aura veni!*" he cried, as they weighed anchor: and the breeze seemed to relish being so classically wooed, for it sprang cheerfully up; the buxom white sail welcomed it to its swelling bosom; and the Circe darted like an arrow from her station, smashing the sparkling water into foam, resembling innumerable fragments of crystal and emerald. The frothing, gurgling sound of the waves curling round the keel was music to the ears of the young men, particularly to Markham's. Another moment, and a charming view presented itself. The wood that descended to the beach, the high lawn beyond (itself scattered with trees of the stateliest growth), the ancient manor-house, gray, irregular, and massive, with the heights that sheltered it behind,—formed a beautiful scrap of scenery, though of a quiet and civilised character, widely different from that which our mariners were going in quest of.

Having now fairly embarked our yachtsmen, we must leave them for some time on the high seas to the mercy of winds and waves, hoping that Markham may prove a skilful seaman enough to carry the Circe safe to the shores of Donegal. The most ruinous mother could not have cockered and petted Vivyan more than George did during that voyage. From stem to stern every thing on board was arranged for Vivyan's ease, luxury, and amusement. Markham had neglected nothing,—coffee, cigars, ice, liqueurs, eau-de-Cologne and eau-de-vie, fruit, vegetables, games of several kinds, abundance of amusing books and prints; couches or divans to loll, chat, smoke, or sleep on; excellent telescopes, an armoury of fowling-pieces and rifles, a guitar, and a violin; with every work of note that had ever been published, illustrative of the scenery and topography of the parts of the kingdom which it was their purpose to visit, and to which we now hasten before them.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER IV.

THE PARSONAGE.

"And now they nigh approached to the sted,
Where those fair mermaids dwelt: it was a still
And calmy bay, on one side sheltered
With the broad shadow of a hoary hill."
THE FAERY QUEEN.

A THOUSAND picturesque bays and creeks indent the western and north-western shores of Ireland, most attractive to the lovers of coast scenery, and most commodious as fishing stations, though sharing, of course, the general marked inattention of the uncivil Irish to the advantages with which Nature has blessed them. The scenery at some points of the coast in question is as fine, perhaps, as any of its class in the British islands. The mountain chains of the interior, apparelled in gold and purple by the gorse and heather, terminate in a series of headlands of every variety of shape and altitude, throwing themselves boldly into the Atlantic, which, whirling into the gorges between them, forms a succession of lochs, more or less exposed to the fury of the ocean, according to their extent and form, but sometimes exhibiting in their windings all the quiet beauty of the stream-fed mountain lake. Approaching such spots as these by water, the contrast is very striking between the boiling surf through which you make your perilous way into the inlet, and the repose that reigns often at no great distance from its mouth. It is like the calm of settled government after the throes of revolutionary violence, when revolution has the good fortune to be succeeded by peace and order.

There existed some twenty years ago, and probably still exists, a parsonage in the county of Donegal, and parish of Redcross, situated close to the water edge, on the shores of a small but beautiful arm of the sea, which resembled, just at that place, one of the many romantic lakes or pools which abound in the Welsh highlands. The parsonage (a comfortable house, containing accommodation for a large family, but with no great architectural pretensions,) stood on the northern side of the creek, or *fiorde* (as such inlets are called in Norway), so that it enjoyed a southern exposure, beside being very well sheltered on the north and north-east by a lofty range of hills, whose steep rocky sides, strewed with patches of wild vegetation (delicious browsing for sheep), rose like a wall over it. In the westerly direction, where the hills were least precipitous, a copse of oak and birch crept from their base to the very summits; and towards the east, or to the left of the parsonage, a high point of rock, which stood boldly into the water, was crested in a very imposing manner with a group of pines, or trees of that species, whose tops were fired at midsummer with the sun's beams, long before their golden track was visible upon the

bosom of the lake. A few acres of greensward—the natural turf improved by not much manual labour—filled up the space between the house and the beach, consisting of a narrow strip of sand, which, not being itself often encroached on by the waves, manifested equal forbearance to the lawn, which seemed to skirt with silver. From the front of the parsonage the view was exquisite, for it not only commanded the loch itself, with its picturesque banks, distinguished by their air of idle grandeur, but the additional prospect of a not very distant mountain range beyond, one of whose numerous peaks was nearly of a sugar-loaf form, and domineered superbly, with its fine dark blue cone, over the less ambitious parts of the chain.

The scenery altogether was the wildest imaginable, but its wildness was chastened by its unity and simplicity. Nature is well compared by a German writer to a great poet, "who produces his greatest effects with the fewest means;" a great thought, and a few household words to clothe it.

It was evident that the tenants of the parsonage were in the habit of enjoying the scenery around them, from the water as well as from the land, for a small pier, neatly constructed with square massive blocks of granite, had been thrown some twenty feet out into the loch, forming not only a quay for embarkation, but a kind of diminutive harbour, within which was now moored a small but smart cutter, destined no doubt for distant voyages, as well as a boat, like a Thames wherry, designed for cruises not far from home. At the extremity of the pier was erected a flag-staff, supported by iron stays; there was generally breeze enough in a mountain region so close to the sea to keep the gay ensign floating, but on the evening when our story commences, there was scarcely a breath to stir an aspen-leaf; the flag had ceased to wave, and drooped like the pendent from a woman's ear.

The sun was preparing to set in all his pomp, and Mr. Spenser, the rector, with his son Sydney, two marriageable daughters, Arabella and Elizabeth, and one or two younger children, were assembled after dinner in front of the parsonage, to enjoy the spectacle. Mr. Spenser was sitting, the rest were standing, all more or less intent upon the scene before them; nor were they enjoying it in silence, but, on the contrary, conversing eagerly, noticing the beauties of the prospect, and speculating upon that ever-debateable topic in these climes—the weather of to-morrow.

A cruise of pleasure seemed to be on the *tapis*. At a distance of about half a league from the mouth of the *fiorde* was a very small but extremely picturesque island, a frequent summer haunt of the Spensers; they held it in joint tenancy with a nation of rabbits, and it was to this little speck in the ocean that they were contemplating a voyage and pic-nic on the following day.

"And a splendid day it will be," cried Sydney, a robust, square-built youth, attired in a kind of sailor's dress, a handsome boy, but with features that indicated both sensuality and wilfulness, as if he had either been left untutored and undisciplined, or as if discipline had been thrown away upon him. The tone of his voice, too, was boorish, as if he kept other company occasionally than that in which we now see him.

"I am no weather-seer," said his father, a comely, grave man, between forty-five and fifty, whose attire announced the well-beneficed clergyman, and whose placid countenance, at once benign and intellectual, proclaimed him one of the race of gentle shepherds.

"You have not yet visited your island this summer," he added, addressing the junior branches of his family.

"The island! the island!" shouted the little Spensers in chorus.

"Listen!" said Elizabeth, the rector's second daughter, a radiant brunette of eighteen, with a figure that was perfect, and a face of the sweetest and noblest expression. She spoke with one hand on the bare shoulder of her little brother, and a finger of the other raised to command attention.

"The island!" replied a voice from afar, as of a viewless speaker;—it was a voice, and nothing but a voice, for the spot was remarkable for its echo, and the shrill and joyful cry of the children came back from the rocks and hills with a sharpness and fidelity which the famous echo of Blarney could not have surpassed.

Sydney, however, said he thought there was a still more wonderful echo on the island, and he hoped his friend Dudley Dawson would bring his French-horn, to awaken it.

"You surely did not invite Mr. Dawson!" said the brown girl, but in a low but displeased tone, as if unwilling to stir a painful subject. Her elder sister, Arabella, expressed her disapprobation in stronger terms.

"But I did," replied the young man, rudely, and left the circle; perhaps to superintend the preparations for the morrow's amusement. He spoke with a clownishness of phrase and accent, which you were surprised to hear in a member of such a group, and the brother of such sisters.

The placid clergyman made no remark, but sat with one of his courtly legs crossed on the other, gazing on the landscape, murmuring to himself lines of Ovid, and verses of Milton, on the phenomena of echo, for his mind was stored with all that is sweet and beautiful in ancient and modern poetry.

The crisis of the sunset was now approaching; the sun descended rapidly upon the brow of the mountain which intercepted the view of the Atlantic. The variegated clouds lay in long, irregular, fleecy masses, parallel to the horizon, their edges burnished by the retiring luminary, whose blazing disc only appeared in the intervening spaces, sometimes so contracted as only to disclose a slender bar of intense lustre, like an ingot of ruddy gold. But directly the sun dropped below the lowest cloud of the strata, there was nothing to obstruct his splendour until he touched the summit of the mountain, when he soon vanished, to illumine and gladden other lands.

Often as the Spensers had witnessed the same imposing spectacle from the same spot, they had never admired it so much. As still they gazed, their contemplation was disturbed by a loud clear hurrah, proceeding from the heights on the opposite side of the creek.

"Uncle Woodward!" exclaimed several voices, instantly. Some called him "Uncle Hercules."

The quarter from which the shout proceeded was more easily discovered than the personage to whom it was ascribed, for the distance across the inlet was upwards of a mile, and the tortuous way in which the road ran upon that side, often altogether hidden by masses of rocks, or clumps of heather and brushwood, rendered it often difficult and sometimes impossible to detect where the road ran at all. In fact, it had been carved in days of rough but daring engineering, and when other considerations besides public convenience influenced road-making in Ireland, in a continual steep zig-zag, from the margin of the creek to the summit of the

which you could travel with tolerable safety, except on foot, or mounted on one of the sure-footed ponys of the country.

Every eye was strained in the direction of the familiar signal.

"He will shout again, if it is your uncle," said Mr. Spenser.

"I think I see him, papa," said one of the children—"see, just at the tall white rock, where the eagles used to build until last summer, when Sydney shot that grand one."

"It was not Sydney; it was Mr. Dawson," lisped the other little one.

"I see nothing yet," said Mr. Spenser.

Another hurrah was heard as he spoke, and almost at the same instant Mr. Spenser, waving his hat, pointed to a spot where the road came conspicuously into view, directly opposite the parsonage, and about one hundred and fifty feet above the level of the water. The correctness of the discovery was soon acknowledged; the girls waved their handkerchiefs, and their little brother returned his uncle's greeting with a scream, which, though very inferior in sonorous effect, probably reached his ear, for again the same stentorian salute came booming across the estuary, multiplied by a score of echoes.

A few moments brought our new acquaintance to the water's edge, for he had his stout mountain hack under him, a pony in whom discretion and valour were blended in the justest proportions, and who was so familiar with up-hill and down-hill, that he actually never stumbled except upon level ground. There was a snug little deep sandy cove, just where the precipitous road seemingly tumbled down upon the beach; and just above high-water mark was a low rock, to which, by means of an iron ring, was attached a boat, with a couple of oars, designed expressly for the accommodation of those who, having to cross the inlet, like Mr. Woodward, preferred this short cut to a circuitous route which led you for a couple of miles along the shore, until you gained a point where the estuary was narrow enough to be spanned by a rude wooden bridge.

The Spensers watched their relative's proceedings with the liveliest interest, increased by some little surprise at receiving a visit from him on that particular evening. He loosed the boat from the ring, drew it down along the smooth tawny sand, launched and almost simultaneously stepped into it, leaving the pony to take care of himself, which he was extremely well able to do. A couple of lusty strokes, such as only a very powerful man could have given, pushed the boat into deep water. He then paused, but it was only to throw off his hat and coat, preparatory to resuming the oar with still greater vigour.

"My uncle deserves to be called Hercules," said Sydney, who had just returned, raising a hearty cheer which his muscular relative as heartily responded to; and the cheering and counter-cheering lasted until the boatman gained the shore, and was surrounded and welcomed by the Spensers. He towered above them all like a dromedary in a flock of sheep. There was not another such strapping fellow in all the diocese, nay, in all the arch-diocese, in either Protestant establishment, Catholic church, or Presbyterian synod. Hercules Woodward stood six feet three inches in his stocking-feet, and he was broad and brawny in proportion. Though possessing a giant's strength, however, you soon perceived that he was not the man to make giant-like use of it. He had the honestest though roughest set of features imaginable; a face as massive and strongly marked as those which sculptors assign to river-gods, a high bald forehead, bushy,

pair of enormous brows beetled, with an endeavour, not always unsuccessful, to give them a ferocious aspect.

Such was his person. His dress was very much in keeping with it. He wore a short frock, or rather jacket, of dark blue cloth, not much finer than frieze; it was something between a sailor's jacket and a shooting-coat. His trowsers, very wide and very short, were of strong grey plaid, the coarsest of the kind that is called shepherd's, and his waistcoat was from the same piece; a black silk handkerchief loosely encircled his hirsute throat; his feet were furnished with shoes such as men wear in snipe-shooting, and his head was provided with a low-crowned and broad-brimmed glazed hat. And now that you have him before you, such as nature formed, and the tailor finished him, to what profession would you suppose him to belong? It was difficult enough to believe that he was Mr. Spenser's brother-in-law, but it will be harder still to credit what is equally true;—he was also his curate!

There was a marked difference in the greetings and receptions "my uncle, the curate," met with from the two ladies. By Elizabeth he was received with cordiality and tenderness, by her elder sister with cold and fastidious civility. It gave you an insight into the characters of the two girls. Nothing could ever conquer Arabella Spenser's repugnance to her rustic relative, neither her father's regard for him, his own sterling virtues, or the fact that he was the husband of her Aunt Carry, one of the worthiest, as she was one of the largest, specimens of womankind.

To Mr. Spenser, indeed, he was a most striking contrast. Mr. Spenser was so quiet and refined; the intellectual predominated in him so much above the physical; his person was so elegant, his manners so calm and courtly. In fact, it was obvious that they had been born in different spheres of society; the rector was Corinthian, the curate Doric; and moreover, to distinguish them still further asunder, the former was by origin and education an Englishman, while the latter was the genuine indigenous growth of the province of Ulster, descended from a plain bluff race of ancestors, who had sent many a good rough scholar up to Dublin College, and supplied many a sturdy shepherd to the Irish church.

CHAPTER V.

THE WEATHER-SEER.

THE curate was a weather-seer, if the rector was not. Not a mountaineer in the country could predict wet or dry, hot or cold, a calm or a hurricane, so unerringly as Hercules Woodward, because, in fact, nobody lived so much abroad as he did, and was so conversant with the elements in all their aspects and vicissitudes. With earth, air, and ocean, at least, he lived on terms of daily familiarity. His acquaintance with fire was not quite so intimate, though no man enjoyed a blazing one of turf more of an evening, when he had his wife at his side, and his little Woodwards littered about him.

It was the purest as well as the most active good nature which brought Hercules over to the parsonage that evening, all the long way from the town of Redcross, where he dwelt.

"You are not dreaming of sailing to-morrow," he said, with his bluff, stormy voice, and striding at the same time towards the house, with his younger niece, Elizabeth, on his arm, where she looked something like a sprig of geranium hanging from a stalwart mountain ash.

"Yes, indeed we are, uncle," replied several voices, eagerly. Hercules looked unpropitious.

"Did you see the sun set, uncle?" cried the little Arthur Spenser.

"Shan't we have a charming day to-morrow?" cried his smaller sister.

"For barnacle and wild ducks, Mysie," replied the curate, looking down at the little girl, as if from the top of a steeple.

"You don't mean to say it will be wet, sir?" growled Sydney, with temper, apprehensive of the effects of his uncle's opinion upon the rest of the party.

"Wet and wind, and plenty of both. The car of day will be a covered car to-morrow, Syd, my boy," replied his uncle, taking no notice of his nephew's ungracious looks and tones, being probably accustomed to such displays of temper.

The prediction, however, caused general surprise; and the little Spensers, as well as their elder brother, looked considerably disconcerted by it.

"I'll tell you more," continued Hercules, not thinking much of the pain he was giving in such a cause, "we are going to have several days of wild weather:—it was nothing else brought me over. I was afraid you might venture out in the morning and get capsized in one of those squalls to which that piece of water there is subject at times, innocent as it looks at the present moment."

Sydney's aspect lowered, but he kept a passionate silence.

"Uncle, you are such a mar-plot," said one of the younger children, half pettishly, half playfully.

"Never mind, Mysie, we shall have our sail," muttered Sydney, in a gruff, refractory tone, which possibly nobody heard, for no notice was taken of it. Elizabeth gently reproved the child for calling her uncle a mar-plot and thanked him over and over again for his kindness, pressing him at the same time to stay that night at the parsonage.

"What would your aunt say to that, Lizzy?" answered her huge relative, —"no, Lizzy, my dear, I'll drink tea with you, and then across the water again to the *dulce domum*. Val, how is Mag this evening?"

Mr. Spenser's name was Valentine, and his wife's was Margaret. The curate had some familiar abbreviation for every body he was related to or intimate with, except his niece Arabella, whose name he uniformly pronounced in full, though her father sometimes called her Bell. The curate was a notable tea-drinker, and as proud of the number of his cups as topers are of the number of their bottles. Although Father Mathew had not yet appeared, there was a Temperance Society in the parish of Redcross, which had Mr. Woodward's cordial support. Mr. Spenser, though anything but a votary of Bacchus, declined joining the society; he used pleasantly to observe that temperance was "a very proper virtue in a curate."

Uncle Woodward drank six cups upon that occasion. It was not a very lively meal. Sydney was gloomy and morose; Arabella frigid, the rector abstracted; Elizabeth alone exerted herself to make her uncle feel comfortable and at home, nor was it difficult to do so, for nobody was less exacting, though nobody felt more keenly the absence of warmth when he had a right to expect it. But his stay was brief; for the evening was falling rapidly; in fact, it was nearly dark when he rose with even more

than his wonted abruptness, and bade them all good night, shaking hands with every one, and even kissing a few of them. The curate shook hands with a vigour that was sometimes distressing; but friendly, warm-hearted people readily pardoned the momentary pain to their fingers, for the sake of the cordiality that accompanied the squeeze.

Mr. Spenser accompanied his brother-in-law to the little harbour.

"When shall I see you again, Hercules?" he said; "I am anxious to have your advice on a matter of very great importance."

"I'll come over in the morning," said the curate.

"Bring Carry with you," said his brother-in-law.

"The weather won't do for that, Val. There will be a storm, rely upon it. On no account allow Sydney to sail. Good night, Val, good night;" and with that the stout curate seized the oars again, and pushed across the shadowy water.

"I trust," said Mr. Spenser to himself, as he walked back to the house, "that Lord Bonham's friends are not at sea, or that they will get into some port before the gale rises." Lord Bonham had written to advertise him of the probability of his receiving a visit from the Circe about this time.

The rector, on returning to the drawing-room, found his son arranging the details of the next day's expedition, just as if nothing had occurred to render its postponement advisable. It was a great relief to his daughters, no small surprise to them likewise, when their father, with a decision very unusual to him, acted on his brother-in-law's prudent advice, and interdicted the voyage in the most absolute manner.

Before the parsonage was asleep that night, the moaning of the wind at intervals, accompanied with the rattling of windows, and the flapping of the branches of rose-trees and woodbine against the glass, promised to verify the prophesies of Mr. Woodward only too completely. The rector got very little rest, but it was his wife and not the wind that disturbed his slumbers. Mrs. Spenser was not a very comfortable consort in the calmest weather, but she was particularly disagreeable in a high wind. This, however, is a premature peep behind the bed-room curtains.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PARSONAGE ASLEEP.

"Now the cricket's chirp is heard,
Loud as note of any bird;
And the ticking of the clock
Is become a mighty knock;
Enter we the silent house,
With the footsteps of a mouse;
Creep along the corridor,
Mark we every chamber-door,
Let the crayon make no sound,
None must know our midnight round."

THE MYSTERIOUS VISITORS.

WHEN people are asleep, it is a very good opportunity for a little gossip on their affairs and antecedents, and not a bad time either to take casts of their faces, and examine the bumps on their heads.

Spenser had now been incumbent of the parish of Redcross for ten years. He came to it shortly after his marriage with his present who was the step-mother of Arabella, Elizabeth, and Sydney), and dest child was now entering his eighth year. The benefice was a one, worth from eight hundred to a thousand pounds per annum, ad been bestowed upon him by his patron, Lord Bonham, a nobleman whom Mr. Spenser had formed a close friendship, originally at Eaton, ubsequently at Cambridge. His lordship's estate, which we have ly mentioned, lay in the neighbourhood of Redcross; but there was ansion upon it, only a shooting lodge, where he occasionally estab- d himself for grouse-shooting or salmon-fishing. He offered his cy to his friend along with the parish, but although such a union of s was a common thing in Ireland at the time, Mr. Spenser's strict ons of clerical duty and propriety revolted at it, and he firmly ined this additional proof of Lord Bonham's friendship, although his easing family rendered an augmentation of income a point of no small ortance. The rector had been more fortunate in his first than in his nd marriage. His first wife was a woman of strong sense, sterling worth, great personal attractions. The beauties of her mind she transmitted er daughter Elizabeth; those of her person only to Arabella. The sent Mrs. Spenser was a discontented, intractable, selfish, and eccentric nan, and had been an invalid, and a most vexatious one, ever since the h of her youngest child, keeping her bed-room seven or eight months he year, and talking of returning to it the remaining four or five. Her plaint was one of the nondescript disorders, called nervous, one part l to nine parts fanciful; the sources of untold profits to doctors, and told miseries to husbands. If people were harmless in proportion to ir imbecility, it would be all well; but the misfortune is, that those who ve the least control over themselves, often possess the most powerful d mischievous ascendency over others. This was remarkably illustrated the instance of Mr. and Mrs. Spenser. The rector had all the weak- sses of an amiable character, and his wife all the weaknesses of a selfish e. The two sets of weaknesses, united in the bonds of matrimony, ade a very uneasy union, and Mr. Spenser would indeed have been very happy in his second marriage, only for the extreme placidity of his mper, the society of his daughters, and his passionate love of books. hen the living plagued him, he often fled to the dead for refuge, and und in literary pleasures sweet though short respites from his conjugal iefs. And here let us pause, and give a word of advice to men in Mr. penser's position of life.

A man in moderate circumstances, particularly a widower with children, ho thinks of marrying a lady in delicate health, ought to examine him- lf, and see that he possesses not only the qualities that befit the master f a house, but those that are indispensable in a mistress likewise. In fact, eing destined to discharge the united functions of the father and mother f his family, he ought to be an active, bustling, motherly, managing sort f a gentleman, skilled in nursery affairs, equal to the control of house- naids, and not above "meddling with buck-washing;" he should know as nuch as possible about chin-coughs and teething, to which branches of seful knowledge were he to add some tincture of the science of pickling nd preserving, it would not be amiss, under the circumstances. An nvalid wife is a very expensive article of luxury even to a gentleman with thousand a year, and so Mr. Spenser found it. Had he made as good a

choice as his curate did, it would have saved him a couple of hundreds annually at the least; he would have had a buxom helpmate to control his servants and govern his children for him, instead of the croaking turtle he had, who gave him more trouble than all the rest of the establishment put together.

Mrs. Spenser had never accommodated herself to life in Ireland, particularly to the life of a country parson in the wildest and loneliest part of the island. She quarrelled with the people, and she quarrelled with the climate; there was always either a storm in the atmosphere, or a tempest in the political world—always something to discompose her; and when there was nothing, nothing answered equally well. You are not to suppose that she would have been happy and contented in a country without a breath of wind, either literal or metaphorical. On the contrary, she was a woman to raise a storm wherever she happened to be; she would get you up a hurricane in an exhausted receiver, and find or make something uncomfortable in Eden itself. The rector was free from avarice, and the only ambition he had was a literary one; but his helpmate was as covetous as Mammon, and as ambitious as Lucifer. She never forgave a tithe defaulter, and was for ever instigating her husband to wring the uttermost farthing out of his parishioners; while, at the same time, she thought it extremely hard that he should discharge any pastoral duty at all; continually urging him to settle in Dublin, where a man of his talents and address, enjoying the smiles of a Lord-Lieutenant, and charming with his witty and elegant conversation the vice-regal circle, might fairly aspire to high preferment in the church—even to change his simple pastoral crook for a crozier. It would have been strange, indeed, if such qualities as these in a wife had not exercised a very decided influence on the life and fortunes of an easy uxorious husband.

The main defect of Mr. Spenser's character (legible in his countenance) was its deplorable want of energy. With a little firmness he might have been a very happy man; without it he was the sport of a thousand passions and caprices from which his own mind was perfectly free. He was formed for contemplation, not for action; a man of the study and the bower, not a man of business, or the world. He was vigorous with his pen or at his books; industrious only in his green-leather arm-leather. Control over his children he had none, or extremely little; he spared no expense either on their accomplishments, or their amusements, but here his parental interference ended: if Sydney rioted at a sufficient distance from the library, and if he could always have one of his girls to accompany him in a walk, or a ride, and had Arabella to sing little French romances after tea of an evening, he was content.

His eldest son, far from being his comfort or pride, was now beginning to give him much uneasiness, and was destined to give him more. It was the rector's own fault—he had been a careless father, and he could not and did not escape the consequences of neglecting his parental duties. With his daughters Arabella and Elizabeth, however, he had better reason to be pleased; his mild brown eye rested with joy upon them both, but with most delight upon the elder, doubtless because she was her mother's likeness, for in every thing else Elizabeth far excelled.

They differed strikingly in both person and mind. Arabella was tall, fair-haired, with delicate and very handsome features; her figure was also very good, her carriage distinguished, but haughty; and the same expres-

es and on her lips, agreeing perfectly with her mode of receiving the
mespun curate, although so closely connected with her. At the same
ıe she was not decidedly or strikingly unamiable, only vain, frivolous,
d, and egotistical, not even returning her father's fond preference with
ɔ-half of her sister's affection and devotedness. In short, she was a
man without passions and without a heart. Elizabeth Spenser was no
nmon girl. In person she was not so tall as her sister, but, though
ınger, she was even more mature in appearance; somewhat rounder,
ımising in a short time to be a robust as well as a beauteous woman.
r hair was a dark brown, and nature had been prodigal to her of that
eliest of female ornaments. Her eyes were dark also, only more grey
n black. The nose was slightly aquiline; it made her countenance a
ımanding one; and the expression of her mouth, too, was a further
cation of energy and self-reliance. Yet the best part of her loveliness
that with which her mind irradiated her person, as the beauty of a
p is shown by the pure bright flame within it. Elizabeth's opportuni-
of improvement had not been greater than her sister's; but as two
hbouring vineyards, with the same cultivation to enrich the soil, and
same sun to ripen the grape, will produce wines of the most different
ities and value, so did the rector's daughters, under the same roof, the
) influences, and the same instructions, moving in the same society,
ing the same company, hearing the same conversation, and surrounded
ıe same books and other means of improvement, grow up to woman's
e, with minds and characters totally dissimilar in flavour and in
h.

Elizabeth Spenser the spirits of love and knowledge—the seraphic
ɔherubic characters, to borrow the old Rabbinical distinction—were
ɔifully blended. With all the soft attributes of her sex, were com-
l a solidity of judgment, and a sincerity, depth, and vigour of character,
ı kept them from degenerating into mere female fondnesses, and enabled
ı after life to act a very difficult part incomparably well, in several
ities, and through severe trials. She was the only member of the
r by whom Sydney was not systematically spoiled; her influence was,
ırse, but a feeble substitute for parental authority, but it was some-
not altogether unavailing. She was more capable, however, of being
. to the little ones, who, between their hypochondriac mother, and a
ıess,—who, though active enough, occupied herself very little with
ıpils,—were in a very fair way to be ruined. Here Elizabeth had a
card to play, for Mrs. Spenser was as jealous of interference with
otherly prerogatives as she was deficient in the discharge of her
rly duties. It was not without considerable address that Elizabeth
ded in usurping the degree of influence absolutely necessary to pre-
Irs. Spenser from ruining her children by proxy.

the useful and valuable attributes of her character, Elizabeth Spenser
lebted chiefly to the influence, instruction, and example of Mrs.
vard, her aunt, the wife of the colossal curate. When Mr. Spenser
ent over to Ireland to take possession of his benefice, he was
ɔanied not only by his present wife, but by his sister Caroline, or
as she was commonly called in the family. We shall presently
his excellent lady's acquaintance. The wonder was how Caroline
r had remained single so very long; she had so many of the
ɔs that marrying men of sense look for in women; her presence was
lly, her understanding so strong, while for prudence she was a

proverb. But she had no fortune, or a very small one, and—she was formidably fat.

Besides (so deceitful are appearances and so inscrutable the ways of women), she did not seem to be a marrying woman at all, and least of all did any body dream that she had preserved her heart for upwards of thirty years in a polished circle in England, to lose it at the end of that period, and lose it abruptly to a poor curate in the wildest part of Ireland. Mr. Woodward was curate of Redcross when Mr. Spenser was appointed to it. If ever there was love at first sight this was a case of it. There was nothing odd in Hercules falling in love with Caroline Spenser, her attractions were so exuberant; but people *did* wonder a little at Caroline so promptly returning the fire, the curate was so very rough a diamond, and Carry, though her charms had a tendency to coarseness, was coarse in no other way. But "*paucas palabras*," as Christopher Sly says. They met, they loved, they married; one of the first duties Mr. Spenser performed in the little church of Redcross was to unite his flourishing sister in the holy bands of matrimony to his gigantic curate.

She was a serious loss to her brother, particularly as the second Mrs. Spenser soon began to exhibit her physical as well as moral disqualifications for the management of a family.

CHAPTER VII.

THE CURATE AT HOME.

"From one great source the human nature springs,
And subjects will be indolent as kings;
Hence ev'ry viceroy pays a substitute,
And hence deputed ministers depute;
Kings hireling secretaries keep, and these
Must have their secretaries too; for ease
Bishops place rectors through their holy sees,
And rectors mince them into curacies.
'Mong all the wretches found on Proxy's list,
That crawl 'twixt heaven and earth, and scarce subsist;
'Mong all the lots to which the poor is heir,
The hardest portion is the curate's share."

THE CURATE. *By the Rev. Evans Lloyd.*

THE curate's house, an old, white, ungainly, three-storied building, with a number of long narrow windows, was situated near one end of the town of Redcross, within a courtyard, surrounded by a dilapidated wall, which was decked in summer with red snapdragons, and gaudy but sweet wall-flowers. A tall gate, with taller pillars, topped with a pair of stone globes, all white-washed, admitted you into the yard; and there, on your way to the door of the house, you probably encountered a couple of young pigs, or a little squadron of ducks and ducklings, bound for a small circular pond in the spacious, luxuriant, well-tilled, kitchen-garden (a wilderness of vegetables and red roses) behind the house. On the ground-floor were three rooms: one was a parlour and drawing-room combined;

:her was Mr. Woodward's sanctuary; and the third the store-room of wife, sometimes called "Carry's Miscellany," and sometimes the other's Magazine." The upper apartments were small and numerous will find it generally the case in the house of a curate); the highest all somewhat crazy, and shaky in gales of wind; and none very riously furnished. The whole was oddly surmounted by an hexagonal et, formed almost entirely of glass, crowned with a weather-cock, and d the Observatory. It was nothing but the distance prevented you n seeing the United States from this belvedere. It contained an old acting telescope upon a rickety stand, of power enough to exhibit some upiter's moons, but of no great use for the discovery of new planets or ulæ. A few scattered copy-books, grammars, and catechisms, with a ve-inch globe, showed that Carry occasionally schooled her children re; but it answered other purposes also: it served as a super- nerary dressing-room when there were visitors; and as a great treat reward to the little Woodwards after a long career of industry and ue, tea was now and then taken in the observatory; but this was ecular event, and only took place in very fine weather, about the full the moon.

rs. Woodward did a great deal,—perhaps all it was in her power to —but it was an irregular, harem-scarem house, notwithstanding. The was, that with the inveterate propensities of Hercules, more or less erited or aped by his children, and the careless, untidy, slattern, take- asy, and deuce-may-care habits of the Irish maid-servants, it was next mpossible to preserve (with a curate's paltry income) any thing like glish order and discipline. Carry soon almost gave it up, contenting her- with keeping her own more especial territories neat, taking care that her dren should be scrubbed and curried with all the vigour of some power- maidenly arm every morning of their lives, and seeing that there was ays a scrupulously clean and brilliantly white cloth on her table, no matter plain the meal was, even an Irish stew, which was turtle and venison her husband. Often did Carry threaten to enforce general order on some ure day, commonly on the next Monday; but *that* Monday was like the ek calends, or the Feast of Next-Never-Come-Tide, and Carry at last e up even threatening it. Circumstances were too strong for her; nay, nthusiastically devoted was she to Hercules, that she felt, and owned felt, herself growing more and more tolerant every day of the domestic rder and confusion, out of which he was like a fish out of water. rtunately, she was of such a cheerful, hopeful, elastic temperament,— ow else could she have brought up such a troop of Woodwards half so ll and so respectably as she did. Fortunately, too, though the most otionate creature in the world, she was not a woman to be imposed on, trifled with; but a little authoritative, and carried matters with a higher id than she would perhaps have done, had her husband been more at ne, or less unfit than he was, by reason of his very size and strength, to l with the irregularities of children. One day, when her eldest boy was n or eight years old, he committed some serious infraction of the law, hich Carry made complaint to Hercules, who was forthwith proceeding punish the malefactor with nothing less than a club. Carry was htened out of her life, took the culprit into her own hands, settled the ter in a motherly way, and never troubled her husband again with the rocement of nursery discipline.

he used pleasantly to say that the rod was in her house a branch of

economy; it enabled her, for instance, to do without a railing round the pond in the garden, and to dispense with the services of a nursery governess; a title, indeed, by which it was known and respected in the family.

It was dark, and growing late, when the worthy curate returned that night to this queer house and the loving and anxious wife of his bosom. Carry had despatched her great children to bed, and was sitting up for him, with a little one in its cradle at her side, in the low, spacious, square, unpapered, rudely furnished room, called the study; a very different room from Mr. Spenser's library; but Hercules liked it all the better for the difference, comfort being inextricably associated in his mind with the state of things called "higgledy-piggledy." It certainly was a curiosity. Books, carpenter's tools, shoes that looked as if they had walked round the world, a very untidy washing-stand, fishing-rods and tackle, old hats and boat-cloaks, a fowling-piece and a duck-gun, with twenty other miscellaneous articles strewed the apartment in "most admired disorder." In one corner was a broken oar, a spade, and a wooden hay-fork; in another, a collection of walking-sticks and cudgels, large and various enough to set up a shop with; a row of shelves intended for books were stuffed with papers, packets of garden-seeds, pruning-knives, a shot-canister, with some horn and tin vessels intended for pic-nics; and all these things were covered with no very thin coating of dust, for the curate was always fidgetty when his wife, or her maids, even talked of "settling" his "study," and there was a sort of understanding (sometimes violated certainly) that brush and broom were not to molest him more than once or twice in the year, about certain great festivals of the church.

There was a blazing turf-fire in the grate, the evening having grown coolish, and Carry not being certain whether her husband would take tea at the parsonage or not. Contemplate her by the alternately rosy and golden light from the turf-fire! She is worth looking at, and has comfort enough in her face and her person to make the apartment of the neediest curate in the church comfortable. What age would you give her credit or discredit for? Forty. Not quite so much by four or five years; a year or two younger than her brother, Mr. Spenser. And she is very fair and very fat, too; you can hardly see the chair she sits on, she overspreads it so; but her corpulence has not yet obliterated her shapes, and merged them, as, alas, it will probably do ten years hence, in one huge round mass of maternity. She is a glorious woman, Aunt Carry, as she sits there, with her red shawl drawn cosily round her, over her habitual black-silk dress, expanded before the hearth, but not very close to the fire, with one plump foot to that of the cradle, making or mending a small pair of sky-blue trousers, and every now and then listening to catch the sound from the road of the hoofs of her husband's pony. She is a glorious woman within and without; bursting not with comeliness only, but with every matronly virtue, and housewifely accomplishment; her heart is as ample as her person; she is thrice-blessed with good-sense, good-nature, and good-humour inexhaustible; industrious as a working-bee, and for economy (else she would make an indifferent wife for a curate) a very Joseph Hume in petticoats. The features of Carry were good, and massive like her figure. Her complexion was florid; her eyes grey, clear, piercing; her air was that of a woman who was the mistress as well as the mother of a family. If there was a *soupçon* of severity, or rather combativeness, in her physiognomy, it was the result of her position in life,

which had its own difficulties, and required a woman with more than a woman's spirit to meet and conquer them.

The little pair of sky-blues contained in themselves the history of a curate's wife. They had been the Sunday dress of each of her three boys in succession, according as each had attained the period when she thought proper to promote him from petticoats. Three times had they been altered, reduced, repaired, and turned with her own hands. When the first out-grew them, they descended to the second; and when the second burst through them, Carry repaired the breach, and they were handed down to the third. The congregation of Redcross church was as familiar with that pair of trousers as with the cassock of the curate himself, and astonishing it was how well they held out, and how well they looked, after so many transformations.

Twice she was positive she heard the desired step; twice she was disappointed; it was either the wind in the branches of the tall mountain-ash on the right of the hall-door, or the pigs in the yard, or one of the villagers also belated. At length, however, she caught the true unmistakeable steady, dogged, homeward trot of the pony; and in less than five minutes the bell that communicated between the outer gate (for there was a walled court in front of the house) and the kitchen announced the return of the curate to all his household. His servants adored him. He had three; two maids, and something between a man and boy, called Peter, who was groom, gardener, footman, and butler; at least, if he was not the butler, the curate had no other. Peter had been brought up by his mistress, and stood in great awe of her, but he was always the same giddy illogical fellow, and neither Carry's ratings, or his master's cudgelings, did much to mend him. When the court-yard bell rang at night, Peter always ran to open it with the kitchen candle, although there was a lantern expressly for the purpose. There was no use in lecturing or licking him. It was in his Celtic blood never to make the proper use of any thing. When there was the least wind, the candle of course was blown out, directly the house-door was opened, although the provoking Peter did his best to make a lantern of it with one of his hands. Then he invariably gave the wind a sub-audible malediction for "laving him in the dark," as if the wind was to blame; and registered an oath in the same key that the house was "the windiest house he ever see'd in all his born days."

Yes!—Peter was a very provoking fellow; but then there flowed, united in his veins, two streams of the purest Celtic blood; his father was a Hogg, and his mother a M'Swyne, so that race had probably something to do with it.

Carry never could run very fast, but, as fast as she could run, she ran to meet and embrace her husband as he stumbled into the room, having been, as usual, obliged to grope his way from the court-yard gate to the door of his study.

"Dear Hercules!" she exclaimed, throwing her large loving arms about him; and right conjugally did the stout curate return the greeting. This done, he hung up his hat on one of the prongs of the hay-fork, and threw himself down, not on a chair, but on a seedy old black leathern trunk, covered all over with torn labels, figures, and directions, and used (when not upon foreign service) for holding all sorts of things, which nobody else would have thought of stowing in such a receptacle.

"All well at the rectory?" inquired Carry.

"All well," he replied, unbuttoning his enormous outside coat, which

was none of your modern paletots, but more of a Boreas than a Zephyr, and throwing it plump down on the cradle.

Carry jumped up with a scream; and it was truly marvellous that the little sleeper was not crushed into a pancake. However, it was not so much as awakened, which made the distressed mother think for a moment that her awkward husband had committed infanticide.

"Who could have thought the baby was there?" he exclaimed, in his own defence.

"The cradle is not a very extraordinary place for a baby," rejoined Carry, a little sharply.

"But in the study, I mean," said Hercules.

The notion of any thing being out of place in Mr. Woodward's study was a pleasant one! Probably, however, that subject had been exhausted, for Carry made no remark, but asked her husband would he take tea.

Notwithstanding the six cups he had taken at the rectory, Mr. Woodward acquiesced with readiness, and Peter was ordered to make the necessary preparations; which he at length accomplished, after making about ten journeys backwards and forwards between kitchen and parlour; when one journey would have sufficed, with a grain of forethought, or thought of any kind. Carry was tired of being provoked with him, and sat working at the little blue inexpressibles, raising her eyes now and then to observe Peter's movements, and call her husband's attention to the wonderful amount of unnecessary trouble he was giving himself.

"Upon my word," said the curate, as his man left the room for the last time, "I think the charge of laziness so often brought against Irish servants is a most unwarrantable one."

"At all events," said Carry, "if they do hate trouble, they are the most self-sacrificing people in the world, for they never spare themselves any." And so saying, she rose to make tea.

"Now am I as happy as a bishop over his Burgundy," cried the good curate, rejoicing in his wife, his home, and his turf-fire, and extending his immense limbs towards the flaming mountain on the hearth.

"Are bishops always drinking Burgundy?" asked Carry, "for I never read a speech or an article about the church but I find bishops and Burgundy always mentioned together."

"Just because they begin the same letter," said her husband; "bishop and Burgundy, curate and Congo."

"I don't expect ever to see *you* a bishop, Hercules," said his wife, pouring out the second cup.

"I should not be a jot happier than I am, were I the primate," he replied; "but, Carry, I sometimes think I am a bishop; *you* are my bonny bishopric, I am bishop of Carolina;" and he rose and kissed her while she was dropping the sugar into his tea.

"You can't say, then, you have not got a fat diocese," she answered, with a smile that seemed the overflowing of a well of warmth and light within her.

"I wouldn't take Canterbury in exchange," said Hercules; "but I honestly confess, Carry, my dear, I should have no objection for the sake of my wife and my children, to hold a good living *in commendam*."

"If it ever comes," she replied with a good-humoured little sigh—a sigh without a tincture of melancholy in it, "I hope we shall be thankful and enjoy it wisely; we are very happy, poor as we are, and I trust we shall not be less so, if we are ever better off in the world;—I am not impatient for promotion, I assure you, Hercules."

"How much happier we are than your brother, for instance, with one of the best benefices in the north of Ireland; but Val was not so lucky in *his* bishopric as I was, Carry."

"Oh," said Carry, with feeling, "there is a great deal in my brother's situation that makes me seriously uneasy on his account; not merely his wife, though, Heaven knows, she is quite vexation enough for any poor man."

"I am going over to him in the morning," said the curate, "to consult with him about something he is anxious about,—I dare say it is about Sydney."

Carry was vexed to hear that her husband purposed to tramp over the hills again so very soon, but she was too much interested in her brother's concerns to make much work about it.

"Did you see Sydney?" she inquired.

Her husband mentioned how uncivilly he had been received by his nephew, on account of his interference to have the voyage of pleasure postponed.

"Graceless boy," cried his aunt, "but what else is to be expected from the companion of Dudley Dawson? If my brother is thinking of sending Sydney to Cambridge, I trust, Hercules, you won't oppose it."

"Indeed, Carry, I think it would be much wiser in Val to send him to Trinity College, Dublin."

"As to the relative merits of colleges," said Carry, "I am not qualified to give an opinion; but the further Sydney is removed from his present associates the better,—there cannot be a doubt of that."

"I don't think as ill of Dudley Dawson as you do, Carry. I think you are all too hard on him; your sister-in-law dislikes him because his father is a tithe-defaulter—why that's no fault of Dudley's; the girls object to him because he smokes cigars and talks a little too loud, as perhaps I do myself; and you, my dear—"

"As to me," said Carry, warmly, "I dislike him for every reason that could make me dislike a young man—he is designing, vulgar, dissipated—"

"No, Carry, not exactly dissipated,—only a little wild. Recollect the life his father led, and how Dudley's education was neglected."

"But that is no reason why he should be suffered to corrupt my nephew."

"Corrupt is too strong a word, Carry."

"Corrupt his morals, and brutalise his manners, for he is doing both," continued his wife with an earnestness well justified, as we shall soon see, by the real state of the case.

"I shall never forget how he assisted me that night last October, when the two fishing-smacks were capsized in the upper part of Loch Erne," said Hercules; "he behaved like a hero. Between us, we saved the lives of three men and a boy, and only for Dawson, two of them at least would have perished."

"It was very brave, no doubt, and very meritorious," said Carry, folding up the blue trousers, as it was growing late, "but a brave man may be very bad company; and I have no notion of Mr. Dudley Dawson, on the strength of any exploit of the kind, gaining a footing in my brother's family, and even presuming to inflict his attentions on one of his daughters."

This was the first the curate had heard upon this subject.

so tolerant, but I don't think it's a crime in any man to admire Elizabeth; and if it is a presumption (as I don't say it is not), why so much the worse for himself, and he is more to be pitied than blamed in my humble opinion."

"You *are* too tolerant, my dear, very many degrees," said Carry, rising to light her bed-room candle.

"Recollect," said the curate, rising also, "a certain personage is not so black as he is painted."

"But he is quite black enough, notwithstanding," rejoined his wife, retiring, having had the last word in this amicable though warm discussion, so womanly was she in all points. She did not go to bed, however, until she saw that all was still in her son's dormitory, and that Peter in his giddiness had taken no measures for burning down the house.

CHAPTER VIII.

BAD EDUCATION AND BAD COMPANY.

"Instruct your son well yourself, or others will instruct him ill for you. No child goes altogether untaught. Send him to the school of Wisdom, or he will go of himself to the rival academy, kept by the lady with the cap and bells. There is always teaching going on of some sort, just as in fields vegetation is never idle."

ESSAY ON MENTAL TILLAGE.

SYDNEY was the principal sufferer by the loss of his mother, his father's weaknesses, and the lax domestic system which grew up out of those causes combined. The mind of the young man had not been left wholly uninstructed, but the formation of his character had been neglected deplorably. The good, easy rector, being an elegant scholar, fancied that, with the occasional aid of a resident tutor, he could bring up his son very well at home; where he would also have the benefit of his sisters' governesses for the acquisition of modern languages, and the other things taught, and perhaps taught best by women. As the boy was quick, if not docile, this plan succeeded well enough for a time, as far as mere learning was concerned; but in other respects it wofully miscarried. Sydney made no intellectual progress which was not more than counterbalanced by the absence of that control which his disposition and temper particularly stood in need of. A too short interregnum of the sensible and energetic Mrs. Woodward's administration (just before his father's second marriage), was the only period of his childhood in which he had been kept in any thing like restraint, or known what discipline was, even in its mildest form. The consequence was, that he grew up, acquiring the metres of Horace, and the names of the Muses, but contracting bad habits in profusion. For one hour spent in his father's library, or his sisters' society, he passed six with grooms, gamekeepers, boatmen, or with men who kept such refined and improving company. Associations like these rapidly uncivilised him; he grew boorish in his manners, boisterous in conversation when he was not moodily silent, violent when crossed in any scheme of self-indulgence; and it was only the slight influence, which we have already said, that his sister Elizabeth managed to acquire, that

ned him from continual displays of his overbearing temper, even in
sence of his father, the mildest and most equable of men.
step-mother had the common fault of step-mothers, which (contrary
vulgar opinion,) is not nearly so much undue severity, as the far
extreme of neglect and indifference. Even before she fell into her
t state of health, she took no pains at all with her husband's chil-
and never interfered with their management, except in the most
and mischievous manner. Indeed, with respect to Sydney, she
aged his faults in the beginning of her acquaintance with him, and
uently, when they came to be too offensive and troublesome, she
ed a system equally reprehensible, licensing his absences from home,
ver, upon one pretence or another, he asked permission to join the
nions of his riotous pleasures, sometimes for several days together.
a great mistake to say that the good points of a character redeem
d ones, even when the former predominate decidedly. On the con-
a single uncorrected fault will often make a whole career vicious,
hstanding a multitude of qualities tending of themselves in the
ion of honour and virtue. Sydney Spenser had his good points; he
do a brave and generous thing occasionally. He was popular with
or in the neighbourhood, not merely because he was athletic and
rising, but because he was really capable of kind actions, and when
a little money to command, would bestow it on an object of charity,
d of his selfish gratification, if the former chanced to come first in his
With his companions his propensity was to be lavish, as far as his
went. His guns, dogs, ponies, his boats, and even his clothes, were
absolute disposal of his favourites, and some of them were by no
backward to profit by his munificence. Sometimes he showed his
sity by being as ready to take as to give; in fact, he had established
of communism with several young men of his own age and tastes,
incipal and the most objectionable of whom was Mr. Dawson, about
the curate and his wife differed in opinions so much.
vson (whose career, not only as a private but as a public man, is
ed to form an important part of our history,) was a few years older
'ydney Spenser, but much in advance of him in a vicious acquaint-
vith the world. He was the son of an embarrassed man, and lived
f from hand to mouth, making the state of his father's affairs the
s for his own irregularities, while in reality he was running the same
ate rig which had reduced the once-considerable property of the
r to almost nothing. He led a kind of oscillating life between Donegal
ondon, appearing and disappearing suspiciously; but he had always
plausible account to give of himself, and few people knew either how
nely in debt he was, or to what ingenious resorts he was now and
riven by his financial difficulties. In fact, just at the present period,
s were going so very ill with him, that he was seriously thinking of
g patriot and getting into Parliament; the time being exceedingly
lous for the advancement, in that line, of men of his stamp and
ter. However, it was not altogether necessity that suggested this
light, for he was not destitute of vulgar ambition, any more than he
ficient in personal vanity, a quality which indeed he possessed in an
ate degree. His family was respectable (though not as good blood as
owards and Plantagenets), and he might have moved in good society,
is tastes been different; but he loved low company, and his manners
rsonal appearance soon became insuperable obstacles to his social

ormation. On every return from London (where his conduct was under st restraint), he fell a step lower in the scale; and, as is usually remarked in such cases, he was particularly offensive when he aimed at being particularly polished and well-bred.

Such was the rising young politician, whose rude eye having been captivated by the rector's second daughter, was now daringly, though not avowedly, aspiring to her hand; hoping, by means of his league with her brother, to gain a footing in the family, and confidently relying upon his personal merits, estimated by his enormous self-conceit, to carry all before him afterwards.

None of the Spenser family had a notion, at the point of time from which we start in these domestic memoirs, either of the extent of Dawson's presumption with respect to Elizabeth, or that Sydney was involved as much as in truth he was with so dangerous an associate. Dawson was in the habit of advancing him small sums of money, to enable him to purchase articles which he took a boyish fancy for, and had not the means of procuring for himself. For the possession of these things he would account, when any account was required, by stating that they were either loans or presents. Nor was this the worst. Sydney had learned to contract little clandestine debts in other quarters also; and independently of his liabilities to Dawson, he was now in the books of country shopkeepers to the extent of near fifty pounds, a serious amount of debt to a youth of eighteen, who had not fifty pence in the world to discharge it.

"Sir," said Dr. Johnson, upon a certain occasion, "small debts are like small shot; they are rattling on every side, and can scarcely be escaped without a wound. Great debts are like cannon-balls, of loud noise, but little danger." The sequel will show how well the truth of this witty remark was illustrated in the case of Sydney Spenser.

CHAPTER IX.

THE CONSULTATION.

"He keeps his time, as punctual as the sun,
When rising he redeems the pledge he gave
The world at setting, and sent us to our couches
With strong assurance of another morrow.
Oh, Sir, the sun himself is not more faithful
Than strenuous friendship; nor the solar beams
More full of warmth and comfort."

NEW PLAY.

THE following morning verified Mr. Woodward's predictions to the letter. The sun rose red with choler, the sky was surly and foul; the mountains were shrouded with mists, so that only the outline of their summits was discernible, and that only at intervals, when the wind, which came in sullen fits, dispersed for an instant the accumulated vapours. The gulls and cormorants, retreating from the ocean, like refugees from an impending revolution, flew screaming over the loch to their wonted asylums in the inland valleys. Before the family assembled, it was

evidently preparing to blow great guns; the gale moaned and howled in the chimneys, and the waves were dashing over the little strand at the foot of the lawn, and swinging the cutter to and fro so rudely as to extort even from the fool-hardy Sydney himself a surly admission that the weather was unsuitable for aquatic amusements. But the curate had made an appointment with his brother-in-law, and no weather that ever "came out of the sky," as the Irish peasant expresses it, would have prevented him from keeping it. When Hercules set out, "on a raw and gusty day," upon one of his prodigious walks, with his huge dreadnought of dark blue frieze, his oiled-skin hat, and a great crooked club in his fist, it was not easy for a stranger to make out who or what he was—whether a farmer, or a pilot, a fisherman, or a mountain shepherd; indeed, he sometimes looked like a man who lived both by hook and by crook, as the saying is. At some distance—particularly when he was encountered on a bleak moor, or upon the crags,—he seemed a very desperate character, and made your heart sink within you; but when people were near enough to see him well, distrust vanished, and they felt that it was no small degree of personal security to keep in his company, or within the protectorship of his arm. The police of the country had often found him a valuable ally, for being a puissant pedestrian (notwithstanding the possession of so capital a pony), he was intimately acquainted with every recess in the mountains, every cavern on the shore, every house, castle, ruin, almost every rock and tree, within a circle of forty miles round the village of Redcross; and for the capture of a smuggler, or any description of lawless character, not a constable in the north had half of the Rev. Mr. Woodward's reputation. His acquaintance with persons, too, was co-extensive with his knowledge of localities; he knew everybody all through and round the country, gentle and simple; and there were few to whom he had not done some strenuous kindness. He had saved dozens of lives in shipwreck; and possessing a certain smattering of physic and surgery, he had cured many a wrinkled crone of her rheumatism or her toothache. Not a blue jacket on the coast but would have died for him; and the old women in red cloaks and blue petticoats, when they could not keep up with him on foot, pursued him with benisons until he was out of sight.

With all Mr. Spenser's knowledge of his curate's hardy habits and character, he was not a little surprised on coming down to breakfast that morning to meet him in the hall, just arrived. He was dripping like a water-dog, and spattered above his knees with the yellow clay of the hills; but he cared little or nothing about it, and was also provokingly thoughtless of the damage he did the floors and carpets by such a needless importation of mud and moisture.

Mr. Spenser induced him to divest himself of his drenched outer-garment, and had less difficulty to make him sit down and eat a breakfast fully proportioned to his size and brawn. All curates are prodigious breakfast-eaters; the reason probably is that they are not always confident of dinner;—more shame upon the system that deprives them of what ought to be the well-grounded faith of every honest hard-working man in every path of life. But Hercules had taken a walk that morning, enough to make any man's appetite wolfish.

"I think, Val," he acknowledged, "I have played the wolf to that cold shoulder of lamb."

"Quite right," said the rector, smiling; "and now play the fox to that cold fowl, I advise you;" and no second invitation was required. Not a

fox in the shire could have disposed in much shorter time of two legs and one wing of the fat capon in question. He scarcely spoke a word to his nieces during the meal, except to give Elizabeth a parcel of loves from her aunt, in a kind of parenthesis between an egg and a cup of tea.

"Now I am your man," he cried, having at length concluded his labours, and rising from the table, with a droll lingering look at the little that survived the havoc, as if it was scarcely worth while to leave it, and yet impossible to do more than he had done.

"Well, Val, you want to talk to me about Sydney?"

Sydney had not appeared at breakfast, but that was too common an incident to occasion a remark from any body.

"I do. Let us adjourn to the library." They did so. Mr. Spenser seated himself in his own green leather chair; Mr. Woodward preferred striding up and down the room, often visibly agitating his friend for the safety of a bust of Curran and some small groups of statuary—things easily overset by the knock of an awkward elbow or the switch of a coat-tail. The curate was a dangerous person in a drawing-room, or wherever there happened to be any fragile articles of *vertu*.

"Hercules," said the rector, "now that the time draws near when Sydney's university education ought to commence, it is time to discuss the question, to what university we ought to send him. Let me at once tell you that Mrs. Spenser—"

The curate made an impatient gesture, as much as to say, "What the —— has Mrs. Spenser to do in a matter of the kind?" The rector continued—

"Mrs. Spenser is decidedly for either Oxford or Cambridge."

"Oxford!" muttered Hercules, contemptuously, and, had he not been interrupted, would have proceeded to express the same scorn for the other university.

"I myself," continued Mr. Spenser, "lean to Cambridge,—as I was a Cantab, you will understand my feeling,—but I wish to do nothing rashly; I desire to combine a due regard to my own circumstances with the best course for Sydney's future interests."

"Why talk, then, of Oxford and Cambridge—of either one or the other—when you have Trinity College, Dublin, where your son would get twice as sound, twice as cheap, and twice as moral an education as it is possible to get any where else in the world. Since you have asked my opinion, Val, here it is frankly for you. Send the boy up to Dublin—'you may go further and fare worse,' as Father O'Leary said to the Protestant bishop who was abusing Purgatory. Send him, I say, to the college of Swift, Burke, Goldsmith, and your favourites, Grattan and John Philpot Curran. There, put him under the tuition of my cousin, Tom Beamish,—and I'll answer for it, Val, you'll never repent it."

"So far," said the rector, having listened in the calmest manner to this speech, which was delivered quite in any thing but a calm way, "so far I anticipated the opinion you would give; but—"

The curate was on his hobby, and took the word out of his brother-in-law's mouth without scruple.

"I'll show you all the advantages, Val, *seriatim*. First the economy—"

"I grant the economy," said Mr. Spenser.

"In the second place, Val,—indeed I should have put this first,—comes the moral consideration. Now there Dublin bangs Oxford and Cambridge [illegible] Val No

rice in old Trinity. Not a man there knows a game-cock from an ostrich; no horses, dogs, or curricles. Smash a few lamps, and thrash a sleepy old Dogberry, once a-year, that's all—an old usage, only at the feast of the *Sanctæ et individuæ Trinitatis*—no great profligacy in that."

Mr. Spenser smiled at the curate's notions of honouring the Trinity, and, without disputing the positions of the enthusiastic Hercules, said, that he was so far from underrating the moral view of the question, that he considered it far the most important point of all.

"But," he continued, "I cannot disguise from myself, that Sydney has formed some unfortunate connexions in Ireland, which, not exactly prejudicial to his morals, certainly are so to his manners. These connexions I am desirous to break off as speedily and as completely as possible, and I see no way so likely to answer the purpose as to send him to an English university, where the company I allude to could not possibly follow him."

"He may get into worse," interrupted the curate. "The worst I know about the Dawsons (for I know you allude particularly to them) is, that they have not paid you the tithes they owe."

"That objection will soon be removed, I am happy to tell you," said Mr. Spenser. "Read this," and he handed the curate the following letter, which we insert, because it may help to throw a light upon the character of the writer.

"Castle Dawson, July —, 183—.

"My dear Sir,

"I trust I need not assure you what pain it has given me, that owing to the embarrassed state of my unfortunate father's affairs, the tithes due to you from the Castle Dawson property have remained so long unsettled. Had my feelings been regarded, or my urgent solicitations been attended to, your claims would have had the priority to those of any other creditor; but my father being a confirmed absentee (not altogether indeed a voluntary one), is of course uninfluenced by the profound sentiments of respect and admiration which every resident in this parish must entertain for the most excellent clergyman, and (let me say, without flattery) the most useful country gentleman in Ireland. But my present object in addressing you is merely to say, that I have at length succeeded in making arrangements for the full and immediate discharge of the arrears so long unhappily due from this estate. I have given notice to this effect to Mr. Maguire, your proctor, that he may come over here on some early day and receive the amount.

"Please to present my most respectful compliments to Mrs. Spenser, whose health I trust will improve as the summer advances, and believe me,

"My dear Sir, yours,

"With the most sincere admiration and respect,

"DUDLEY

"To the Rev. Valentine Spenser,
"Redcross Rectory, Redcross."

"Now, there!" cried Hercules, with some triumph, "that's what I call the letter of a brave, honest fellow."

"A little too sweet, methinks," said the rector.

"Come, Val, that's a good letter, and an honest letter; if there's a little too much of the *suaviter in modo*, there's the *fortiter in re* along with it. My firm belief is, that you would never have got one farthing of those tithes but for the personal influence and exertions of Dudley. He might as well

have left the sweetness *out*, but since he has put the money *in*, I am not disposed to be hard on him."

"But to return to our subject," said Mr. Spenser, "I was going to observe that vicious pleasures are expensive ones, and that my income is not large enough to enable me to make Sydney such an allowance as would give him the means of indulging in pleasures of that description. Moreover, Sydney, though wild and wilful, has no actual vices that I have observed, or heard of. He has been brought up, you know, under my own eye."

"Under your *eye*, Val," said the curate, "but not under your *hand*; and as to the limited allowance which you say is all you can make him, that seems to me to be only an additional source of danger, adding debt and improbity to dissipation, supposing him to fall into bad company, which, as he has done here under your own roof, he is at least as likely to do when some hundred miles away from you."

"There is a great deal, I admit, in what you say," said Mr. Spenser, yieldingly.

Hercules pushed his success with uncouth energy, swinging his arms about, and raising his voice painfully.

"Send him to Dublin—I'll go up myself with him—Tom Beamish is the best fellow and best friend I have in the world. All the vacations will be spent here with you—make him a pensioner—he will get a scholarship if he minds himself—think of that, Val. I'll tell you what a scholarship did for me:—I had chambers, Val, books on the buttery, exhibitions—twenty pounds a year, think of that Val. The college paid me instead of my paying the college—I had a vote for the member—"

"Yes, and you voted against my friend Plunket, I'll answer for it—ah, Hercules?"

"Yes, that I did," cried the sturdy Woodward, elate at the memory of the conscientious opposition he had given to the greatest orator of his age, and brightest ornament of his country; "but the best of all is yet to come. I had commons—dinner, you know dinner, Val—roast leg of mutton and boiled leg of mutton alternately every day of my life for five years—take your pen and calculate how many legs that was in all—in fact, Val, five years' maintenance in the Prytaneum, like Themistocles or Xenophon."

"I was not aware that Themistocles or Xenophon received that honour," said Mr. Spenser, quietly. Mr. Spenser had no great respect for the scholarship of his curate, which, indeed, was not very elegant or exact.

"Can you prove that they did not?" demanded the curate. "And, at all events, Val, if they did not, you can't deny that they deserved it."

"That's another matter," said the rector. "But there is a great deal in all that you have said on the college question, and I will turn it carefully over in my mind, Hercules, you may depend upon it."

"What's the use, Val, of turning it over in your mind? Let me write to Tom Beamish by this post," said the impetuous curate.

"Not quite so fast," said the rector, smiling as he rose.

The curate rose also, and took his leave; not, however, without a sanguine hope that the enumeration of the legs of mutton had carried the day hollow in favour of his own *Alma Mater*.

CHAPTER X.

STORMS WITHIN AND WITHOUT.

"L'homme propose; Dieu dispose."
FRENCH PROVERB.

THE rector's library was a handsome and spacious semicircular room, fitted up with bookcases of black oak, exquisitely carved, and polished like ebony, containing from two to three thousand volumes, the best editions of the best works in the Greek, Latin, Italian, French, and English languages, the majority superbly bound, for books were the only thing in which Mr. Spenser's personal tastes were luxurious and expensive. He was a bookish man, but not so much a glutton as an epicure in books, and he held that when a work was "glorious within," it was only fit that the "clothing" should be rich in proportion. A taste in bookbinding is essentially a masculine one. No woman has a tincture of it. Women read, and women write books, and often beautiful books, but taste in binding books they have none. It is one of the few elegant things the sex has no gust for. The binding of a robe or a bonnet they comprehend; but the distinctions, proprieties, and niceties of russia, morocco, and vellum,—where to gild and not to gild, where to be severe and where to be splendid, what authors and what editions to dress in plain attire, what to clothe in richer garb, what to array imperially in gold and purple,—not even your bookish woman has a notion of. Many are, indeed, of opinion that books look best, as ladies often do themselves, *en déshabillé*. Bookbinding is twice an art; it is more than the craft of the tradesman, it is part of the study of the scholar, for even in literature it is vain to affect a total indifference to externals. A library is a noble thing, and a taste in books is the politest of tastes. As we love them, we love to embellish and exalt them; the fountains of our purest pleasures, it seems but grateful to deck them with marble and surround them with flowers.

The rector was a thoughtful, exact, careful, and, therefore, a slow writer, no pilferer from Barrow or Massillon, nor one of your mechanical preachers, who take what is called a skeleton discourse, and stuff it with unconnected texts, with the assistance of "Cruden's Concordance." Mr. Spenser, indeed, took remarkable pains with his sermons; his congregation was not a large one, but it consisted chiefly of the lower classes, to whom, as to children, it is most important that instruction should be conveyed with that perfect clearness and simplicity, which in composition is the summit of art. His curate, however, was of a different opinion. Hercules Woodward thought an *ex tempore* the proper thing for the Protestant shop-keepers and policemen. He roared and bellowed in the pulpit; frightened and bullied his congregation; thumped things into them, and thumped things out of them, and thumped a great deal of dust out of the cushion into the bargain. He was a little addicted to coarseness, too, in his language, particularly when he made a personal attack upon Satan, which he often did, or upon the Pope, which he only ventured to do in Mr. Spenser's absence. But he was an earnest, good man, not more resembling Luther,

in the vehemence of his manner, than Melancthon, in the mildness and benignity that were under the surface.

"Now," said the rector to himself, when his brother-in-law had taken his leave, to trudge back again to that sweet home, to which the reader has already been introduced, "Now," said the rector, "I shall sit down and write my sermon."

Scarce was he seated in his green leather arm-chair before his library table, preparing his mind for heavenly thoughts, and tuning his tongue to express them in appropriate language, when a rapid running and trampling overhead (my lady's chamber was over the library) and a violent jangling of bells—well-known signals of distress—called him upstairs abruptly. He was used to such disturbances, and bore them only too stoically.

Can you imagine a woman at once handsome and ghastly? Mrs. Spenser's features were good; the complexion actually death like; her eyes were black, and brighter than was necessary or agreeable. You would not call her face emaciated, but it was so exceedingly pale, or rather pallid, that she looked more like a person escaped from a cemetery than on the way to it. There was, however, no want of vitality about her: just the reverse: she was only too lively, but it was a liveliness the very reverse of pleasant, the animation of selfishness and irritability. A woman more full of whims, whimsies, humours, crotchets, prejudices, envies, jealousies, paltrinesses, pettinesses, peevishnesses, narrownesses, and little miseries, caprices, suspicions, and apprehensions of all sorts, never existed; and she was ruthless in inflicting them on every one about her, particularly, of course, upon her *devoted* husband. Mrs. Spenser was considerate to only one thing in the world, and that was a black-faced pug, who was lying at this moment at her feet, coiled up in a ball, with a collar of red velvet round his neck, embroidered with the name of "*Bijou.*"

"Calm yourself, Margaret, pray do," said her husband, in a tone of earnest tenderness, approaching the bedside, where Rebecca, her maid, looking frightened and fluttered, was standing all alert, with opiates, salts, tonics, and many more things than she could well hold in her hands, not knowing what might be first called for. Rebecca's face could almost spare a few roses, and presented a lively contrast to Mrs. Spenser's, which resembled that of a bust in white marble, with two real eyes of unearthly lustre glittering in it.

"Calm yourself, Margaret," repeated the rector, "pray do not make yourself uneasy about the chimneys; they have been recently examined by the diocesan architect; believe me they are perfectly secure."

"Secure, indeed!" she cried; those unnatural eyes glancing back and forwards between the ceiling and the window, as if she was in instant expectation of seeing the chimney topple down, or Boreas making his appearance in person. "Secure, indeed! as if anything could be secure in such a terrific storm!"

Then she asked whether there was such another climate on the globe, and said she could stand any thing—any thing but storm; then she was confident the windows would be blown in the very next gust that came; after which she affirmed that her head was splitting, and applied her long white fingers, not unlike icicles, to her temples, as if to keep the pieces together; and when her hands brought a mass of her hair down from underneath her night-cap, perhaps the luckless Rebecca did not come in for a little hurricane to her own share for her negligent pinning!

"Perhaps, my dear, you would be better up," resumed her husband, to

make a diversion in the maid's favour; but instead of noticing what he said, she looked at her watch, and inquired pettishly for Miss M'Cracken. That was the name of the nursery governess, not a very harmonious one, it will be admitted, but she was quite ready to part with it, and what could any girl with an unmusical name do more? Rebecca ran for her, but Miss M'Cracken was not to be found.

"Try the school-room," said the rector, with a *soupçon* of satire in the solemnity of his tone, implying that the room in question was not the most likely place to find the governess in; though it was not to be entirely omitted in a search for her.

It turned out that Lucy M'Cracken was at her toilette. Mrs. Spenser could not bear to have any one about her who was not at all hours nicely, almost elegantly, dressed. Few young women objected to her service on that account; not Miss M'Cracken, certainly.

While the governess was attiring, the rector again suggested to his wife the expediency of rising, at the same time repeating his assurances that the chimneys were as solid as any masonry could possibly be. Mrs. Spenser seemed to be measuring the ceiling with her wild black eyes, and marking the precise spot where the chimney must inevitably smash through it, if the gale continued to rage. It certainly did blow furiously at the moment; close as the wood-work of the windows was, they rattled at every gust, and a tall ash in front of the house, that in general could not be seen from Mrs. Spenser's pillow, was more or less visible every minute, as it bowed under the weight of the blast.

"Perhaps so," she answered, in a tone of peevish acquiescence. "I'll get up and sit in my dressing-room; pray go down, Mr. Spenser, while I dress,—no—stay—the exertion would be too much for me—do you not think you and Rebecca could push the bed over to the other side of the room? My poor Bijou—he has been so restless all night—*soyez tranquille, pauvre petit.*"

Master and maid put their shoulders to it, Bijou growling at them the while wickedly. Rebecca was perhaps the robuster of the two, being more in the habit of exercising her arms than her master, who made no great use of his, not even in the pulpit.

Before, however, they commenced moving the bedstead, which was a massive one, they should have thought of putting all impediments out of the way; but they neglected to do so, and the consequence was that they overturned a small table, with all the drops, salts, and tonics, a cup and saucer, a porcelain candlestick, a small silver bell, some French novels, Mrs. Spenser's watch, a china jug, a jar of red-currant jelly, and a wine-glass, the simultaneous fall of which miscellaneous articles made a handsome crash, you may suppose.

Mrs. Spenser concluded it was the chimney at last, in spite of the diocesan architect, and sprang screaming out of bed with an agility that was perfectly marvellous, dragging half the bed-clothes after her; and worse, or rather better than all, pitching her ill-conditioned pug into the middle of the room, where he barked and snarled like a little Cerberus.

Mr. Spenser ran round on one side and Rebecca on the other—it was a scene that Wilkie should have painted—the girls ran up stairs, hearing the din, and Miss M'Cracken, dressed *à quatre épingles*, followed by one of the housemaids, with a sweeping-brush in her hand, also rushed to the spot, to see what calamities had happened, and lend their assistance.

A glance would have told any body of the least skill in divining cha-

rector, who saw Miss M'Cracken enter Mrs. Spenser's bedroom that morning, that she was a person of no little authority and consequence. She was under the middle stature, but made the utmost of her height; her figure was at once neat and stout, and her dress set it off to the best advantage. Handsome she was unquestionably, but disagreeably so; at least many people thought so. Her face was one of those you can't object to, and yet don't quite fancy; it at once attracted and repelled you. In short, it was evident she had a *character* and a mind, while at the same time there was something sinister that bespoke a mind better stored with shrewd projects than good principles. She had reached the mature and stirring age of twenty-seven, and looked as if she had commenced life early in her teens, and seen and done as much as it was possible to see and do in the time.

Every body except Miss Spenser gave way to Miss M'Cracken. She called for explanations, she issued orders, she inquired for the children, she seemed disposed to box Rebecca's ears, although she and Rebecca were generally good friends enough. To the rector alone she was respectful, but there was something condescending in her bearing even to him. Arabella, who did not restrain herself, said in a low but sharp tone, that it would be better for Miss M'Cracken not to talk so much, but to pick up the broken things. Lucy's colour mounted, and her eye showed her resentment at this speech, but she commanded her tongue perfectly. Rebecca was instantly on her knees, picking up the shattered glass and china; Elizabeth and the chambermaid assisted: it was too grovelling an office for Miss M'Cracken, who occupied herself helping Mrs. Spenser into bed, and appeasing Bijou with Naples' biscuits. It is to be presumed she thought these latter employments more dignified.

Mr. Spenser was ridiculously out of his sphere amidst all the petticoats, blankets, and broken china, currant-jelly, and sal-volatile; he felt it, and took the opportunity of the confusion to slip out of the room, picking the feathers from his glossy black coat as he went down stairs, and blaming himself internally for being so weak as to humour his wife's vagaries, a weakness, however, of which he continued to be guilty to the end of the chapter. His grand mistake was, forgetting that he had other duties as well as his conjugal ones; he should have locked himself up in his study, if necessary stood a siege there, and written his pastoral discourse, in defiance of rain and wind, and all the nerves and nonsense in the universe.

Mrs. Spenser continued very excited for some time, unusually fidgety and exacting, always wanting something, and changing her mind before her faithful attendant could get it for her. Lucy took up her position near a window, and applied herself to "Clarissa Harlowe," as well as she could, in the intervals of her attendance at the bedside. Never once did she exhibit the least temper, unpleasant as it is to be disturbed reading, particularly such a work as Lucy was engaged with; on the contrary, when the interest became very absorbing, she seemed only to grow more anxious for the comfort and repose of her patient; for she approached her on tip-toe, with a small vial containing a black liquid, and implored her to take a few drops of laudanum on a lump of sugar.

"How many will you take, madam?" she tenderly inquired, her voice as nicely pitched to the tone of a sick room as if she had been educated by Miss Martineau expressly on the point.

"Give me twelve, or thirteen," said Mrs. Spencer.

"Twelve will be quite enough, ma'am," said Lucy, but she administered twenty, and enjoyed Richardson's great work to the content of her heart.

At dinner that day Sydney was missing.

Mr. Spenser asked his daughter Elizabeth whether she knew what had become of him.

"He rode over, I believe, to Castle Dawson," she replied, in a tone that conveyed her displeasure at having no better account to give of her brother.

Mr. Spenser merely remarked that it was an unpleasant day for so long a ride. It was one instance out of a thousand of the parental negligence which caused him so much unhappiness hereafter; and yet Sydney was just now, as we have seen, occupying his mind more than he had ever done before and more than subjects of direct practical interest usually did.

CHAPTER XI.

THE NURSERY GOVERNESS.

"A young lady is anxious for an engagement as Nursery Governess, or Companion. She is active, intelligent, amiable, and confidential; teaches English in all its branches, French like a native, and the rudiments of Latin. Has no objection to town, or country, or to the education of young gentlemen. Would make herself generally useful. Salary of *some* importance, and the family of a clergyman, or an invalid would be preferred. Address, L. M'C., Post Office, Kensington."

THE TIMES, *Aug.* 3, 1830.

LUCY M'CRACKEN'S ostensible employment in the family was not her real one; nominally she was the preceptress of the younger children; she professed the rudiments of Latin, and prepared young gentlemen not only for the studies of Eton, but for its discipline also. But her real and *bonâ-fide* occupation was that of sycophant to Mrs. Spenser. She had a fair salary for the former, but she made a better thing of the latter, not only in the shape of perquisites, but what she valued more, influence and position. Lucy had entered the rector's household a mere nursery-governess, bound by the terms of her engagement to do several things less dignified than teaching grammar and geography; but she had gradually and cleverly shuffled off every function that was in any degree menial, and all that remained was, to shake off her educational duties altogether; an object which, about the present time, she had very nearly succeeded in accomplishing. A more ambitious or more artful young woman never advertised in the "Times" for a post in a nursery. Her grand object was to make herself a lady, and as that was only to be done by captivating and marrying a gentleman, she was always ready for a flirtation with any handsome young man who fell in her way. Beside the face and figure we have described, she had other qualities that made her by no means an undesirable girl to flirt with. She spoke French fluently, sang well, and there was something piquant in the alternate demureness and vivacity of her demeanour. Miss M'Cracken was much too sagacious, to rely upon the advantages Nature had bestowed upon her. She perfectly understood the value of accomplishments and manners, and had omitted no opportunity of improving herself in both ways. Her manners, indeed, were already easy and grace-

ful beyond her station; if they were embarrassed at all, it was not by the humble opinion she had of herself, but more by the trouble it gave her to disguise the high one. As to her mind, the pains she took with it would have deserved the highest praise, only that much of the time its cultivation occupied had been purloined from the discharge of her duties; she taught herself Italian when she ought to have been teaching her pupils Latin or English, and the books which she recommended for their use were invariably those which she desired to have for her own mental improvement. In fact, she had little, if any, of the organ of conscientiousness; or, if she originally possessed a conscience, she had contrived to reduce its voice to an almost inaudible tick, which it is quite possible to do, if people will only resolutely and patiently set about it.

When Lucy came first to Redcross, she found Rebecca in the post of honour nearest to Mrs. Spenser's person. But Rebecca was a poor simple country-girl, without a notion above her sphere of life, and the sorry line of her duty. She was pliable and complaisant because she was obliging and good-natured, but she had no turn for flattery, knack at intrigue, or talent for self-advancement. Her prudence began and ended with depositing a few pounds in the Saving Bank of the village; she was born and bred a servant, and a servant was destined to continue all her days, while everything about Miss M'Cracken announced that if fortune had not a higher sphere in store for her, she was not the woman to sink with alacrity into a lower one. Lucy (who indeed hated children) soon conceived the idea that Rebecca would answer extremely well to superintend the fry of the nursery, while she felt that it would be more congenial to her own tastes and talents to pass the greater part of her time in Mrs. Spenser's bed-chamber and boudoir, acquiring lady-like ways of talking and thinking, or doing nothing, and thus fitting herself to move in the walk of life which she had no doubt destiny had chalked out for her, and which, at all events, she had chalked out for herself.

The skill was consummate with which Miss M'Cracken contrived to change places with Rebecca. She began by making herself agreeable; then she made herself useful; and she ended by making herself as indispensable to Mrs. Spenser as her salts and morphine. Nominally, however, she still retained her original appointment; a few hours every day, generally in the morning, were devoted to the young Spensers, during which, by her severe rectitude and her despotic government, she compensated herself in some measure for the lax morality, and the servile behaviour of the remainder of the day.

Lucy had contemplated at one time (not long before the commencement of our story), making a little conquest of Sydney Spenser. She would gladly have put him on the list of her pupils, and offered to read "Gil Blas" with him; or be his Italian mistress, if he would prefer Petrarch's Sonnets. But Sydney had the bad taste to scorn Lucy's sentimental schooling; he cared nothing for Petrarch, or for Laura either; the beauty of a bull-dog was that which then had most power over him, and he had more ear for an Irish melody than a Tuscan. In short, he was as repulsive to Miss M'Cracken as St. Kevin was to Kathleen; but his coldness she could have brooked and forgiven, if he had only repelled her advances without ridiculing them, and if he had not gratuitously declared that Rebecca was in his opinion a handsomer girl. Lucy had no notion of being jealous, or quarrelling with Rebecca on the subject; but she became all at once a malignant though secret enemy to Sydney. None of his irregulari-

ties escaped her inquisitorial eye, and she had always a bad word for him whenever she could vent her feelings in safety.

Next to Sydney she disliked Elizabeth. She had no cause for it, only that Elizabeth showed a willingness to discharge the duties which the proper officer neglected, and that her quiet dignity of manner kept the *soi-disant* governess at a lowering and provoking distance. Lucy had not half so much ill-will to Arabella, who openly attacked her, and sometimes gave her an opportunity for a "reply churlish," or "a counter-check quarrelsome." The "retort courteous" not often passed between them.

Miss M'Cracken, in short, was one of those people of whom there are many in the world, who are liked by hardly any body, yet of whom nobody can easily find any thing decidedly bad to say. Mrs. Spenser, however, more than liked her, and with very good reason, for Lucy's main business from morning to night was to flatter and humour her; the latter being a much more arduous task than the former, with so capricious and whimsical a woman. Lucy possessed the art of always divining what her mistress wished her to say, or not to say; knew when to congratulate her upon looking charming, or pronounce her looking wretched, which was sometimes the more agreeable compliment; when to coincide with the doctors, when to differ with them; when to be mute as a mouse, when to speak; and what to say when she did speak. To a selfish invalid such an ally was invaluable. Lucy was always ready with the most acceptable suggestions, and of course it was no concern of hers whether the rector could well afford to act upon them or not; she was not his Chancellor of Exchequer; her business was to consult poor Mrs. Spenser's health and gratification, and nobody could accuse that lady of reckless extravagance, or of thinking of herself to the exclusion of every body, and every thing else, when the ideas seemed to originate in the amiable thoughtfulness and inventive good-nature of the governess.

Privations, discomforts, and indignities, are the lot of hundreds of young women who devote themselves, or are devoted by their ruthless destiny, to that line of life which the world in its wisdom (or at least a great portion of it) continues to treat as one of the basest of human employments—the education of infancy. But Miss M'Cracken was not the girl to put up with privations or indignities. She knew how to feather her nest, and to butter her bread on both sides, as they say in Swift's "Polite Conversation." Not to speak in proverbs, she possessed the art of making herself snug wherever her lot cast her; and there was scarcely a prettier room in the parsonage than that which she had appropriated to herself. It was handsomely curtained, warmly carpeted, more than comfortably furnished, and, better than all, it was as remote as the extent of the house permitted, not only from the school-room, but from the children's dormitory. In the house the Woodwards lived in, there was no chamber half so well appointed, not even Carry's own, though Hercules did his best to make that comfortable.

Miss M'Cracken's room had the advantage of enjoying the overflow of luxuries and ornaments from Mrs. Spenser's. The rector's wife was particularly whimsical and extravagant in couches and chairs, and as her chamber could not hold all the varieties her caprice had accumulated, when the inconvenience of a glut was felt, the excess was carried elsewhere, and Lucy was so obliging as to allow a portion of it to be stowed in her own apartment. In the same way she managed to decorate it with a handsome French clock, a buhl cabinet, a mosaic octagon table, and many

other like articles, which she wished perhaps to make herself familiar with early in life, lest the possession of them might embarrass or overexcite her at a later period. But many little things in the room and the greater part of the books and prints were her own private chattels. Miss M'Cracken was always acquiring something, and never lost anything she acquired. She rolled through life like a hedgehog through an orchard, gathering as she went, and probably, as in the case of the prickly and predatory animal, many things stuck to her which were not properly her own. Over the mantel-piece were hung, in little gilt or maple-wood frames, engravings of some of the most eminent Protestant missionaries, preachers, and theologians, interspersed with portraits of several women of celebrated piety, who were, of course, understood to be the female models which Lucy proposed for her study and imitation.

Need it be said that the books were of the same spiritual character. There was a neat little bookcase, well furnished with small editions of the most popular and standard religious works; a few belonged to Mr. Spenser, but the majority had been either bought by Lucy herself, or were presents which she had received from time to time from attached pupils or grateful mothers. Mr. Woodward had given her at Christmas a copy of Wilberforce's "View of Christianity," and the rector had very lately presented her with "Butler's Analogy," a proof of the high opinion he entertained of the powers of her understanding. It often gave him sincere pleasure to find her deeply engaged in its profound pages, while she kept watch and ward at his wife's bedside; for Lucy's novel-reading was generally a clandestine pursuit, which, no doubt, gave an additional piquancy to the scenes of Richardson and Sand.

Very little sleep sufficed Lucy herself, particularly when she had such a book as "Clarissa" to keep her eyes open. It was well for Mrs. Spenser that the stock of novels and romances in the house was limited, for the volumes might have been counted by the phials of morphine administered to her, while Lucy devoured them. That night the dose was doubled, partly because the winds were so mutinous, and partly because Richardson was so absorbing. Long after all the house was under canopies of chintz or dimity, Lucy continued to sit up, with her wax candle, her lively little fire chirping in the grate, her person fused into the swelling cushions of a chair which was all cushions, her feet planted on the fender, her elbow on the table, her eyes riveted on "Clarissa," and taking no notice whatever of either Hannah More, or Mrs. Fry, who were both peering primly at her out of their little frames.

Somebody tapped at the door; she started, though not at all superstitious, listened, threw her handkerchief over the book, and said, "Come in." It was Rebecca, who, kept awake by the tempest, came to pass the night with Lucy, either in her bed, or at her fireside. Lucy was charitable; drew over another chair, nearly as easy as her own, though made on another principle; planted her shivering deputy in it; and replenished the grate with sods, almost as sable, solid, and full of flame as Newcastle coal. There were soon two pair of feet on the fender, but there was a great difference between them; Lucy's were pretty, and wore silk stockings; Rebecca's were clothed in cotton, or worsted, and deserved no better.

"You hear the storm here mighty little, miss," said Rebecca, "it's mighty loud in the nursery."

"It's because the wind happens to blow from the west," said Lucy.

The fact was, that the wind blew from that point three hundred days

out of the three hundred and sixty-five, so that it was very commodious to have a bed-room that was not exposed to the west wind.

"What's a tempest, miss?" asked the deputy-governess, "though I'm sure I ought to know, living in these parts, where it never stops blowing all the year round."

Lucy smiled at the philosophical curiosity of Rebecca, and luminously explained that when the air was agitated, and tumbled things down, blew them about, and turned every thing topsy-turvy, that was a tempest.

"And what's a hurricane?"—was Rebecca's next inquiry.

Lucy again explained, and asked what made her companion so inquisitive that night.

"It was the children that were axing me, as I was putting them to bed," said Rebecca, and then she remarked how curious children were.

"Don't encourage their curiosity too much," said Lucy. "It's a great vice in children to be always asking questions; I have corrected them for it more than once."

"Indeed, it's very troublesome, miss," replied Rebecca, "and I find it so particularly when I don't know what to answer them. But how quiet mistress is to-night!"

"It's the few drops of morphine I gave her in her gruel," said Lucy.

"It's a darling medicine," said Rebecca; "it does the nurse as much good as the sick body."

Lucy sighed tenderly, and said she could sit up for ever with such a sweet patient as Mrs. Spenser. Rebecca sighed responsively; and then Miss M'Cracken added that she greatly feared poor Mrs. Spenser would never get a natural night's sleep as long as she remained in the country.

"She never will be asy, anyhow," said Rebecca; "it stands to rayson."

"She never will be well, Rebecca," said Lucy, with sad solemnity.

This was the way the storm within doors was brewed for the easy and unsuspicious rector. Miss M'Cracken's object was to get up a cry in the house that Mrs. Spenser would never get her health in the country. As to herself, she always professed the greatest aversion to town.

"The Dublin doctors would do her a power of good, I suppose, miss?"

"Of course they would."

"But they're very expensive, I'm tould, miss, and won't cure any but rich people."

"And isn't Mr. Spenser as rich as Crœsus?" asked Lucy. "But even if he was not, ought he to think of money when the health of that dear sweet woman is in question?"

"She's his wedded wife, at any rate," said Rebecca, implying some dissent from the flattering epithet Miss M'Cracken had applied to her mistress, but having a clear view of the strength of matrimonial obligations, as all women have.

"She is," said Lucy, with emphasis, "and she deserves better than to be murdered by the sea air, that never agreed with her, and those country doctors, that hav'n't as much skill as my little finger."

The simile was not very disparaging to the country doctors, for Lucy's fingers had a great deal of skill in them.

"They do well enough for poor bodies," said Rebecca; "but of course, miss, a lady ought to have the best of doctors that's goin'; it stands to rayso!

The clock struck one.

"It's getting very late, Rebecca," said Lucy; "hadn't you better go back to your room?"

"Let me sit here by the fire, miss; do you go to bed, and I'll talk you to sleep, or I'll hold my tongue, just as you please."

"I'm not sleepy myself," said Lucy.

"Read me something," said Rebecca.

"Put some turf on the fire, and I will, then," answered Lucy, complaisantly.

"Shall I read you one of Mrs. Hannah More's 'Sacred Dramas?'"

"Just read me what you were reading for yourself, miss," said Rebecca, perhaps divining that Miss M'Cracken's nocturnal studies were none of the driest, or spying a book that looked more amusing than instructive under the handkerchief.

"I was just looking," said Lucy, taken a little aback, "into a work called 'Clarissa Harlowe;' I suspect it's a novel; but I thought it right to know what it's about, in order to forbid the children to open it, should it contain any thing improper."

"Well, it doesn't sound improper at all," said Rebecca; "Clarissa is such a beautiful name for a lady—"

"That you think," added Lucy, "her story must be very interesting."

So saying, she resumed her book and took up the story where she had left off herself, without taking much trouble to put her companion in possession of the previous part of it. Nor, indeed, was there the slightest occasion. Rebecca devoured every word with a rapture she had never felt before, and the book was never laid down until the flame of the candle suddenly collapsed into the socket, and left the secret novel-readers in almost total darkness. Lucy drew the curtains to admit the gloomy grey of the morning, and Rebecca, huddling her cloaks and shawls about her, crept back by the same faint light to the children's room.

CHAPTER XII.

SUNDRY MATTERS.

"When that I was and a little tiny boy,
With hey, ho, the wind and the rain,
A foolish thing was but a toy,
For the rain it raineth every day."

TWELFTH NIGHT.

A STORM always kept the Woodwards, too, in a state of alarm and excitement, though not entirely upon their own account. Mrs. Woodward was not the woman to fall into paroxysms of selfish apprehension, whilst billows mountain-high and fierce winds were threatening perhaps hundreds of hapless mariners with destruction within half a mile of her; and as to the curate he was never so great as when a furious gale was vexing the coast and threatening to afford fearful occasions for the display of his humanity and prowess.

Redcross was on the shore, and the windows of the curate's house commanded a view of the coast for an extent of many miles. The house was

far from being as good as so good a man deserved to inhabit, or as solid as its exposed situation required in a country so subject to hurricanes. The chimneys were so tall, and at the same time so slender, that their standing was a standing miracle. In that house, indeed, there was rattling of window-frames, and shattering of panes, and creaking of ill-fitted doors, and whistling and howling of wicked blasts through hole and cranny, through ancient crack and modern crevice. Indeed, so continually recurring was the damage done by the wind, that repairing it perfectly was out of the question; it would have taken more than Mr. Woodward's income to have kept the glass in repair, for at that period there was a heavy duty upon that fragile article. The consequence was, that there was scarcely an integral pane in the upper apartments of the house; and many had been shivered over and over again, until it was wonderful how paste and old copy-books kept the fragments together. You might have traced the progress in writing made by the little Woodwards from the first rude pot-hooks, by inspecting the slips of paper with which Hercules had managed to put off, as long as possible, the reference to the man of the diamond, which was inevitable at last. But the wood-work was almost as precarious as the glass, and it was no uncommon incident for a violent gust to burst in a window at one smash, instead of taking the trouble to demolish it by degrees. The curate was then obliged to unite the trade of the carpenter to the glazier's, and fortunately he had a turn for mechanical operations, and could even repair the brick-work a little, or do a matter of slating, to prevent the wind and the rain from becoming absolute masters of the house, while he was constrained to pay the rent of it. Had he required cheering while performing these humble offices, which the poverty of his lot imposed upon him, his wife was there to cheer him, though she was always averse to his labours on the roof, which was very high and slanting, not to mention that the ladder was somewhat rickety by which her brave husband was wont to clamber to his house-top.

In the gazebo called the *Observatory* you may fancy what an uproar there was in such weather as the present. The windows there were boarded up with stout planks, like those of Apsley House in political tempests, but even then it was any thing but a safe place, for it was as obnoxious to the wind as a lighthouse, without being constructed in the same substantial way. Still it commanded so wide a view, that the curate used several times a day to venture up to it to take a more extensive survey of the coast than he could obtain from any of the lower parts of the house.

Upon the first day of the gale, a small vessel had been seen in the offing, apparently anxious to run into some of the numerous creeks along the coast; but it was a leeshore, and Hercules, who was a pretty good seaman, perfectly apprehended the difficulties she must have to contend with in an attempt of the kind in such ugly weather.

On a minute examination, Hercules had no doubt she was a pleasure-boat; she was certainly not a fishing-smack, and was too small either for merchandise or war. That entire day she was seen beating about, until towards evening, when suddenly she disappeared, apparently behind a group of small islands in the offing, one of which was the romantic rock of which the Spensers considered themselves the suzerains. To send any relief off to the distressed stranger was out of the question; it was possible, however, that the storm might still drive her ashore, and in that case her destruction was almost inevitable, although it was also possible that timely

aid might save the lives of her crew. Every exertion that humanity could make to provide against this contingency was made by the brave and worthy clergyman; and Father Magrath, the Catholic priest of Redcross (with whom Mr. Woodward, as well as the rector, lived on the most cordial terms, notwithstanding both political and religious differences), was fully as prompt and energetic in doing all that charity dictated. Parties of the country people were despatched northwards and southwards along the cliffs, with poles, ropes, lanterns, and whatever was likely to prove serviceable, should the yacht be driven on the beach. Father Magrath, a bluff, benevolent man, went himself with one of these parties, and Mr. Woodward led another; they heard a gun towards the close of the evening, but saw nothing, and returned to the village in the dead of night, in the midst of the howling tempest, full of the saddest apprehensions as to the fate of the unknown craft. The next day, and the day following, rumours of more than one wreck at various points along the coast reached the inhabitants of Redcross, and it was but too probable that the yacht, if that were her character, was one of the number. There was a bare chance that, by some combination of fortunate circumstances turned to advantage by very dexterous seamanship, she might have found shelter in a particular cove on the eastern side of the Spensers' island; but it was what the curate called a "potentia remotissima." The odds were enormously against the safety of any vessel situated as she was, much more against one that was obviously a stranger to the coast, and but ill prepared for its peculiar dangers. Familiar as the Woodwards were with storms, and their disastrous effects, they were always thrown into confusion by them. The domestic phenomena, always singular, became at such times doubly curious and striking. The curate sat down to his meals in the dress of the pilot of a life-boat; and Carry, with a double complement of petticoats, cloaks, and shawls, looked vast enough to be the mother of half her species, and almost as anxious as if she had actually so large a family. Ranging from room to room, to patch up the windows as well as she could, according as the wind shattered them, she almost unconsciously huddled on every thing wearable that came in her way, until she grew into an actual mountain; but, with all the disadvantages of this prodigious *déshabillé*, and the disorder of her cap and her hair, she was such a mountain as Mohammed would have gladly seen approaching him, or gladly have approached, if it had refused to answer his call. Mrs. Woodward was a very different woman in a hurricane from Mrs. Spenser; there is so wide a difference, even in its influence upon personal appearance, between being uneasy for others and uneasy for one's self. The lines of the face are affected in quite another manner; the form of the visage is changed differently altogether. It would seem as if benevolence and selfishness acted on two wholly distinct sets of nerves and muscles.

At the parsonage the gale abated considerably, after blowing fiercely for a day and a night; but the rain served equally well to keep Mrs. Spenser in her normal state of unamiable excitement. She was now apprehensive of the glebe-house being washed into the loch by the flood, nor did she know any reason why there should not be land-slips in Ireland as well as in Switzerland; in short, there was no fate so dreadful which might not be naturally expected, in such frightful weather, and such a detestable country. Another year in Ireland, however, would put an end to her sufferings; of that she was quite positive—but no matter, of course, what became of *her*. You might stereotype the speeches of such a woman.

The rector had not ten minutes of tranquillity the livelong day. Hurry-skurry over head again; running of women to and fro; bells ringing convulsively; doors spasmodically opening and shutting; Miss M'Cracken calling to Rebecca; enormous fuss and humbug, all about nothing in the world but that the wind had cracked the corner of a pane of glass, and the rain had made its way through the tiny crevice, and trickled down into the room, where it formed what the governess poetically called "a sea"—a sea which you could have drained with a tea-spoon. What a consort this was for a country clergyman! Mrs. Spenser was never quiet and inoffensive except under the influence of morphine, which it was almost to be regretted that her prime minister did not give her in larger doses. She was the wasp in her husband's peach—the nettle in his garland.

It enraged the gentle but ardent Elizabeth to see her father disturbed by such nonsense in so reckless a manner. She was proud of his preaching, and she admired his sermons all the more, because, elaborate as they were, they were not written with the sordid object of establishing a character for pulpit eloquence, and so advancing their author in the church; but simply with the pure and elevated purpose of communicating the most important truths in the manner he believed to be most impressive and intelligible to the "people of his pasture and the sheep of his fold."

Mrs. Spenser, on the contrary, took particular pleasure in molesting her husband when she knew he was engaged in writing his sermons; she thought it was a shameful abuse of his talents to exert them, as he did, in a remote rural district, for peasants who had merely souls to be saved, instead of reserving them for the ears of bishops who had livings to bestow, or viceroys with still higher rewards at their disposal. Miss M'Cracken never returned from church, when the rector preached, but she was sure to observe—"What a pity it was, ma'am, to throw away such a beautiful discourse upon a little country church!"

The appetite for Richardson grew with the feeding, and that night again Rebecca took refuge in Lucy M'Cracken's cosy room, from her own comparatively uncomfortable and exposed one. There was of course the usual gossip before the reading. Lucy had noted Sydney's departure for Castle Dawson the day before, and now she did not fail also to remark the fact that this was the second night and yet he was not returned. Upon this subject she made a great many severe, and some very just observations; partly levelled at the young man himself, and partly at his father.

"In such weather as this, Rebecca," she said, "to be galloping through the mountains, and out of his father's house for two nights running, without asking permission, or even informing his family where he was going."

Rebecca said it was very wrong.

"It is very *shocking!*" said Lucy (not thinking Rebecca's word forcible enough); and added, how very differently from Mrs. Spenser would she act, if she were a parent, and if she had a son, and so forth. Lucy, indeed, would probably not have erred on the side of gentleness.

"I'm told Master Sydney went over to Castle Dawson," whispered Rebecca.

"You may speak as loud as you like," said Lucy, implying the strong measures she had taken to quiet her dear mistress for the night. She then said in answer to her crony's remark,

"And he couldn't possibly go to a worse place, if only half what I hear about it is like the truth."

"It bears a bad name, true for you," said the other girl.

"And so do the people that own it," said Lucy. "It's no fit place for the son of a gentleman and a *clergyman* to be seen at."

"Mr. Dudley and Master Sydney are very great, I hear," said Rebecca.

Miss M'Cracken spoke very harshly of Sydney's friend, when her companion interrupted her by asking whether she had ever heard that he was paying attentions to Miss Elizabeth.

This was a surprise to Lucy. It was not often that any one had the start of her in domestic intelligence. She expressed her doubts whether Rebecca was correctly informed, but in truth she was embarrassed between her previous readiness to abuse Mr. Dawson, and a malign pleasure which she instantly felt at the idea of Elizabeth having an unworthy suitor, and, perhaps making an unworthy match. In this ill-natured perplexity she abruptly changed the subject by asking Rebecca had she ever been in Dublin.

"No, miss; I was onst in Londonderry," said Rebecca, "to see the gates closed."

The governess smiled with real contempt, but affected good-nature, and again asked her friend if she would not like very much to go to Dublin.

"Why, then, I would, miss," Rebecca answered; "but it's not for the sake of the doctors I'd care to be in it."

"No, I should think not," said Lucy, laughing; "neither you nor I want much doctoring; but I know your tastes, Rebecca, my dear, and I am positive you would be much happier there than here; it was that made me think of it; of course, my dear, we must do our duty wherever it pleases Providence to place us."

Her voice was becomingly low and serious as she delivered the devout part of this little speech, and a well-drawn sigh served for a peroration.

"Dublin is such a big place, I'd be lost in it," said Rebecca, paying much less attention to Lucy's bit of divinity than to the worldly part of her discourse.

"Oh, you would soon find your way," said Lucy, "and you would find more than that, Rebecca—"

"I suppose you mean sweethearts," said Rebecca, giggling.

Lucy admitted that she did, and (protesting her own unchangeable affection for rural scenes) drew a most bewitching picture of the Irish capital and the life that people lead there, particularly girls in Rebecca's sphere of life, who had no other employment from morn to night (it would appear from Miss M'Cracken's enchanting statement) but tea-drinking, car-driving, play-going, and all manner of fun and diversion.

"Did you ever see Donnybrook Fair, miss?"

Lucy had seen it, or said she had. "But I won't attempt to describe it to you," she said, "for I couldn't; and, besides, you wouldn't sleep a wink to-night, if I did, for dreaming of it."

Rebecca was mute with delight and wonder. Lucy left the potion to work which she had so adroitly administered to the girl's love of novelty and pleasure, and resumed the reading of the novel.

BOOK III.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE MOUNTAIN RIDE.

"Next him was Feare, all arm'd from top to toe,
Yet thought himselfe not safe enough thereby,
But feard each shadow moving to or froe,
And his owne armes when glittering he did spy,
Or clashing heard, he fast away did fly;
As ashes pale of hew, and winged heeld;
And evermore on Daunger fixt his eye,
'Gainst whom he always bent a brasen shield,
Which his right hand unarmed fearefully did wield."

FAERY QUEEN.

WHILE the rector and curate were holding the dialogue on education
orded in a previous chapter, the handsome but headstrong youth to
om it referred, in a costume something between a sailor and a groom
t unsuited, however, to the unruly state of the weather), was traversing
leak mountain road, and caring very little what decision was come to
the academic question, having probably made up his mind to follow
s bent of his humour, and enjoy what is called life, whether his lot
ould be cast on the banks of the Liffey, or those of the more renowned
m.

Not more than a quarter of a mile from his father's gate, he picked up
companion, who was no other than Mr. Randal Maguire, commonly called
andy, his father's proctor, a very odd-looking old fellow, and with odd
atures in his character as well as in his face. Randal was going over to
astle Dawson also, partly in consequence of the intimation he had re-
ived from Master Dudley that he was prepared to settle the long pending
rrear of tithes, and partly to collect the rent of a small property belonging
o an English gentleman who had never seen it, and whose name was all
hat Randy knew of him. Randy was not himself the agent, but only his
eputy. The agent resided in Dublin, lounging about the clubs, being
oo fine a man to collect rents in person, particularly the rents of a small
state.

Maguire was a short, slender, elderly man, with a feeble frame, but a
wiry constitution, always looking as if he had not many years to live, but
burying in succession nine-tenths of those who had made the remark. In
business, he was scrupulously exact and honest, in fact, in all respects an
admirable tithe-proctor, except that his tendency was to apply the screw
to the parishioners a little too powerfully; but this was a propensity which
in the service of a clergyman of Mr. Spenser's character he was obliged to

Maguire's physiognomy was extremely queer; a
[illegible] and ending with scarcely

any chin; a pair of prying, decimating little reddish-grey eyes; a miserable crop of scrubby sandy whiskers; and a sharp nose, which had the extraordinary peculiarity of appearing either very long or very short, according to the position in which the spectator viewed it, for it projected horizontally, so as to seem nothing at a front view, while seen in profile it looked like a long spout of a jug, or a tea-pot. This feature gave a peculiarly humorous expression to his face, and, indeed, he was considered a humorous little old fellow in the country; but a little humour goes a great way in a thinly peopled mountain district. Maguire had faults like other men—he was very garrulous, as timid as a hare, and a most inveterate card-player. The passion of the lower orders of the Irish for cards has been noticed by the old chroniclers; Campion gives some amusing instances of the extravagant lengths to which it was indulged in his time by the fellows who were called "carrows;" and though Maguire perhaps did not gamble quite so desperately as those ancient unworthies, he was keen enough in all conscience, and never travelled without a greasy old dog-eared copy of what the Puritans used to call "the devil's prayer-book" in one of his pockets.

The cowardice of the little proctor made him always glad of a companion in his journeys through a wild and little-frequented country; but it was now particularly satisfactory to him, for though the agitation against tithes which prevailed in other parts of Ireland about this time, had not yet reached this remote district, symptoms of a disposition to join it had made their appearance, and the shadow of danger was enough to unnerve Maguire. Accordingly, he was delighted to find that his line of march on the morning in question coincided with that of young Spenser, who, upon his part, was not displeased to have Maguire for a fellow-traveller; not (you may suppose) for the sake of any help in need to be expected from him, but because his eccentricities, especially his open and avowed poltroonery, were amusing, and he had endless tales of the "hair-breadth perilous 'scapes," or more fatal disasters of tithe-proctors in the southern counties, where he always cordially congratulated himself that his own lot had not been cast.

"What would become of you, in times like these, Randy, if my father were promoted to a better living in Limerick or Tipperary?" said Sydney, as they jogged along, both indifferent to the rain which pelted them, for the elements were the only thing in nature that Maguire did not fear.

"By the powers, Master Sydney," said the little dastardly old man, "I often thought of that same; I don't think I'd flourish in Tipperary at all, at all. The boys are divils, I hear say, down there; and as to maiming or murthering a chap of my profession, 'faith, they think it no morthall sin to slaughter a minister himself." The proctor was in the habit of finishing his sentences with a noise something between a cough and a laugh; it was partly asthmatic, partly facetious.

"Well, this country, I hope, is quiet enough to please you," said young Spenser. "At the same time, they don't pay my father as cheerfully in some parts of the parish as they do in others; isn't it so, Randy?"

"By my troth, things are not as they used to be, sartinly, Master Spenser," said Randy. "I remember when the ministher hadn't to ask for his tithe twice; and when the farmers used to run after me on the high road. Now it's I that have to run after them; and some of thim's not very asy to catch. I don't see the sale that I used to do; of course I'm alladin to the Catholics, and some of the Presbyterian boys is particular."

"Some go so far as to say there's a storm brewing against my father," d Sydney.

"It won't signify much, I'm thinking," said the old man, "there's some itation and harranguin going on, I'm tould, in some parts, but Father agrath has his eye on the chaps that's doing it, for he tould me as uch."

"Where are you bound to, Randy, this beautiful summer day?" asked 'dney, the rain and wind almost taking his breath away while he spoke.

The old man's little decimating eyes twinkled with extraordinary satisction, as he replied, "I'm going the same coorse as your own self, Master 'dney, for I presume you are going over towards Castle Dawson?"

"What are you going to do at Castle Dawson, Randy?"

"Thin, I'm going to do what nobody has done there for many a long day -I'm going to receive money."

Sydney's countenance expressed his pleasure at this intelligence, for he as aware how the pecuniary claims of his father against the Dawsons ad prejudiced Dudley in the eyes of his stepmother, and he was glad to e one obstacle removed to the reception of his friend at the parsonage.

"I didn't know whether I was standin on my head or my heels," connued Randy, "when I was sarved last night with a notice, in Mr. Dudley's wn hand-writing, to go over some early day, and he'd settle all demands i cash. By the mass, I could hardly believe my eyes; and I won't be ock-sure of the money until I have it lodged in the ould pocket book in ne buzzom of my coat here." Randy used almost as much action in speakig as a Frenchman, and clapped his little withered hand on the place here he was in the habit of carrying his sacred treasures.

"Is it a large sum?" inquired Sydney.

"Seventy-six pounds seven shillings and sixpence," answered the proctor. But it's more than the value of the money, Master Spenser; it's the xample it will set in the country, where there's anything going on that's ot correct. By my faith, people was beginning to say that Mr. Dawson is own self was disposed to be combinin, as they're doing in other laces."

"Combining!" exclaimed Sydney, angrily; "what do you mean by ombining?—you don't mean to say that my friend Dudley Dawson, or is father either, are suspected of anything dishonourable, particularly owards our family?"

"I only tell you what I hear said," said Maguire, coolly; "but of oorse when the arrears is paid up, there'll be an end to all such ainivations."

"Such insinuations," returned Sydney, passionately, "are most impertinent, and I repel them on the part of the Dawsons, and Dudley in particular, with indignation."

"Be that as it may, Master Sydney, it's my duty to your father's son to acquaint you with what I hear and believe, that Master Dudley has some queer people about him just at the present time," said the old man, pertinaciously; using a liberty with Sydney, on account of his youth, which perhaps he would not have ventured to use with a man of more advanced years, in the same station of life.

"We'll drop the subject, if you please," said Sydney, imperiously. Randy submitted, and soon after asked Sydney to sing him "The Boys of Kilkenny,"—a song which the old man particularly rejoiced in.

"Here goes, Randy; but it's no easy matter to sing with this wind in

one's teeth." However, he managed a stanza or two, to the entire satisfaction of his companion, who had no idea that there was any better vocal music in the world; and indeed young Spenser had a good tenor voice, and sung with spirit and humour.

> "Oh, the boys of Kilkenny are stout roving blades,
> And if ever they meet with the nice little maids,
> They kiss them, and coax them, and spend their money free,
> Oh, of all towns in Ireland, Kilkenny for me."

"The wind is too strong for me. Were you ever in Kilkenny, Randy?"

"Then I never was, Master Sydney, but I often hear talk of it as a mighty quare place, with fire without smoke, and the streets paved with marble."

"Shall we travel together and see the world, Randy?"

The rain was penetrating Randy's short threadbare old brown surtout, and the wind was almost doing the barber's duty on his little wrinkled face. His efforts to laugh were laughable, as he answered,

"At all events, I'm growing too ould to be travellin and roamin such a day as this, Master Sydney."

"If you're old, Randy, you're tough," said his companion.

"Yes; I'm purty tough; thank God for it," replied the proctor.

"How do you feel when you ride this road alone?" asked Sydney, who knew the old man's chicken-heartedness perfectly.

"Och, thin, I don't feel at all warlike," said Randy.

"It's a bleak road," said young Spenser.

It was so, indeed; running through a succession of low brown hills, covered with a stunted heath, of which a hundred acres would scarce have afforded a brace of grouse a decent competence.

"It's murtherin bleak," said Randy.

"I'll give you another song, to keep up your spirits," said Sydney, and he struck up the once celebrated Ned Lysaght's popular melody—

> "Oh, love is the soul of a neat Irishman,
> He loves all that is lovely, loves all that he can,
> With his sprig of shillelagh, &c."

Just at this moment a sharp turn brought them to the ruins of what seemed to have been, some centuries back, a castle of considerable strength and size. These ruins stood close to the road, on an abrupt eminence, presenting a very remarkable and picturesque object, known in the country by the name of the "Black Castle."

"A very convenient ambush, that," said Sydney, pointing to the ruins, "for footpads, if there were any in the country."

"Many's the time I've said that to myself," said Randy. "I never pass them ruins without shiverin and shudderin on the hottest day of summer."

"Now, Randy," said Sydney, suppressing a smile, "suppose a highwayman, six feet high, were to jump out of those ruins there upon you, with a blunderbuss or a brace of pistols, to-morrow or next day, when you are returning with all the money in your pocket, what would you do? You'd make a fight for my father's property, wouldn't you?"

"By the holy spider," said Maguire, shrugging his narrow shoulders and scrutinising the ruins to which his companion pointed with an eye full of comical alarm and suspicion, "I'd make as good a fight for your father's property as I would for my own; but it's a runnin fight, and not a standin

one, I'd make for either the one or the other. I'm not come of fightin people, Master Sydney."

"You wouldn't show the white feather surely!" said Sydney, as if he had now for the first time discovered what a craven the proctor was.

"Then I'm afeard I would so, and a bunch of them into the bargain, as big as the Prince of Wales's plume," said Maguire, with his little tittering cough.

"Now suppose any body were to pull your nose, Randy?"

"I could spare a bit of it, Master Sydney," and he laughed again in his peculiar way.

"Well," replied Sydney, "here's what will protect us both against all the highwaymen in Ireland," and he exhibited a case of very beautiful double-barrelled pocket-pistols, his last clandestine acquisition, and the latest addition to the schedule of his small debts.

Randy admired the arms, but seemed very well pleased when Sydney returned them to the pocket expressly made for them in the breast of his coat.

This and other chat of the same kind, with now and then the stave of a comic song, helped a little to beguile the tediousness of a long ride across moor and mountain; so desolate a track that they passed but one human habitation before they arrived at Castle Dawson, itself the bleakest abode that ever disheartened a resident proprietor, or justified an absentee. Sydney and the proctor separated at the ruinous gate-house. The latter proceeded to his usual lodging at a small inn hard by; the former trotted up the neglected avenue which led to the house.

It had been in Chancery for fifteen years! Is further description necessary? Do you not see its shattered windows, neglected roof, dilapidated offices, green-white walls, hingeless doors, grass-grown walks, weed-cropped gardens, the stones of the balustrades dislocated as if by an earthquake, the premature havoc of the axe amongst such poor timber as there was, and the silent clock in the yard, announcing probably the self-same hour which it announced on the day that the bill was filed in the equity suit? But, in its best days, before it fell into the clutches of the ruthless power so vividly typified by Rabelais in "Gripe-men-all, the Arch-duke of the furred Law-Cats," Castle Dawson was a lonely, savage place (the very abomination of desolation), where the owners resided sometimes of necessity, but where nobody else ever willingly passed two nights in succession. The process-servers demanded double fees for serving a latitat or a subpœna there. It was close to the sea, amongst hills that were barren without being picturesque; wretched crops of oats composed its harvests, stunted cattle showed the indigence of its pastures; in fact, with the exception of a few acres, the grounds were absolutely good for nothing but snipe-shooting, and the soil only fit for fuel. The word "Castle" was an ostentatious misnomer. The house was so called either because there was nothing at all castellated in its structure, or from the adjacent relics of what had perhaps formerly been some kind of fortress, which relics (only a few walls, with an arched gateway) had been incorporated into the offices, and now formed in combination with them a rambling extent of buildings in an advanced stage of architectural decay.

CHAPTER XIV.

CASTLE DAWSON.

"Panurge was a very gallant man of his person, only that he was naturally subject to a kind of disease, which at that time they called *lack of money*; yet, notwithstanding, he had threescore and three tricks to help himself at his need; of which the most honourable and most ordinary was by the way of filching; for he was a quarrelsome fellow, a sharper, drinker, royster, and a very dissolute and debauched fellow; otherwise, and in all matters else, the best man in the world. And he was still contriving some plot, and devising mischief against the serjeants and the watch." RABELAIS.

THE remote, dreary, and almost inaccessible situation of Castle Dawson rendered it a most commodious retreat for a man of Dawson's stamp, particularly when he had company with him whom he did not care to acknowledge at the market-cross; for Maguire's information was correct; Dawson had some guests in his house at the present moment, whom (engaging as their manners and conversation may have been) he was far from desiring to introduce abruptly to Sydney Spenser. Indeed he generally affected strict domestic seclusion when he came down to the country; but the fact was, that in such a district, particularly in wild weather, his house might have been filled with the most notorious swindlers and black-legs in the empire,—he might have entertained Joseph Ady and Ikey Solomons without much risk of the fact being noticed in the columns of the *Morning Post*, or even in the Dublin newspapers.

On such a day as the one in question, the chance of a visitor was not much greater than if Dawson had lived on the top of the highest peak in the neighbouring mountains, or the stormiest island off the coast, and he was consequently not a little, as well as not very agreeably surprised, when Sydney Spenser, after having tried several damp and dismal apartments without success, at length hit on the right one, and found him at dinner, with a distinguished company consisting of two guests, neither of whom carried any very strong testimonials of character in his countenance.

The entrance of young Spenser visibly disconcerted Dawson. He sprang up and vainly attempted to conceal his embarrassment under the mask of a boisterous welcome, horse-laughter, and violent shaking of hands. I do not well know how to describe Dawson. He had not a plebeian and still less a patrician exterior. He looked as if he ought to be a gentleman, and would have called any body out that questioned his title to that appellation, and yet he did not look gentlemanlike, or like the habitual companion of gentlemen. He was vain of his person, and might have once had some grounds for his conceit, but intemperance had bloated and inflamed his face, and injured his figure at the same time. He had naturally good features, but dimmed with passion; the eye alone was originally a bad one—sinister, double, and designing. He dressed flashily, with bright colours, and over-much velvet and jewellery; strutted when he walked, and talked with a Celto-cockney accent, the tone of the society he kept in England grafted on the brogue of his Irish friends.

Dawson would more gladly have received any other visitor that day than

Sydney Spenser. He had no wish to introduce him to either of the gentlemen who were then enjoying the hospitalities of his decayed house. One was a tall, gaunt, muscular man of thirty-five, or forty, in a seedy half-military blue frock, buttoned up to the throat; a black silk stock, or cravat, over which no shirt collar emerged; coarse grey duck, and a very indifferent pair of not very clean boots. When his host presented him as "Major Lamb," he bowed to Sydney in a most ungainly fashion, and smiled in so ghastly a manner that he could hardly have scowled more disagreeably. In fact, Major Lamb looked very like a fellow who you might suppose had been drummed out of the guards, if he had ever been in his majesty's service at all, even with the rank of a serjeant-major. The other guest looked to advantage by his side, and he stood in want of a foil greatly. He was a pale emaciated youth, who had evidently been living on the capital of his health and marrow; he had an aspect at once melancholy and profligate, and was attired in deep black, possibly mourning for some near relation, whose heart he had broken, and end accelerated, by keeping such company as that of Major Lamb and Mr. Dawson.

The first glance at these gentlemen reminded Sydney of Randy Maguire's remark, that "queer people" had been seen of late in Dawson's society; and perhaps Dawson perceived something like surprise and uneasiness in his countenance, for, under pretence of making him change portions of his dress to which the rain had penetrated, he carried him off through a labyrinth of dilapidated corridors up to a bed-chamber, where he accounted in a most satisfactory manner for the presence of the questionable people they had left behind them.

Sydney expressed his regret that he had not found his friend alone, as he had reckoned on.

"I *am* alone," replied Dawson; "you don't take those fellows for friends or guests of mine?—one is some sort of a surveyor or valuator, under an order of the coorts, and the other (the poor devil who looks consumptive) is an artist from Dublin, down here sketching the coast—I met him near this, and asked him to dine. I am under the disagreeable necessity of entertaining such people occasionally when I'm at home. You needn't take the slightest notice of them. As soon as dinner's over, they'll probably be off to attend to their business, and then we'll have a cosy evening, my boy."

"All right," said Sydney, whose faults did not include suspicion, "only don't turn the poor devils out such an evening as this on my account."

"Give yourself no trouble about them," said Dawson, "but change your boots—here's a pair of tops of mine that will fit you—and excuse me for a moment, while I give directions to have your sheets aired."

Sydney pulled on the top-boots, and then finding his blue jacket damp, put on a coat of Dawson's, which he found flung on a chair. While he was thus engaged, Dawson flew back to the parlour, very considerately acquainted his guests with the account he had given of them, and prepared them for the part it was necessary for them to act in consequence. He then returned to the bed-room, and reiterated his apologies for having such low fellows at his table under any circumstances.

"Never mind," replied Sydney; "we'll get on very well, depend on it."

Dawson dropped the subject, and commenced admiring his flashy coat on his friend's back.

"That hoonting-coat," he said, "fits you as if it was made for you; it's a little too tight for me, so it's yours, my dear fellow, if you fancy it."

"Thanks," said Sydney, coolly, and surveying himself with great satisfaction in a looking-glass.

The coat thus generously transferred and as liberally accepted was a bright green one, with massive silver buttons—one of the smartest things imaginable—but it required flash manners and green politics to match.

"You are surprised, I suppose," he resumed, as they went down stairs, "to see me on such a day as this?"

"I'm deuced glad to see you; it's a confounded relief to me. You're a darling fellow for coming over in this way."

"The parsonage is so devilish dull in wet weather," said Sydney.

"You'll find it dull enough here, I'm afraid," said Dawson.

"No, I shan't," said Sydney. "We'll smoke, and we'll practise pistol-shooting at the fire-screens in the long drawing-room; we'll get on well enough."

"I hope you have a good appetite," said Dawson, as they reached the parlour, "for you'll have coarse fare, I can tell you;—you may suppose I don't treat valuators and strolling artists to French cookery."

"I'm as hungry as a hawk," said young Spenser. And so he was—hungry with the hunger of youth, exercise, and mountain air; and hunger is more concerned about the things *on* the table than critical upon the company *round* it.

It was not the dinner for a man who was at all fastidious; it required the piquant sauce of a keen and a healthy appetite, but with that zest it was excellent. There had been a fish, but it had been disposed of. There remained a corpulent boiled turkey; a dish of mutton-chops, very brown and unctuous; a ham garnished with quartered heads of cabbages, and two great chargers of potatoes—ample provisions for a party of four men, though never so pot-valiant.

Sydney did ample justice to the viands, and so did the major with the mild surname, so little in harmony with his personal appearance. The young man in black (whose name was Thomson) seemed to have no stomach, except for the fiery port and sherry, the only wines on the table. Dawson kept politely winking at Sydney, as Messieurs Lamb and Thomson evinced every now and then their contempt for many of the little conventionalities of polite society; while at the same time he proved his own superior breeding, by clamorously inviting Sydney to eat, and occasionally blurting out some coarse inquiry about some member or another of the Spenser family. As to the surveyor and painter, he took little notice of them, and that little in a very lofty and distant way.

The only male attendant was a red-headed slovenly kerne, Terry by name, with a countenance in which savagery and dulness contended for pre-eminence. His dress was a tarnished livery-coat, white turned up with green, with red plush breeches, made for a fellow of twice the height; and he had a villanous trick of wriggling his shoulders as he presented you a plate, or shuffled with the wine round the table. A particularly uncanny and ill-favoured old woman, answering to one's idea of the hag of the robber's cave in "Gil Blas,"—and probably the cook,—made her appearance at one of the doors more than once during dinner, either to hand in a dish or carry one away; and now and then there seemed to be an interchange of the most virulent abuse between her and the red-headed butler; but it was in Irish, so that its eloquence was lost upon all the company except perhaps Dawson himself, who sometimes swore at the old woman, but took no other step to forbid the colloquy.

Sydney was little of an observer of either men or manners. Even when he had satisfied the desires of nature, he paid less attention to the company than he did to a lank voracious greyhound that was pacing round the table collecting scraps, and to a rifle of Dawson's which stood in a corner of the room.

There was one thing, and one thing only, comfortable in the apartment. It was the fire, which was glorious. The Court of Chancery had exhausted everything but the bogs on the property, and a capacious grate was filled with a mountain of turf, in a state of triumphant conflagration. The ruddy flame gilded the scanty and damaged furniture (the work of the law-cats), and diffused a glow over the room, which made a young man soon forget the deficiencies of carpets and curtains, though accustomed to Axminsters and chintzes.

The subdued mellow light was exactly the sort of sombre yet warm illumination which Dawson would have chosen to set off his professional guests to the best advantage, since he could not well darken the parlour altogether.

The removal of the cloth made an improvement; for it was not spotless, any more than the reputations of some who sat round it. But the next removal was better still: for Messieurs Lamb and Thomson, having finished their dinners, exchanged moody looks, and rising simultaneously, made ungainly obeisances, and left the room, which certainly looked more respectable after their departure.

"Hard work," said Sydney, commiserating the lot of the artist, and the surveyor, "under the coorts."

"D—d hard," said Dawson, using the strong word to which young Spenser had not yet accustomed his lips. But "Rome was not built in a day." Perhaps, in time, Sydney will use strong words as flippantly as his tutor.

Mr. Thomson and the surveyor, however, were not such objects of pity as young Spenser supposed; they only adjourned to a smaller room in a sequestered part of the house, where they soon kindled a good fire with more of the same capital fuel, and made themselves extremely comfortable for the rest of the evening, less by their colloquial resources than by a bountiful provision of that etherial liquor called mountain-dew, the far-famed vintage of the Barony of Innishowen.

As soon as these worthies had retired, said Dawson to his *protégée* and pupil,

"What will you drink, Sydney?"

"No more wine," was Sydney's reply.

"Terry, the black bottle yonder!" Dawson called to his wild butler.

In a few minutes the cold mountain-dew in a black bottle, and the steaming water in a great jug, stood side by side upon the table, flanked with a bowl of sugar and a plate of lemons.

Sydney was just beginning to be familiar with strong liquors as with strong language. However, he had now the excuse of a long wet ride, and probably the contents of the black bottle were purer than those of the decanters. He composed a large glass of punch, and Dawson mingled another, "stiffer" by some degrees, as the phrase goes with punch-drinkers.

"Well, my boy!" cried the host, with hearty emphasis, drawing his chair by one and the same movement nearer both to his friend and the fire, and slapping young Spenser on the knee.

"This is what I call comfort," was Sydney's answer, adjusting his elbows on the arms of his chair, and thrusting out his legs, with the top-boots on, towards the blazing fire.

"Shall w[illegible]ave a cigar, eh?"

"Have y[illegible]ny of your famous Havannahs?"

Dawson p[illegible]d a red-leather case from a side-pocket, and extracted a couple [illegible]cig[illegible]e of which he presented to his friend, who made an *allumette* of the back of a letter, and lighted first his own cigar, and then Dawson's.

They puffed alternately, and alternately looked at one another in silence, with the mute eloquence of smokers.

Dawson was the first to speak; lowering his cigar, he said,

"I've got good news for you, Sydney;—prospects is brightening, my boy."

"I knew that before you told me," said young Spenser.

"How?"

"Randy Maguire rode over with me."

"Oh, indeed," said Dawson; and then added, with a strong expression which need not be repeated, "Sydney, my boy, it was no fault of mine that the tithes due to your father from this property were not settled long ago."

"You need not tell me that," said Sydney.

"There's no man living, Sydney, for whom I have the same respect and admiration for that I have for your father; I swear by his name, so I do. If he only knew what a battle I had with creditors and lawyers, and every body, to have the tithes settled before any other claim against the estate! I was as firm as the Hill of Howth, or I shouldn't have the money to pay Randy Maguire to-morrow morning."

"My father shall know how well you have acted," said Sydney.

"Don't say a word about it," said Dawson, "what's right is right; I only did my duty, and I want no reward, my boy, but the testimony of an approving conscience;—so no more on that head. Sing me something brightly, now;—have you got anything new?"

Sydney sang a song that was once popular at the banquets of the Irish volunteers, and which Mr. Crofton Croker has given in his collection.

"Love and whisky both
Rejoice an honest fellow," &c., &c.

Dawson either was, or affected to be, in ecstacies at Sydney's performance. It is scarcely possible he could have been sincere, in declaring, as he did it with several oaths, that it far surpassed any singing he had ever heard on the London boards, though he had heard Braham himself. The effrontery is marvellous with which some men can flatter others in the grossest manner to their faces. But then there are people on whom flattery can never be laid too thick to be agreeable; you may lay it on them with trowels; nay, you may shovel it over them; they can bear any weight of it; cartloads of encomium, mountains of compliments, Pelion on Ossa, and Ossa on Olympus. There are gross feeders, or there would not be gross caterers. Dawson knew very well the voracity of Sydney's appetite for praise, but he had other ways of making himself agreeable to his guest beside the fox's trick of commending his voice.

"Now tell me," said he, after some little pause; "tell me something

about yourself,—have you paid the gunsmith in Letterkenny the ten pounds for the fowling-piece?"

"No," said Sydney, gloomily—Dawson was now coming to the points that he was most concerned about—"but he can wait awhile longer—I'm more uneasy about what I owe *you*."

"Oh, not a word of that, my boy—light another cigar—no matter if you can never pay me; it can stand over at any rate as long as you like, but settle the other matter as soon as you can, for the rogue was saying the other day he'd apply to your father if it wasn't arranged speedily. Small creditors is such harpies."

"I see no way of paying it," said Sydney, with much dejection, "except by applying to my father myself."

"Which I won't hear of your doing; you musn't be annoying a literary man like him about paltry money matters. I'll see what I can do for you in a few days. It would be pleasanter for you to owe nobody anything but myself. Between friends it's nothing; but it won't do for a clergyman's son to have tradespeople running after and dunning him for dirty little matters of ten pounds or so. Is there anything else bothering you?"

"I am sorry to say there is; I owe *your* tailor five guineas for that white bang-up coat, and I owe Amby Hogg, in Redcross, nearly as much more for cigars and gunpowder and sundries. Oh, and there's the brass swivel for the cutter."

"How much did that come to?"

"I don't exactly know; not very much, I suppose."

"Well, altogether it won't break us," said Dawson; "don't make yourself uneasy about the coat—I believe I have worn it as much as you have—but Amby Hogg must get his money, or some of it, for he's a griping rascal, with a dozen hungry brats at his heels, and, if he gets impatient, he'll go badgering your uncle Woodward, who won't think so little of five pounds as you and I do. By-the-bye, it's a long time, Syd, since you *did* your uncle for me."

By *doing* his uncle, Dawson did not mean cheating him, but only taking him off, or mimicking him, which Sydney could do capitally. A very dangerous talent it is, that of mimicry; it makes enemies and no friends; and, as it is commonly directed against the gravest and worthiest characters, those who exercise it freely come in time to lose all respect for those high qualities which they are in the habit of making sport with for their light companions. Sydney, however, imitated his uncle's oddities to the life; and on this occasion he gave an imitation of Hercules in the pulpit, which threw Dawson into unaffected raptures.

"Another tumbler, Syd," he said, after applauding vehemently.

Sydney declined; he had already taken two—the first time he had ever made so deep a potation. "Dudley," he added, warmly, "you are certainly the best fellow and the best friend in the world."

"Nonsense, man, nonsense; but what did you do with Maguire?—take just half a tumbler more."

"He went to the inn," replied Sydney, yielding to the sweet temptation, and nearly filling a wine-glass from the black bottle, while he hummed—

"Love and Whisky's joys,
Let us gaily twist 'em;
In the thread of Life,

"Is Randy as fond of cards as ever?"

"That he is; always carries his soiled old pack about with him."

"Soiled as they are, I wish we had them; I'd teach you *écarté*."

"Send Terry for them," said Sydney; "shall I pull the bell?"

"Do, if you can," said Dawson, laughing. The bells of Castle Dawson had ceased to ring some years back.

He proceeded himself to despatch the messenger, and found Terry in the room to which Messieurs Thomson and Lamb absconded so submissively after dinner. Terry was lying supine in the middle of the floor, not quite asleep, yet not exactly wide awake. Thomson was snoring thunderously upon an old sofa, or settle-bed; Lamb was sitting doggedly before the flickering and decaying fire, his arms crossed, and his red chin reposing on them, looking surprisingly truculent for so tame a profession as that of a surveyor and valuator. Behind him was a small deal table, on which stood some glasses, and what had, a few hours before, been a bottle of whisky.

"What, now?" demanded Lamb, gruffly.

"It's Terry I want," said Dawson. "Get up, you lazy good-for-nothing hound," and suiting the act to the word, he gave the recumbent domestic a kick in the ribs, so violent, that it made him spring to his legs with an actual howl of pain and astonishment.

Having thus effectually roused him, he gave him his commission and returned to Sydney.

"Who's Maguire?" asked Lamb, as Terry was preparing to obey his orders.

"Randy Maguire, the little ould nosey procthor," said Terry.

"I'll go with you and make his acquaintance," said Lamb, seemingly captivated by Terry's description of Maguire.

"Go without me, Mr. Lamb, honey," said Terry, "Master Dudley has just kicked the breath out of me, the d—'s own sweet luck to him."

Lamb undertook to be Terry's deputy, and rising from his seat, took down from a peg in the wall a broad-leaved oil-skin hat, such as pilots wear, clapped it down over his eye-brows, wrapped himself in a huge camlet boat-cloak, and proceeded on his mission, having first, however, further provided himself with an old umbrella, which he found in the hall, and a lantern which the beldame in the kitchen accommodated him with. What an envoy to send to the poor old man, who was as arrant a coward as Acres, or Sir Andrew Aguecheek, "a coward, a devout coward, religious in it!"

CHAPTER XV.

MONEY.

"What a god is gold,
That he is worshipp'd in a baser temple,
Than where swine feed?"

TIMON OF ATHENS.

THE inn where Maguire proceeded to "take his ease," after parting with young Spenser, was not much more of an inn than Castle Dawson was of a castle. Randy, however, was in good luck, both as a collector of rents for Mr. Dawson, the inn-keeper, paid him a matter of a few

pounds that were due for a farm he held in the neighbourhood, and two or three other farmers, who chanced to be weather-bound there that evening, likewise availed themselves of the opportunity to discharge their holdings and their consciences of their debts to their landlord and the church.

Randy then sat down to his frugal supper. He was a carnivorous little fellow, when he was out collecting, and felt himself justified in exceeding the ordinary bounds within which poverty confined the ambition of his palate. Randy was nothing of an epicurean in the primitive and vegetable sense of the term; he had no objection to a scrag of mutton, or a shin of beef (the only joints he had much knowledge of), but his chief delight, as his chief experience, was in the flesh of the unclean beast, amongst gammons, and shanks of hams, particularly. He had an extensive acquaintance with pig's faces, and a pig's foot was one of his dainties. Once in his life had he eaten of a leg of pork, with the accompaniment of pease pudding. It was in the rector's kitchen, and the memorable day was registered by the proctor "amongst the high-tides in the calendar." This very evening, he discussed that leg of pork and pudding over again with Mr. Branagan, and no doubt the pleasures of memory sweetened the less delicate meal which was now served up to him. It was pork, but of what part was a mystery. Randy, however, was hungry, and asked no questions, but ate of it with as much relish as if he had been a Turk, or a Jew, with the sauce of prohibition to make it piquant.

Some of the people in the kitchen, knowing the old fellow's habits, proposed a game of cards, while he sipped his grog, but Randy was wet and weary, and retired that night sooner than he was wont to do. He was anxious, too, to be alone with his money. Altogether, when he crept up to his little chamber under the thatch, he had the gratification of counting, smoothing, marking, and otherwise manipulating a sum of between eighty and a hundred pounds in notes of nearly as many different banks, provincial and metropolitan.

The passion for money was illustrated strikingly and curiously in the character of the little tithe-proctor. Randy was remunerated for his services with a fixed salary, and he was scrupulously honest and punctual in making over to his principals all the sums he received; but he delighted inconceivably in the mere act of receiving. The mere sight and touch of the money,—the mere flapping of the wings of Plutus passing ever so fleetly over him, gratified his disinterested covetousness inordinately. The uncleanest rag of a bank-note—the filthiest dress that ever filthy lucre wore—a tattered old note, which he was not even to retain possession of, perhaps, for half a day—thrilled with rapture his little yellow palm, made his fingers quiver, and his eyes dance and glitter. So far his avarice was sensual, almost the only sensual luxury the poor old man was acquainted with; yet at the same time, was there ever so pure a form of the love of money? For it was not for himself he grasped it; if he was rapacious (and it was only the fear of Mr. Spenser's displeasure that kept him from being a Verres in his line) it was not with the slightest view to his own profit, but simply out of a strong affection for the sight of the paper or the coin itself. Mammon had never a sincerer worshipper: Mammon did little for poor Maguire; housed him poorly, clothed him sparingly, put scarce a pound of flesh on his bones, fed him grudgingly on herrings and potatoes, varied only with eggs and rashers of bacon, supplied his extraordinary length of nose with only a penny-worth of snuff weekly; yet was the devout

the true and bountiful divinity who clothes him in soft raiment, lodges him in a palace, and feeds him daintily thrice a day.

No sooner had he climbed the steep narrow stair-case, or more properly ladder, which led to his familiar roost, than closing the door he squatted himself down on a rough-hewn deal chair, over his twinkling farthing candle (a peeled rush dipped in the melted fat of sheep) to reckon out his money, and perform the necessary little operations and tendernesses towards it, previous to vesting it respectfully in the old black-leather case, which (as we have seen) he always carried in a privy pocket wrought into the breast of his coat, on the inner and left side, so as to be as near his heart as possible.

One by one he took up the notes delicately and reverently, as some great scholar and editor in the Vatican might handle a fragment of a lost decade of Livy discovered in a state of extreme decay, dropping to pieces like tinder. Then he very gently smoothed down every piece of bank paper separately; no lady's maid ever handled a berthe of the costliest point more daintily. When every dog-ear was removed, he took from an old pouch, which was also one of his invariable travelling companions, a little short-necked bottle of ink, and the stump of a pen, looking as old as himself, and set about marking the notes in order, which he did on the upper left corner of each with the initials of his own name in minute cramped characters, placing each as he marked it straight before him, one above another, so as to make a pile which he might afterwards sit and contemplate to his soul's content.

He was on the point of completing this labour of love, and was just putting the hieroglyphics to the thirteenth note, when there was a step on the creaking ladder, followed almost immediately by a tap at the little door, and Randy said, "Come in;"—he had been expecting the maid of the inn, a niece and namesake of his own, to come and arrange his little bed for him, and so certain was he that it was Maggy Maguire, who now entered, that he continued his proctorly occupation without looking up from the table.

Dudley Dawson's ill-looking messenger stood glaring at him and his bank notes, with eyes expressive of a kind of avarice very different from that which constituted Randy's ruling passion. The fellow's imagination probably made the heap of paper look more considerable than in fact it was. He stood glaring fixedly on the little proctor while he marked the fourteenth and fifteenth note, and it was probably the stillness of the room, when he expected to hear Maggy bustling about it, that first made him raise his head. He would have shrieked, had he been less terrified by the apparition that loomed on him. The figure of Lamb was formidable enough of itself, but the dark light of the rush made it still more appalling, and the fellow's head actually nearly touched the ceiling, or the roof, for they were identical. Lamb addressed Randy by name, in what he perhaps considered an amicable tone, but his blandest address was gruff and savage; and it so heightened the proctor's alarm that whatever reply he made, as he huddled up his money, was perfectly inarticulate.

"It's not your bank-notes I'm come for, Mr. Maguire," said Lamb, with a grim smile at the old man's trepidation.

"Who are you?—what do you want?" gibbered the proctor, recovering his speech, and at the same moment crushing up all his paper into a wisp, and thrusting it into the depths of his pocket.

Lamb smiled again in his sinister way.

'I was sent," he said, "by Master Dudley Dawson—"

Directly the name was mentioned, Randy's terror abated, and he saw his itor in quite another light.

'To settle the arrears," he cried, eagerly; and so excited was he at the ospect of receiving the money, that, without waiting for a reply, he garlously proclaimed the amount he expected to receive, not leaving the iculent stranger time to mention what his business really was, or to terrupt Randy's revelations, had he been disposed to do so.

When he paused, expecting his grim visitor to rain gold upon him, and arned the trumpery matter about which he came, and that he knew othing about the arrears until informed by himself, never was a cautious ttle old man so confounded.

"Why didn't you say that before?" he cried, with peevish vehemence, id pulling out his pack, he handed it to the demandant with the utmost epidation, anxious to be relieved as soon as possible from a presence so inister, and feeling as if the very proximity of a man of Lamb's appearance ould not but lessen the number of his bank-notes.

Lamb bid him a surly good-night, as he thrust the cards into his breast, nd stumbled down the ladder to return to the castle. Then little Mary Maguire came in for a bit of a scolding. Randy rated his niece roundly or not having given him some notice of the arrival of such an ugly-customer, particularly at a moment when he was counting his money.

Mary could tell him nothing about Lamb, and said that nobody in the house could give him much more information; all she knew was that he had very lately made his appearance in the country, and had been observed prowling about the castle and neighbourhood. Maguire's thoughts (naturally enough, considering what his vocation was) were all more or less connected with the impost which it was his duty to collect; and everything about Lamb's appearance suggested and encouraged a suspicion that he was some low itinerant incendiary, who had arrived in this hitherto peaceable district to organise the same system of violent resistance to tithes, which prevailed so extensively in other parts of the island. Then, on the other hand, he appeared to be in the service or employment of Dawson, who was going himself to give the very next day so signal a proof of his own determination to support the law and the rights of the clergy. Maguire did not well know what to think, and (after again arranging and fondling his notes) he went to bed in a state of perplexity that made him dream of a great many fearful things, belonging more to the meridian of Thurles than the quiet parish of Redcross. Perhaps his supper of pork had something to do with it.

It was an improving night to Sydney Spenser, for he learned that important branch of useful knowledge and polite education,—the game of *écarté*. After playing for upwards of an hour, Dawson ordered the grilled remains of the turkey to be served up. Sydney smoked another cigar, made another libation of the etherial dew, and then felt nearly as drowsy as if he had taken so much "poppy or mandragora." So soundly did he sleep that night that he knew nothing of what went on in the house and had no notion the next morning that all its inmates had not been as quiet and well-behaved as himself. It was late when he came down, but Dawson was still later, so that it was just one o'clock when they rose from breakfast, neither having made a meal worth a place in history. Sydney proposed to adjourn with the pistols to the long drawing-room, which was the

"Business before pleasure, my boy," said his exemplary friend, "let us first step down to the inn, pay Mr. Maguire a morning visit, and settle our little account with him. He may, perhaps, be anxious to return home."

"Very well," said Spenser.

They put on their rough coats and waterproof hats, and trudged down the miry, grass-grown avenue, Dawson pointing out every moment some improvement he was on the point of making, a new approach to the house, a belt of wood to be planted, an unsightly wall to be pulled down, or masked with ivy.

They found Maguire on the tenter-hooks of expectation, nervous and fidgety to an extreme. He had been wondering for several hours that he had not been summoned to the castle, and had his receipt ready drawn on the proper stamp, only leaving blanks for the date and his own signature. He thought the happy moment would never come when he should receive the long pending arrears, and when he descried Dawson and Sydney approaching, he would have jumped for joy, only that he was so old and rheumatic.

"Good morning to you, Mr. Maguire," said Dawson, in his loud hearty way, grasping the proctor by the hand.

"Good-morrow, Randy," said Sydney.

"Good-morrow, kindly to your honours both," said Maguire, consolidating his acknowledgments.

"Well, Maguire, have you any objection to receive a little money this morning?" asked Dawson, with a wink at Sydney.

"No, your honour, nor never had," said Randy with his little laugh.

"Let us to business, then," said Dawson.

Maguire led the way up to the little dormitory, where he had the small table (scrupulously washed that morning by his niece) in readiness with all things needful for the transaction of business. It scarcely occupied five minutes, but there may be enormous bliss as well as enormous suffering in five minutes.

First, down on the table in golden concert chinked six and thirty sovereigns, looking red and almost hot from the mint: had the gold been made into an instrument of music, and had a seraph played on it, the harmony would not have been so sweet to the ear of Maguire. After the chime of the precious metal came the crackling of forty pounds in crisp and maiden paper of the Bank of Ireland, and it would have been hard to determine whether the chink of the bullion, or the sound of the notes, were the more melodious. Every passion has its music; love the lute, glory the trumpet, avarice the ringing of coin and the rustle of precious paper. Had Dawson been an Orpheus, or a Mozart, he could not have so ravished the ear of old Randy Maguire.

"When do you return, Randy?" asked young Spenser, as he was leaving the room.

"This afternoon, if the weather takes up," replied Randy, "but in the course of to-morrow at all events."

"Perhaps we may travel together again," said Sydney; but Dawson put his veto on that proposition in the most positive manner, not without more than one very unnecessary allusion to the other world and a certain warm province of it.

Well, if business put pleasure down in the morning, the latter, *en revanche*, engrossed the rest of the day all to itself. As to Dawson, he seemed almost delirious with excitement. His spirits almost crushed

ney's. The fire-screens were riddled with pistol-bullets; they played ds and back-gammon; they sparred, they leaped, they lunched, and vson took a good deal of wine at luncheon. Then, for about half-an- ır, Dawson disappeared, and Sydney occupied himself in the interval h trying on various articles of Dawson's gay and miscellaneous ward- e. When Dawson re-appeared, they had a bout of fencing, after which y smoked a couple of cigars each; then Sydney shot at a rook on a ıtch fir from one of the parlour windows with his friend's rifle, and ;htened the solitary bird without hurting him, and then—it was near ner.

A dismal day it was out of doors, and little less bleak within. The rain with a melancholy pertinacity, only checked by the sweeping wind. thing was visible from the windows of Sydney's room but a wilderness ɔrown heath and a waste of surly waters. The waves howled sorrow- ly along the craggy beach, and thundered in its wave-worn hollows, ne of which, from the closeness of the roar, seemed to undermine the ıse itself. The only question was, whether the sights or the sounds re the most hideous at Castle Dawson. The evening, however, would ɔbably have passed heavily enough, had it been like the preceding one, *tête-à-tête*, or a *tcat-a-tcat*, as Mr. Dawson pronounced it. But the ected artist re-appeared at dinner, and Dawson's agent and man of ɜiness, as he called him, a certain Mr. Sharkey, a "special attorney," ll known in his profession, arrived unexpectedly from Dublin. This de a pretty *quartette*; and after dining, and much smoking and punch- nking, cards were proposed again, and the game was whist.

At first, Dawson and Mr. Sharkey would only play for amusement, but Sydney's instance (though he knew almost nothing of the game) they nmenced playing sixpenny points. The second rubber the points were llings. It ended (nobody remembered at whose suggestion) in playing · crowns, and at one o'clock in the morning Sydney rose, having won wards of ten pounds from the pretended artist.

Then there was another fiery supper; more grilled bones, more cigars, ıre punch; much slang, cock-pit anecdote, and profane swearing. The orney punned, and repeated his own waggeries at sessions; Dawson poured about public spirit; Sydney sang bad songs and mimicked good ın; and the artist showed a marvellous knowledge of low London life, if he was the Hogarth of Bethnal-green, or the Wilkie of St. Giles's. ıen more cigars, more punch, and to-bed without family prayers.

So ended the second day of Sydney's visit. The third was a broken one, : Dawson and Sharkey were called away by sudden business to the unty town; Sydney proposed to accompany them; and, as they rode rough the village, they found Randy Maguire mounting his little brown ɔk at the inn-door, to wend his lonely way back to Redcross, full of ɔrehensions and presentiments of danger; and in point of fact, although did his best to argue himself out of his fears, there was only too much ɔund for entertaining them. At an early hour that morning he had served two men, whose appearance he disliked, taking the same road he d himself to travel; one of them bore a strong resemblance to his quaintance of the previous evening, which made him feel exceedingly comfortable, notwithstanding his knowledge that he was a person in wson's service.

Dawson and Sydney wished the poor little collector a good morning, and

benediction, and so wistful a look at young Spenser, that the latter could not refrain from lingering a moment behind, to cheer up the old man, and to express his regret that it was not in his power to ride home with him, which he well knew was what Maguire wanted.

"It's only bekase I have so much *money* about me, Master Sydney," he said, in a very low voice, as if afraid that the very pony should hear the word that had such magic in it.

Sydney had a misgiving that it was wrong to leave the proctor to travel alone under such circumstances, but he had promised to accompany Dawson, so he contented himself with again guaranteeing the perfect safety of the route, and rode forward after his friend. Dawson and Sharkey were both very unsociable; Dawson neither talked himself, nor seemed to wish Sydney to talk to him; he was moody, and seemed to be brooding on some painful and harassing subject. Sydney good-naturedly thought it was, perhaps, the general state of the country that was disturbing him; or that he was pondering deeply on the responsibilities of a member of parliament. At length, however, it occurred to him that it was just possible Dawson might have private business to transact at the place he was going to, and that he would prefer proceeding there unaccompanied by him; so, after about two hours' ride, without the exchange of as many sentences, Sydney pleaded the continuance of a headache, with which he had set out, and said he would return to Castle Dawson. Dudley made no opposition, and they separated; but Sydney changed his mind on gaining the village, bethought himself of poor Maguire whom he had before deserted, and not questioning but that he would overtake him in the course of the day, instead of going back to his friend's dreary house, he turned his horse's head towards Redcross, and was soon in the heart of the mountains. He might easily have overtaken the tardy ill-mounted old proctor, but his horse lost a shoe, so that he was under the necessity of performing the greater part of the journey on foot.

At one moment he was almost on the point of resuming his original intention, for on putting his hand into the pocket where he kept the case of pistols which he had lately been displaying to Maguire, he found only one of them in its place. This surprised and vexed him, and he would certainly have returned in search of the missing one, had his steed been in travelling order. As it was, he proceeded on his way homewards, soon forgetting his loss, and awakening the echoes of the lonely brown mountains with—

> "Bryan O'Linn had no breeches to wear,
> So he bought him a sheepskin, and made him a pair,
> With the skinny side out, and the woolly side in,
> The warmer for that, said Bryan O'Linn."

But now and then he puzzled himself, thinking how the pistol could have been abstracted from the pocket, and repeatedly during that long solitary ride did he recollect, with unpleasant feelings, the faces he had seen under his friend's roof, and even at his table.

CHAPTER XVI.

NOCTURNAL DOINGS.

"Light thickens; and the crow
Makes wing to the rooky wood:
Good things of day begin to droop and drowse;
While night's black agents to their prey do rouse."
MACBETH.

IT is necessary now that the reader should be informed of the things which were done in Dawson's house on the first night of Sydney Spenser's visit,—while he slumbered as deep as a watchman of the old municipal régime, under the combined influence of the mountain air and the mountain dew. We need scarcely say that neither was Mr. Thomson an artist, or the gentleman called Major Lamb a surveyor or valuator. They were profligate acquaintances and instruments of Master Dudley's; and they were now at Castle Dawson for a special purpose, not unconnected with the proceedings in Chancery, but one which the Chancellor would have by no means approved, had an opportunity been afforded him of giving his judgment upon it.

We must promise that the Dawson property (originally a large one) had been created by Dudley's great-grandfather, in a manner not very uncommon at the period, namely, by a career of successful smuggling, for which the wildness of the coast, and the close proximity of the house to it, afforded every conceivable facility. Such at least was the popular belief in the country, and the story was heightened as usual with circumstances of a still more daring and criminal nature; some people going so far as to say that frauds upon the excise were only one source of profit to the founder of the family, who would sometimes evince his hospitality to merchantmen by inviting them on shore, almost under his own windows, with lights put up expressly by himself, and with no expense to the public, at places where the Trinity Board had neglected to erect them. However, all suddenly raised fortunes are obnoxious to some scandal or another of this kind; certain it was, that in the space of a few years, old Mr. Dawson, from a poor became a very rich man; and the glitter of wealth, according to custom, soon blinded people's eyes to the means by which it was amassed, and enabled its possessor to take a place in society commensurate with his fortune. He purchased land, and with the proprietorship of acres, assumed the air of state and importance which acres alone bestow; money, once made, did everything for him; he married a lady of good family, who added to his estate; he bought a seat in that notorious den of thieves, the Irish House of Commons, which some pleasant politicians are so eager to re-establish;—he even discovered that his own family was an ancient and distinguished one, and spent a few thousand pounds in collecting at sales and auctions in both countries a gallery of portraits (some by eminent painters), which served as well to represent his grandfathers and grandmothers, as if they had been painted expressly to commemorate their features.

The story ran, that this enterprising gentleman selected his grandfathers by their noses; and whenever he saw or heard of a portrait with what was called "the Dawson nose," which was somewhat cocked up like himself, he purchased, or gave an order to have it secured for him; and when the picture reached Castle Dawson, it was styled an admiral, a general, an ambassador, or a lord-mayor, according to the costume in which the figure chanced to be dressed. There were some busts, too, amongst the family memorials thus oddly collected; and amongst the number were two which (if you believed your own eyes as well as Mr. Dawson's account of them) established, beyond a doubt, that not only was Mirabeau one of the family, but that it traced its origin and nose to Socrates himself.

The majority of pictures in the Dawson gallery were, as may be imagined, of an order of art not much above sign-painting; but there were some portraits of more value than was generally suspected: there were two Vandykes, two Lelys, one by Reynolds, and another supposed to be a Rembrandt. There was also a group of characters by Rubens, including a beauty of enormous development, who might have better passed for Mrs. Woodward's great-grandmother than Mr. Dawson's, only for the decisive circumstance of the *nez retroussé*. The whole collection, however, was soon to be brought to the hammer, under an order of a Master in Chancery, who, though an old master himself, knew nothing about the old masters of the pencil, and had given no particular directions for the valuation of the pictures by competent judges, nor for their safe custody previous to the sale. Under these circumstances, the idea had occurred to the fertile mind of Sydney Spenser's friend, to turn to his own account the valuable part of the gallery, substituting for it a corresponding quantity of trash, picked up at the old curiosity shops, at the rate of a guinea a portrait. There was also an opportunity for practising the same little artifice with respect to a few hundred pounds' worth of books, which had been collected by his ancestor, merely on the principle that a great house ought to have something like a library, and that the books ought, at all events, to be superbly bound. Expense had not been spared, so that the books were not only in rich bindings (now indeed damaged by damp and neglect), but some of them rare copies of the works of standard authors; including, for example, a splendid quarto edition of Molière, with finely executed engravings, which had cost forty guineas, and would now, probably, produce a larger sum. The books to be abstracted were, as well as the pictures, to have their places supplied at a moderate cost; and the business which Dudley Dawson had just now in hand, assisted by Messieurs Lamb and Thomson, was to remove this property clandestinely from the house of his father, and transport it to London, to be there disposed of with the privacy suited to a transaction of so delicate a nature.

No sooner had Dawson assured himself, by applying his ear to the key-hole of Sydney's bed-room door, that his young friend slept profoundly, than he proceeded, with a dim lamp in his hand, to the apartment where his auxiliaries had sequestered themselves, and rousing them from their repose (for it is a mistake to think that rogues don't sleep as well as honest men), summoned them to the work of the night.

"Now, boys," he said, in a low deep voice, "silence and activity! Follow me!"

The miscreants obeyed, shrugging their shoulders, and knocking against one another, and against the furniture, the room was so gloomy, for there

was no light but from the one flickering lamp. Terry had nothing on but his shirt, and his red plush breeches, and was scarcely able to walk, from the effects of the kick he had received from his mild young master in the early part of the evening.

They crept through the passages, not making half the noise which the wind did, whistling through the chinks of the wainscots, and the shattered panes of glass, and slamming distant doors, with that particularly melancholy sound, which writers of ghost-stories make such good use of. At the head of a staircase Dawson paused a moment, and held the lamp up to two pictures which hung there. One was the Rembrandt; it was expeditiously unfixed from the wall by the major and Terry, when Dawson took it out of their hands, and carried it down stairs himself, for greater security. In the hall were several of his cock-nosed ancestors, but their descendant treated them with supreme contempt, and passed on to the large dining-parlour, which was not that where Sydney had been entertained. In this room were the marble busts already mentioned, and the rest of the pictures of value; they were taken down with marvellous celerity, and packed, with their frames, in wooden cases, which had been provided for them, Dawson looking very sharp to protect the faces of his pretended forefathers from being scratched in the process. The room where the books were was contiguous, and there also stood several strong boxes made expressly to hold those which had previously been selected for embezzlement. The packing of the books occupied more time than the pictures: there were in all four boxes full, and Dawson did this part of the work almost exclusively himself, having probably made himself acquainted with the knack the booksellers have of packing daintily, so as to prevent collision with Russia, or a brush with Morocco. When he came to the splendid edition of Molière, he hesitated for an instant, and then set it aside; his assistants concluded that the book was of little worth, but the fact was, that Dawson reserved it for a judicious present to Mr. Spenser, to whose library he fancied it would be a desirable addition.

The boxes required nailing, but that operation was postponed, out of consideration for Sydney, whose sleep might have been disturbed by it.

Now came the most trying part of the business. Dawson and Lamb being the strongest of the party, undertook the weighty porterage of one of the boxes of books; Thomson and Terry carried a case with the pictures; and then it was that the peculiar subterraneous contrivances of Castle Dawson were once more turned to use, and in a manner quite in keeping with their original destination. They were all strong men, except Mr. Thomson, or they could not have done what they did that night. Dawson and Lamb went foremost, with the lamp on the top of the box, and having crossed the hall, they descended a short staircase which led to the kitchens, and other apartments on the basement story. Few people knew that there was any lower excavation than this, save such as rats or mice might have made to burrow in. Lamb and Thomson fancied they were going to deposit the booty in some of the ordinary vaults or cellars with which all houses are provided; and in fact it was at the wine-cellar they first halted with their loads.

Hoarse, protracted, and gradually increasing sounds, accompanied with something like the splash of waves at stated intervals upon a pebbly beach, were now mournfully audible. Dawson unlocked the door with a thick, rusty key. The mournful noise, and the sullen splash, became more distinct.

It was a spacious desolate vault, with a multitude of compartments; the most of them were quite vacant; the pleasant profligate fellows, and jovial jobbers of fifty years since had drunk them dry; only a few bins were partially stocked, and but one could be said to be well furnished with wine. The wine, however, was not the present object. The boxes were set down; Dawson scraped away with his feet the thick coating of clay and saw-dust, with which the floor was covered, and presently a trap-door was disclosed to view. It was secured only by a bolt, and when the bolt was drawn, the door opened downwards; you saw a ladder descending to unknown depths, and now were fully satisfied that it was the sea itself whose dashing immediately under your feet had for some time been audible. When Thomson, who bore the lamp, lowered it into the opening to examine the rounds of the ladder, the light, faint as it was, probed the obscurity of the cavern, and was visibly reflected in flickering gleams, either by the gushing tide itself, or the bright wet shells and pebbles which the water, retiring with a long-drawn sigh, left behind it.

Not much art, but a good deal of toil, had been required to construct this secret communication with the ocean. A deep fissure in the cliffs, broad enough to admit a small boat at time of high-water, had been extended by the operation of blasting, so as to form something like a subterraneous canal, or the horizontal shaft of a mine, terminating directly beneath the vault where these lawless men were now peering down into it.

Terry was sent down in advance, and scarcely was the splash of his feet heard amongst the wet shingles when he raised a howl and an execration, as if Cerberus had bitten him with his three set of fangs at once. It was not Cerberus, but a huge lobster, which had lost no time in attacking the midnight invader of his retreat. Terry's brogues were none of the slightest, but the angry shell-fish cut one of them clean through, and it was not until after a battle of some minutes that the superior animal, howling and blaspheming all the time like a demon, succeeded in extricating himself from the inferior. Indeed, except that the element was water and not fire, the entire scene was infernal enough; below was the caitiff in red plush struggling with the crustaceous monster; while over-head, straining their eye-balls through the trap to see what was going on, were the faces of Dawson and his knavish companions; Dawson railing and cursing at his unlucky vassal, and menacing him with horsewhips; Lamb witnessing Terry's tortures with the mute and grim delight of an amateur executioner; and Thomson, with his unalterable look of sad and exhausted turpitude, perhaps the most fiendish expression of all.

A boat was secured to a staple in the rock at about an arm's length from the foot of the ladder. It was brought directly under the trap, and the boxes were lowered with ropes into it, Dawson and Lamb placing them so as to let them slide down the ladder, and Terry guiding them below, until they were safely lodged in the hull of the boat. Three times did these sons of night go back and forwards between the cellar and the great dining-room, until all the boxes and cases were thus mysteriously secreted, preparatory to their being removed to another receptacle known to Dawson, where they were to be shipped of to England at a convenient opportunity. At every return to the cellar, the leader of this piece of midnight villany knocked off the neck of a bottle of wine with the key of the cellar, to cheer and refresh his comrades, who stood indeed much in want of refreshment, for the job tried the sinews of the party, if it did not

sting their consciences. The least guilty was Terry, for he acted merely as a loyal retainer of the Dawson family, and had nothing but kicks for his reward, and the cruel squeeze which the fish gave him. Lamb and Thomson were mercenary accomplices, and had been brought over specially from London to assist in this transaction; not that Dawson could not have found lawless fellows like them nearer home, but that he was already mixed up with them in more than one dark affair, and did not choose to extend unnecessarily the circle of his vicious connexions.

It was daylight, but a dim, drizzling morning, when the business was finished, and the four emerged from the basement story, looking like a low dissolute crew tumbling out of a tavern in Bethnal-green, after a debauch and a boxing-match. Lamb had cut his lip at his last draught from the broken bottle, and his face was not only begrimed with dust, but dabbled with blood, as if he had been at a murder. Thomson and the wretched Terry threw themselves on the naked stone, and the latter was instantly asleep. Dawson crept up to the room where Sydney lay, and assured himself that the seal of repose was still unbroken on his eyelids. Then he descended, and took Lamb aside into a villanous yard, where an old hound was howling in a dilapidated kennel, to give him further directions respecting the embezzled property.

"Very well, Mr. Dawson," said Lamb, after Dawson had concluded, "all that shall be done; and now let me tell you, that both Thomson and myself are of opinion that this job is well worth another hundred pounds."

"A hundred fiddlesticks," said Dawson; "you shall have what we agreed on—not a farthing less, and not a farthing more."

"We must have another hundred," rejoined the major. "We'll not sail for London without the money."

"I wish you may get it," said Dawson, with an irritated laugh. "Come, Lamb, I'll stand no such nonsense; do your duty, and I'll do mine; we ought to know one another well enough by this time." Then he cursed the old hound in the shed, venting on the brute the rancorous feeling excited by his rapacious companion.

"I know you well enough, Mr. Dawson."

"And I know you, Lamb; so no more balderdash. We bargained for fifty pounds and your travelling expenses, and a bargain is a bargain."

The hound continued to whine, and the noise, combined with the whistling of the wind and bellowing of the waves, made it difficult enough to carry on a conversation. Dawson snatched up a branch of a tree that lay at his feet, and, flying at the dog, beat it savagely, in a kind of parenthesis.

"It's a bargain with only one side to it, from this moment," said Lamb, looking diabolical.

So did Dawson after his barbarity to the old dog, but he commanded his temper with the human brute, and said, in a voice comparatively soothing, "Keep yourself cool, Lamb, and listen to me. I could just as easily pay you ten thousand pounds down at this moment, as the hundred you ask of. The fifty for you is ready; twenty in hard cash, and my note of 2nd for the remainder. It was no easy matter, under existing circumstances, to raise even the twenty; but it was a point of honour with me to settle partly in cash for this night's job, so I raised the money."

But Lamb was not mollified by this speech.

"And is it also a point of honour with you to pay seventy-six pounds

seven shillings and sixpence to Mr. Maguire, the tithe-proctor, to-morrow morning?" he asked, with a fiendish grin.

Dawson's face, red at all times, grew crimson with surprise and rage; then it turned to a livid purple, as he demanded what Lamb meant by his question.

"I mean just what I say," replied the major. "Is it a point of honour with you to pay a rascally proctor, when you can't settle an honest account with a friend?—that's a plain question, Mr. Dawson."

"What the fiend is it to you," cried the other, "what I pay Mr. Maguire or any body else, or whether it is tithe or not?"

"Just this, Mr. Dudley Dawson—that if there's money for the parson, there's money for hard-working men like us;—ours is the prior claim."

"We'll see," retorted Dawson, fiercely and doggedly.

"We will," echoed Lamb, in the same determined way.

"If another guinea would save you and that consumptive varlet snoring in the hall from Tyburn, or a worse place, you should not have it from me," cried Dawson.

Lamb was silent for one moment—it was a moment of rapid, deep, and atrocious meditation.

"Mark what I say," he said, in a hoarse, resolute growl, approaching his companion as he spoke, and thrusting his ill-favoured and bleeding face close to his ear, "if we don't get something handsome out of you, we'll manage to get it out of Mr. Maguire."

Dawson regarded him with an eye of fierce scrutiny, and demanded what he meant.

"Coax it out of him," said Lamb, with his atrocious smile; and then added, in a whisper between his teeth, "it wouldn't be a much worse job than we have just been doing, Mr. Dawson."

Dawson's countenance assumed an expression difficult to understand. It was not approval of Lamb's suggestion, and still less was it horror at it. Perhaps he thought it not worth an observation. However, no more was said. Lamb seemed to abandon his attempt to extort more money from his employer, who seemed, upon his side, glad to have the conference over; and indeed they both wanted some repose after such an extraordinary amount of physical exertion.

BOOK IV.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE FLOOD.

"There is sure another flood toward, and
This couple is coming to the ark."
AS YOU LIKE IT.

RETURN we now to the parsonage, which we left with a hurricane blowing, but with very little idea that it was destined to blow one of the rector's daughters a husband. It is pleasant to go back to the haunts of civilisation after passing a couple of days at Castle Dawson, and it is agreeable also to mix the proceedings of grim ill-favoured men with the doings of women like Arabella and Elizabeth Spenser.

We have mentioned the rudely constructed wooden bridge across the upper and narrow part of the estuary, at a distance of some two or three miles from the residence of the Spensers. For ordinarily rough weather this structure was sufficiently firm; but it proved unequal to withstand the violence of the storm that now raged, with the additional strain of an enormously increased volume of water, partly produced by three days' incessant rain in the mountains, partly by the influx from the ocean under the action of a furious west-wind. About five o'clock in the afternoon, on the third day of the storm, the bridge gave way, and in a very few minutes scarce a plank remained to show where it had once stood.

The shooting-lodge of Mr. Spenser's friend, Lord Bonham, was situated about five miles to the north of the parsonage, in the heart of the mountains, an extremely beautiful wild spot, to which the Spensers sometimes made excursions and pic-nic parties with the Woodwards and other neighbours. There was, at the time we speak of, but one practicable and that a very circuitous route, between the lodge and the village of Redcross, and this depended upon the wooden bridge, and was totally interrupted by its destruction. Two gentlemen, one well mounted and attended by a servant, with a good horse under him likewise, the other riding a stout black pony (one of the same breed as Mr. Woodward's), were the first to discover, to their extreme inconvenience and distress, the havoc occasioned by the flood. The party was coming from the lodge, and proceeding southwards, intending to dine at a house in the neighbourhood of Redcross, and remain there until the weather should clear up. They had had a long, rough ride, and had been comforting themselves for the last half hour by talking of the good table, and the excellent bottle of wine, they expected at the house where they proposed to bait for the evening. The rider of the black pony was Lord Bonham's agent, a fat, short, round, red-faced, fidgety little man, with a white hat, a heavy brown coat, and a shawl like a woman's wrapped round his throat, hurying half of his smiling physiognomy. He looked however (as far as

he play of his features were visible), excessively agitated and dismayed, on reaching the place where the bridge, to his personal knowledge, had stood only the day before. Surprise seemed to have deprived him of the power of speech, but his companion (a tall man, under thirty, with a showy figure, and gentleman-like appearance, though his air was a little arrogant), exclaimed in a dry, high-pitched voice,

"I say, Trundle, where's the bridge?—I see no bridge, Trundle."

"Nor I, Colonel Dabzac," replied the gentleman addressed, looking comically dismal, and gazing ruefully on the surging and triumphing waters, "all I know is that it was there at six o'clock yesterday, or we should not be on this side now; it's an extremely ugly business, that I can tell you, colonel."

"What's to be done? that's the question. Trundle, you know the country—I don't—are you sure we are at the right point? Is there another road?"

"No road that I am acquainted with but this—no other road to Redcross."

"We must swim for it, I suppose," said the colonel.

"One thing is certain," said the other, "we shall not reach our friends in time for dinner, to-day; I doubt, indeed, if we shall dine at all, without returning to the lodge."

"Which I positively won't do, Mr. Trundle."

"Then, colonel, we have no alternative but to turn to the right and go to Mr. Spenser's."

"That——Whig parson!"—the reader will excuse us for not recording the epithet used by the colonel.

"Then we must either go back all the way to Bonham Lodge, or stay here all night.—The parson has got two handsome daughters, I can tell you that, colonel."

"Has he a good cook?—that's more to the point," replied the other; "however, any port in a storm—*en avant*, Mr. Trundle; it's getting late; we had better ride hard, or we'll come in for the cold shoulder."

Without waiting for a reply, the colonel set off at a fast trot, and the pony that Trundle rode did its best to go at the same pace, very much to the grievance of his pursy rider, who had not been so long on horseback for several years, and was already uncomfortable enough in his saddle, beside being very embarrassed by a huge roll he was carrying, like a map or survey; and in point of fact it was one. Fain would he have remonstrated with his hardier comrade, but the blustering wind, which blew right in his teeth, took away his breath, or prevented the complaints which he tried to gasp forth, from reaching the colonel's ear. It was all in vain to pull in the obstinate pony; poor Trundle, sadly embarrassed by his enormous map, tugged hard at the reins to restrain a speed so adverse to his personal ease, but the beast had the spirit of competition which the man wanted, and seemed perfectly to understand the gestures of Dabzac, who looked back over his shoulder at intervals to see that his friend was not losing ground.

The colonel, however, was obliged to slacken his pace before long, owing to the steepness and roughness of the road, if road it might be called. This enabled Trundle, or rather the pony, to rejoin him; and then it was highly diverting to observe the little round man's physiognomy, as he received the compliments of his companion upon his admirable seat (the sorest subject Dabzac could have hit on), and the merits of an animal,

whose only demerit in the eyes of his owner was the stubborn speed at which he insisted on going. The pause was but momentary; the road grew level again, and the colonel, intent on his dinner, pushed forward, the pony again accepting the challenge, and Mr. Trundle in vain endeavouring to call attention to the beauties of the stormy sunset, and its effects upon the ruins of the Black Castle, at which they were now arrived. No man living cared less for sunsets, or ruins, or any thing picturesque and romantic than he did; but he thought to induce his impetuous friend to slacken his pace a little, either not knowing or not reflecting that Dabzac was quite as little sensitive to the charms of scenery as he was himself.

Arabella and Elizabeth Spenser were standing at a window in the library, contemplating the weather-beaten shrubs and down-trod roses, when the two horsemen, such contrasts in all respects, came trotting up to the parsonage, drenched with rain, and bespattered with all the various soils of the country, so that an agricultural chemist could have inferred the rural produce of Donegal from an observation of the state of their boots. Such arrivals create a lively sensation at quiet glebe houses, particularly in such dreary weather. The person of the colonel was not unknown to Arabella, for she remembered having once danced with him at a country ball. Both girls, however, recognised Mr. Trundle instantly, even under the cumbrous disguise of his huge brown coat, and the cotton shawl that enveloped his face. A groan escaped from Elizabeth, which of itself was sufficient to intimate that a more agreeable guest could easily have presented himself. One likes to hear a pretty woman groan, when it is not the expression of actual pain or misery. Elizabeth Spenser groaned charmingly. Why she groaned now will appear very shortly.

Mr. Spenser, who was sitting with his wife, recognised Dabzac directly he saw him, and there were not many men in Ireland whom he would not have more willingly received into his house, for Dabzac belonged to a class for whom, both socially and politically, the rector, having strong Whig prejudices, entertained a decided dislike, the high Tory magnates of Ulster, who, at the period of our story, had not had their crests lowered by the repeated victories of the demagogue, and the triumphs of the popular cause. Such social prejudices, sometimes even amounting to antipathies, were prevalent in Ireland at the time we speak of; they were the growth of laws and systems which, with a few exceptions, have been wisely abandoned, and were themselves irresistible arguments for the abandonment of them.

Mr. Spenser, indeed, had not much reason to be pleased with either of the gentlemen who took refuge under his roof that tempestuous evening. Mr. Trundle, though not formidable in the way the colonel was, was, perhaps, the more formidable of the two. The little round red-faced man was one of the numerous troublesome, self-opinionated, but well-meaning personages, who, at the period of our story, had their heads stuffed with projects of all kinds for the improvement of Ireland, and could talk of nothing but the crotchet uppermost at the moment, utterly disregarding fitness of time or place, or the tastes and temper of the company. Now it was the reclaiming of bogs; now the draining of lakes; now mines; now canals; now a scheme of colonisation; "everything in turn and nothing long;" but the plan of the moment was always, of course, the only plan to save the country. As to Mr. Trundle, he had only just abandoned a desperate undertaking against the great bog of Allen, and was now

enthusiastically engaged in a terrible design against Loch Foyle and Loch Swilly; mad on the subject himself, and driving every body mad who had the misfortune to encounter him.

The reader will now easily comprehend why Elizabeth Spenser groaned when she saw this gentleman approach the parsonage, with the huge roll in his hand, of which she guessed the nature only too correctly. The groan, indeed, was more on her father's account than her own. The never-failing placidity and benevolence of Mr. Spenser particularly exposed him to bores of every kind, just as a jar of honey attracts wasps, or a sugar-bowl on a sunny breakfast-table gathers all the buzzing and droning things in the room about it.

Mr. Trundle introduced his friend the colonel, and Mr. Spenser and his daughters received them with a gracious hospitality which made Dabzac instantly feel that he was the guest of people of refinement, whether of the right sort or not. The colonel's servant had carried a small portmanteau, containing a change of clothes and a dressing-case, but the agent was utterly unprovided, so that Mr. Spenser had to accommodate him with one of his own black suits, in which, when he re-appeared in the drawing-room, he cut a singular figure; the skirts of the coat sweeping the floor, while the tightness of the body gave it almost the stringency of a strait waistcoat, an article of dress (by the way) which many thought that Mr. Trundle should have been provided with long ago. While Colonel Dabzac was indulging a sort of dull, dry facetiousness he had, at the expense of his travelling companion, dinner was announced; and then the struggles and fidgetings of the little agent, in the act of presenting his arm to Elizabeth, were so ludicrous, that it was with no small difficulty she concealed from him how much he amused her.

CHAPTER XVIII.

IMPROVEMENT OF IRELAND.

"*Dogberry.* Truly, for mine own part, if I were as tedious as a king, I could find in my heart to bestow it all on your worship.

"*Leonato.* All thy tediousness on me!—ha!

"*Dogberry.* Yea, and 'twere a thousand times more than it is."

MUCH ADO ABOUT NOTHING.

IT was a momentous occurrence in the lives of both Miss Spenser and Colonel Dabzac, the carrying away of that wooden bridge. The colonel was too busy, however, losing his appetite to lose his heart that day to any lady in the land. But Arabella, from the first (although perhaps nobody noticed it), regarded him with an eye of favour; and it was not for Mr. Trundle that she came down to dinner, dressed with more than usual care and elegance. She liked his height, his whiskers, his name, his fortune; she had no objection either to his pomposity or his politics; and of all things, she liked his title of colonel.

However, he was a colonel little more than nominally, or figuratively, for he was not an officer in the king's army, but only a lieutenant-colonel in the Londonderry militia, a corps which he had never seen, and which

had probably only an existence on paper, just enough to allow some twenty or thirty country gentlemen to give themselves ridiculous martial airs, and swagger in scarlet coats at a Lord-Lieutenant's levees.

As to Arabella, she was just the girl to captivate a man like Dabzac, whose heart, like her own, was a mere animal organ: whose tastes, like hers, were intrinsically vulgar; and whose eye, like hers also, was one of those that are fascinated more by an epaulette, or a livery, than by the most glorious prospect in nature.

Miss Spenser, indeed, possessed every charm that could make a woman attractive to an unintellectual, unsentimental man. There was, in fact, only one thing against her;—she was the daughter of a Whig parson!

Mr. Spenser was a Whig, and a zealous one; but his politics and his profession were kept totally apart. He never attended political meetings, and scrupulously abstained from the remotest reference to political events, questions, or principles, either in his sermons, or in his pastoral intercourse with his parishioners; but he was not without the natural wish to propagate his opinions, and he did so quietly with his pen, sometimes in a pamphlet, sometimes in the *Edinburgh Review*, or some other liberal periodical. These productions, of course, were anonymous, but known to be his in the literary and political circles. Occasionally, however, he amused himself with essay-writing upon lighter subjects, and his desk contained many pleasant papers, or fragments of papers, which he would now and then read for the entertainment of his daughters, or a few of his friends. As to allowing politics to interfere with the kindly relations of private life, it was utterly foreign to Mr. Spenser's character; and the best proof of this was the fact that his curate and brother-in-law, Mr. Woodward, was the most resolute anti-Catholic in all Ireland, the most redoubted champion of Protestant ascendancy in church and state, and yet they lived (for it was equally creditable to both) on terms of the most cordial and brotherly affection, having a good-humoured battle occasionally about Mr. O'Connell's proceedings, or one of Lord Plunket's speeches, but the same hearty good friends after the engagement as before it. Still, there were certain people who would not or could not differ temperately and politely with a man of the rector's liberal views—people who asserted what they called their Protestant principles in an intolerant domineering way that was most offensive to Mr. Spenser; and the Dabzac family, and their connexions, were of the number. When he met these people in society, he studiously avoided collision with their prejudices; he knew how useless it is to reason with passion and self-interest, and he never attempted it; but he had no objection to argue a little with a man like Woodward, who, though a bigot on a few points, was a bluff, conscientious, and most good-natured one.

Probably Dabzac expected that the Whig parson would talk nothing but Whiggery all day long; if so, he was agreeably disappointed, for Mr. Spenser never once quoted the *Edinburgh Review*, or mentioned the name of Charles James Fox; nay more, Dabzac might have been under his roof for a month, and never have heard a syllable from him upon any of those subjects, or upon politics at all, except in the most general way, or respecting some point upon which politicians of all creeds were pretty nearly of the same opinion; and even in such a case, lightly and almost playfully, without the least approach to vehemence or argumentation. Then, bad as Mr. Spenser's Whiggery may have been, his wine was good, and Colonel Dabzac was enough of a liberal to drink and enjoy a bottle of old claret,

although bought from a Catholic wine-merchant, beside being the produce of a Catholic country.

But, indeed, as to that day's conversation, neither Mr. Spenser nor Colonel Dabzac had much share in it, for the ardent Mr. Trundle, albeit not very easy after his ride, and anything but comfortable in the rector's coat, soon engrossed all the talk to himself; and, of course, his theme was the improvement of Ireland, for he had only the one arrow in his quiver. Mr. Trundle was the most zealous, indefatigable, benevolent busy-body in the world; as in shape he was not unlike a humming-top, so the tone of his voice was not unlike the sound of that monotonous toy, when it spins on the nursery-floor. Before he finished his soup, the "hideous hum" commenced; it was all about a meeting ever so great that was to be held somewhere the following week, for the purpose of considering his magnificent scheme for a ship-canal between Loch Foyle and Loch Swilly, as the basis of a wonderful system of inland navigation, absolutely essential to the prosperity of Ireland; indeed the only chance she had of escaping everlasting redemption," as *Dogberry* says.

"I must prevail on you," he said, in a tone of voice amusingly insinuating, with occasionally a forcible-feeble emphasis on his words, "to sign our monster petition, at all events, Mr. Spenser, and *our address to the Crown*—the most *important* document that was ever drawn up in Ireland—I drew it up myself—strong but *moderate*—I am always for moderation but *I speak out*—all that we want from government is thirty millions sterling—we don't ask more, and we won't take *one farthing less*. And I must have the ladies, too. I can't do without the ladies. The ladies must join us. A long pull, a strong pull, and a pull altogether, as I said the other day in Derry,—I did, indeed, Miss Spenser."

Elizabeth endeavoured to express, by her looks, her admiration of Mr. Trundle's eloquence at Derry; encouraged by the smile, the humming-top instantly resumed.

"It will bring back our absentees—it will give employment to *two millions of our poor suffering countrymen*—nothing else will ever do it. I don't want organic changes. I don't want revolution—I told them so at Derry. I only want *thirty millions sterling*, for the improvement of our inland navigation. Now, Mr. Spenser, won't you support me?"

"Thirty millions is a great deal of money," said Mr. Spenser, very much at a loss what to reply.

"A mere trifle. What signifies thirty millions, or sixty, to the British Treasury? And so I took leave to tell the Chancellor of the Exchequer in a letter I addressed to him last year, to get a little assistance for our General-Lake-Drainage Company. I want the nobility and gentry of Ireland to *put their heads together* and get something for my unhappy country. Is that unreasonable, Mr. Spenser?"

"I would rather see them put their *hands* together and *do* something for her," said Mr. Spenser, very quietly.

"We are too poor to do anything for ourselves; we must get the news of war from John Bull; we must get the thirty millions. Only give me the thirty millions," persisted Mr. Trundle, as persuasively as if Mr. Spenser had the money in his pocket for him at the moment.

"Irish independence would do much more for the country than English money," said Mr. Spenser, but said it to himself—he was afraid to utter so bold a proposition above his breath, for fear of exciting Dabzac, who was a fair representative of that class of Irish landlords, who only "put their

heads together" to devise the means of evading their duties, and only use their hands to dip them into English pockets.

How charmingly the remainder of the evening passed, we leave the reader to conceive. Miss Spenser, indeed, and Colonel Dabzac seemed to have some agreeable chat; but the rector and his second daughter had not one moment's respite from Mr. Trundle, and his thousand and one projects—canals, bogs, fisheries, colonies, and small-loan funds; quotations from his letters and pamphlets; abstracts of his speeches, petitions, and correspondence with London and Dublin officials; for he was the plague alike of the Treasury in London and the Castle in Dublin, and had made more than one Irish Secretary think seriously of resigning his office.

Providentially at length the colonel, being very much fatigued, gave unequivocal symptoms of somnolency, so that Mr. Spenser had an opportunity of suggesting an early move bed-wards, which accordingly took place, after an exchange of the usual drowsy civilities.

"Oh, papa," cried Elizabeth, when her father returned to the drawing-room, after having conducted his guests to their chambers, "what will become of us, if the weather does not soon mend? My poor papa!—and you to preach on Sunday!"

"The bridge ought to have stood just ten minutes longer," said Mr. Spenser, with Christian resignation.

The girls kissed their father and retired; Elizabeth meditating how to take the whole weight of Mr. Trundle on her own shoulders the next day, or at least diminish the burden to her father as much as possible. As the girls passed the little round agent's door, they distinctly heard him humming to himself about Loch Swilly, for want of somebody else to hum to. It was (as Mr. Spenser observed the next day,) a capital illustration of that bitter curse of *Thersites*—"Thyself upon thyself!"

CHAPTER XIX.

THE ROBBERY.

"Wherein I spake of most disastrous chances,
Of moving accidents by flood and field."

OTHELLO.

At eleven o'clock that night the parsonage was profoundly still, all its inmates (except Lucy and Rebecca, still reading "Clarissa,") either sleeping or retired to their beds, and courting repose, if not enjoying it. The gale was abated, but the rain came down in only more impetuous torrents. Half an hour later, Mr. Spenser, who was a light sleeper (probably having been cured by his wife of the habit of deep slumber), was awakened by sounds very unusual at such an hour—the trampling of horses' feet, human voices, and then the sharp ringing of a bell. His first idea was, that this untimely hubbub was occasioned by the return of his son, and under this impression he made no movement to rise. The domestics had evidently been roused, for he could distinguish the unlocking and unbolting of the house-door, and instantly afterwards heard the same voices again, but louder and more distinct. In a few seconds there was a quick step on the

stairs, and a tap at the door of his bed-room. He jumped up, and found a half-dressed servant with a lantern, who, in a state of excitement, with a countenance pale with alarm, informed him that the arrivals were Mr. Woodward and Mr. Maguire, the tithe-proctor, and that the latter had been robbed and half murdered.

With an exclamation of astonishment and horror, Mr. Spenser threw on his dressing-gown, and rushed down stairs, where he found that part of the story was only too true; the worst part, however, being happily so much exaggerated, that there was the little old man himself to tell his tale, only not yet recovered enough from his fright to relate his adventures very correctly. However, *there* he was, to vouch for the fact of his having been robbed; and there was the athletic curate at his side, to verify the statement. Both were in a melancholy pickle, between rain and mire, though only the proctor had sustained any personal injury, and that was nothing affecting life or limb.

Maguire had been attacked by footpads, and the scene of the outrage had been the Black Castle, the spot which he had so often in his life passed in safety, but never without some apprehension or presentiment of danger. There it was that Dandy Maguire, returning from Castle Dawson, and urging his little hack as fast as he could make it trot, past a locality so black and ominous, was set upon, flung from his saddle, rolled upon the road, and robbed of the old black-leather pocket-book, containing all his bank-notes, and also of the little bag in which he had bestowed the thirty new sovereigns in which Mr. Dawson had paid him part of the arrears. This was nearly all Maguire knew about the matter; the state of his clothes bore unquestionable testimony to a liberal rolling in the loose yellow soil of the country, but a scratch on the temple, with one or two not very serious bruises on the ribs, were the extent of his bodily damages. Oddly enough, his nose escaped scot-free, though it seemed to project from his face, as it were expressly to bear the brunt of whatever blows or damages were going. We have now to explain how the curate came to be involved in the events of a night, which in the regular course of events, he ought to have passed in his own house like a peaceable man and a good husband. He had been in the hills during the morning, on an expedition of charity, half pastoral, half medical, to visit the mother of one of his servants, an aged widow, who had been suffering with a rheumatism almost as old as herself. To gain the spot in the mountains where the poor woman lived, he had been obliged to cross the wooden bridge, which he reckoned upon regaining at about five o'clock; and from thence a short hour, with those seven-leagued boots of his, would bring him to the "dulce domum." He arrived at the bridge, or rather at the place where the bridge was not, about half-an-hour later than Colonel Dabzac and Mr. Trundle, and found himself, of course, in exactly the same perplexity. He must either return to the parsonage, abandoning the notion of reaching home that night, or try a shallow place higher up, which Mr. Trundle had not thought of, and which might chance to be still passable without much hazard, as enormous blocks of stone had been placed there for such travellers on foot as were nimble enough to jump over the ugly watery chasms between them. His homeward yearnings, always vigorous, made him choose the latter course, but when he gained the point where he hoped to cross, not a stone was to be seen; the water swelled and roared over the highest and bugest of the blocks, leaving him no alternative but to direct his steps (now not quite so brisk as before) all the weary way to the house of his brother-in-

law. It was indeed a severe march in such a rain, accoutred so heavily as he was, with a club like that of his namesake, and a coat probably as ponderous as the skin of the Nemean lion. But the greatest weight was the weight on his mind, thinking what Carry would be suffering. The watery moon yielded a dim and uncertain light, but the curate, accustomed to nocturnal walking, could see the objects before and around him distinctly enough to discover anything unusual, or suspicious, should any thing be stirring which ought not to be stirring at the place and season. The ruins, owing to the winding of the road, were not visible until he came quite close to them. A sharp turn disclosed them suddenly to his view, and two objects immediately arrested Woodward's attention; one was a faint twinkling light through an orifice or loophole in the dilapidated building; the other a figure on horseback, about fifty yards in advance of him on the road, apparently just emerging from the shadow of the ruins. The next instant two fellows sprang out of them, rushed at the man on horseback, who rolled on the road, with one of his assailants over him. Woodward had no doubt about the character of the transaction. He rushed forward, brandishing his cudgel, and had the gratification of saluting one of the miscreants with so hearty a thwack, that the stick was fractured by the blow, and perhaps the bones it encountered were not more fortunate. That was matter for conjecture, for the fellow escaped into the ruins notwithstanding, and Hercules, instead of pursuing him, ran shouting to the aid of the assaulted traveller. Damaged as his club was, it would probably have given a second proof of its strength and toughness upon the person of the other footpad, had he waited the curate's onslaught; which, however, he did not, but effected his retreat to the same asylum with his comrade, only to another corner of it. The first impulse of the brave clergyman was to pursue; but a moment's reflection convinced him of the rashness of doing so, weaponless as he was, while the robbers were probably provided with firearms, although, as yet, they had not thought proper to use them. When he first stooped down over the prostrate man, he concluded he was on the point of death, he moaned and gasped in so grievous a manner. Hercules elevated his head, and turning it so as to let such light as there was fall on the face, was equally distressed and astonished to ascertain (which he did at once by the features, particularly the nose, which was unmistakeable) that it was the tithe-proctor. Although the poor old fellow was more frightened than hurt, it took the curate a considerable time before he could get him on his legs, and quiet the agitation of his nerves, which shook so, that you could almost hear them vibrate. Woodward often said that he never in his life saw anything so humourously tragical as the face of Maguire, when, thrusting his hand convulsively into an inside pocket, he discovered that he had saved his life but lost his treasure. He fell back on the road in extremity of mental agony, and would probably have lain there till morning, had not the curate reminded him that the bandits were probably still within a stone's throw, and might possibly renew their attack. This succeeded;—the little proctor suffered his gigantic champion to raise him to his legs; at some short distance they found the horse quietly nibbling the short mountain grass, as if nothing extraordinary had occurred; Mr. Woodward helped Maguire to mount, and they ultimately gained the parsonage in the manner already described.

Mr. Spenser, after listening in mute astonishment to all these painful

the servants took charge of the maltreated and still quaking proctor. Hercules (fairly exhausted by the incredible toils of the day) slept powerfully, as he did everything, though still disturbed by thinking of his wife's anxieties, and all the unpleasant events of the night. The loss of so large a sum of money was too grave a matter to Mr. Spenser not to affect his repose very seriously. In strictness, it was true that his proctor (or his security) was liable to make good the sum lost; but the idea of enforcing his strict rights under such circumstances never occurred to the benevolent rector; and it would probably not have been very easy to enforce them, had he been so harshly disposed, the proctor being a very poor man, and his security a still poorer one! But there were other reasons stronger than the pecuniary ones that made Mr. Spenser feel extremely uncomfortable, in consequence of what had occurred.

At an early hour the following morning Hercules rose, literally "a giant refreshed," and made his way to the bed-side of his brother-in-law.

"This is a bad affair, Val," said the curate.

"Very bad indeed," said the rector, raising himself on his elbow. "It is not altogether the loss, although I shall feel that too, but to think of a crime like this being committed in our peaceful neighbouroood, a quiet pastoral parish like this!"

"I know this country longer than you do, Val," said Woodward, "and my father knew it before me. The robbery of last night is probably the only outrage of the kind that has been perpetrated for the last hundred years, not only in this parish, but in this barony. Indeed, it is the first case I ever heard of in all Ireland, of a tithe proctor being robbed. They cut off their ears and noses, and make them eat their applotments, but they never rob them."

"Mrs. Spenser will never consent to live here after this," said the rector, despondingly; now touching the point that agitated him most, and paying little attention to the curate's *resumé* of the attentions usually paid to proctors.

"Fudge!" said the curate. "Fudge!"

"I know her better than you do," said Mr. Spenser.

"Keep it secret, then," said Hercules.

"A very good suggestion," said the rector. "I shall act upon it."

Concealment seemed not very difficult, as it was still early, and only one servant had been roused by the nocturnal disturbance. As to Maguire, he was still in his bed, and not likely very soon to leave it.

"Let us go to him," said Mr. Spenser; "he may stand in need of some of your medical skill. I only cure the soul; you cure both soul and body, Hercules."

"I'm a great hand at a bruise," replied Woodward, "and I have treated a simple fracture before now,—but if there's anything worse, I'll leave it to Wilkins."

Between his robbery and his rheumatism, his bandaged forehead and his bizarre nose, his short cough and his deep groans, there was never such an odd patient as little Randy Maguire; and the oddity of the patient was well matched by the oddity of the doctor. The rector forgot his losses in the diverting contemplation of his curate and his proctor, as the former, with his great hand, manipulated the other from head to foot, in search of breakages, and Randy squeaked, and in vain remonstrated, under the ten-

"No fractures," said Hercules, at length, desisting from his painful investigation, "but a good many bruises."

"I should think so," said the rector gravely, and no doubt implying that it could not well be otherwise, after the squeezing poor Randy had undergone in the vice of the curate's fist.

When his pains subsided a little, Maguire gave a prolix account of his adventures; but he concealed almost the only particulars which could have afforded a clue to the discovery of the criminals, being unwilling to mention the pack of cards, as his inveterate gambling propensities had frequently brought down upon him the censure of both the clergymen, particularly the curate, a lecture from whom was a serious affair. Besides, Randy could not have told the whole truth on the subject, without involving Sydney, in some degree, as well as himself, which the proctor thought would neither be discreet nor handsome. He mentioned, however, the fact (of which the rector had not been aware before), that Sydney had been his companion on his journey to Castle Dawson, and bitterly lamented that he had not had the advantage of his protection on his return also. The rector expressed the same regret, and with a wonderful display of parental solicitude, put some questions to Maguire respecting his son, which the old man answered to the best of his knowledge.

Sydney was at that moment in the house, and in his bed, having returned about daybreak, without the cognizance of any of the family, save Lucy and Rebecca, the latter of whom observed him entering his chamber, as she was stealing back to her own, after the night's reading was over.

"Let us now go to breakfast," said Mr. Spenser to his brother-in-law. Hercules obeyed with alacrity; but, before he left the room, he directed the servant who was in attendance to apply some brown paper, steeped in brandy, to the proctor's temples.

"He will probably roar like a bull," said the curate, "but never mind—apply the paper."

CHAPTER XX.

BREAKFAST.

"The love of woman is a tricksy spirit,
As full of arts and wiles as hate itself,
Deep plots to please, or subtle schemes to save us,
Still practising some kindly stratagem,
Or setting some fond snare."

NEW PLAY.

RAIN, rain, still rain—we are in for another day of it, beyond all question. It certainly did rain enormously in these Donegal mountains, and at the parsonage particularly, when it set about it. The very trout in the streams got too much of it. Down it came, doggedly, and wickedly, in a forest of small water-spouts, as if the Atlantic were hung up in the air to give the island a douche-bath. Three drops of the Redcross rain was enough to wet a middle-sized man to the skin. The country-people were proud of it, as people always find something to be proud of—even their faults, or their misfortunes, sooner than be proud of nothing.

Think of another day of Mr. Trundle, his ship-canal, Loch Swilly, and the thirty millions! Mr. Spenser, indeed, had now sufficient to distract his mind without Mr. Trundle and the improvement of Ireland. Of this, however, his daughter Elizabeth knew nothing; so she came down to breakfast that morning full of a notable artifice to deliver her father from the fangs of his tormentor, who was already diligently studying his map to prepare himself to re-commence with effect the assault of the preceding evening.

"Mr. Trundle," she said, motioning him to sit beside her on a sofa at some distance from the table (probably the first time any lady so fair ever gave him such an invitation), "I want you to do me a very great favour; —but first, now, pray tell me candidly, shall you be very busy this morning?"

"Oh, my dear Miss Spenser," cried the little round man, in ecstacies, the more pleased at being thus accosted, as it was so new to him, "I am your humble servant for the whole day,—dispose of me as you please,—entirely at your service, and only too happy."

"Well, then, my dear sir," she continued, in the same very serious tone, "I'll tell you what you must do for me, if it is not too unreasonable,—you must give me a full account of your plan for establishing Small Loan Funds"—[the little black eyes of the agent here actually danced with glee] —"in connection with reading societies and lending libraries"—[here he jumped about]; "and that is not all—I am going to be still more exacting —you must draw out a plan expressly for myself, suited to the peculiar circumstances of this parish and neighbourhood, for it is really full time to have something of the kind here, and with your help—you, who are so great an authority—"

"I flatter myself," cried Mr. Trundle, visibly swelling with consequence, and radiant with delight, looking like a triumphant cock-robin, "I do flatter myself I am an authority upon Small Loan Funds. Who was the first man that called public attention to the subject of Loan Funds? Humble me. Who was the first that ever established a Small Loan Fund in Ireland? Humble me. Who—"

He might have gone on for ever with this process of self-catechising, had not Elizabeth interrupted him by moving towards the breakfast table, saying, whilst she winsomely took his arm, "Now remember, Mr. Trundle, you are *all* mine for the *entire* morning;" to which she internally added, "Now papa will be able to write his sermon."

Both the girls were much surprised when Mr. Woodward entered the breakfast-room with their father; but the accident to the bridge, and the vagrant habits of their uncle (the result of his enormous activity in the discharge of his duties), sufficiently accounted for his unexpected re-appearance.

Arabella seized an early opportunity of explaining to Colonel Dabzac that her uncle the curate was only her uncle by marriage. Elizabeth (far from being ashamed of a man who was an honour not only to the church but to human nature) paid him, as usual, every kind attention, supplied him liberally with tea, placed the sugar-bowl within his reach, and privately ordered a couple of turkey-eggs to be boiled for him, which, however, did not discourage that mighty breakfast-eater from also paying his addresses energetically to the pickled salmon and cold meats on the sideboard.

Dabzac was amused at the extent of the curate's devastation, but still more by seeing a tray with coffee, a quantity of toast, an egg, butter,

marmalade, and a wing of a fowl, sent up to Mrs. Spenser, who was so great an invalid that she could not make her appearance. Rebecca was scarcely able to support the weight of the tray.

"I need not ask how Mag is this morning," said Mr. Woodward to the rector, who smiled, and said that Mrs. Spenser had got a tolerably good night, and hoped in the course of the day to have the pleasure of receiving Colonel Dabzac and Mr. Trundle.

There was not much conversation, and the little that took place was not on an agreeable subject, for it related to Mr. Dawson. The curate's inquiries for Sydney led to the mention of that gentleman, and Colonel Dabzac, who had heard a report that he was likely to be returned to parliament for the borough of Rottenham, on the ultra-radical interest, spoke of him with a severity against which the curate thought himself bound to protest, though nobody present was more opposed to Dawson's politics than he was.

"He signed my Address to the Crown for the thirty millions," said Mr. Trundle, "so I ought to give him a good word, but I fear he is running through the remains of the property very fast."

"There's not much left to run through," said the colonel.

The curate made a remark to the effect that Dawson's embarrassments were not all of his own creation.

"My uncle," said Arabella, sneeringly, "thinks Mr. Dawson nothing less than an angel, because he once saved a boy from being drowned in Loch Erne."

"No, Miss Arabella, I do *not* think him an angel," rejoined Hercules, somewhat too vehemently, "I have not so high an opinion of any person of my acquaintance, whether a gentleman or a *lady*; but I do say that the man who saves the life of another at the risk of his own is a fine brave fellow."

"But it does not prove him a loyal man or a good Protestant," said Dabzac, coming to Miss Spenser's aid.

"Nor did I say that either, though I believe the majority of fine brave fellows are both," said Hercules, with quite too much energy for private life, though it would have done very well at a vestry.

Mr. Spenser smiled, but though he dissented from his curate's last proposition he made no remark upon it.

"When we have drained Loch Erne, as I propose," said Mr. Trundle,—

"No more people will be drowned there," said Dabzac, finishing the sentence for him.

"Mr. Trundle has got a new argument for his project," said Mr. Spenser, gravely smiling (every body else laughed) at the little agent's ingenuity in turning the conversation into his favourite channel. However, he was soon cut short by the general rising from the table, when the self-sacrificing Elizabeth instantly pounced on him, as if he was the greatest prize in the world, and carried him off to the hall, there to have him "*all to herself*," for three or four miserable hours.

Mr. Spenser and Mr. Woodward retired to the library to consult together further upon the steps to be taken in consequence of the events of the night; so that Miss Spenser and Colonel Dabzac had the field all to themselves for amusing or instructive conversation, for flirting, or love-making, at their discretion, or indiscretion, as the case might be.

CHAPTER XXI.

COURTSHIP AND HORSEMANSHIP.

"Light-winged toys of feathered Cupid."
OTHELLO.

You may say what you will of moonlights, and twilights, and sun-set hours, and summer evenings, for the occupation of love-making, but there is no time, or season, half so propitious for the purpose as a desperate wet day in a country house. If, under such circumstances, there is anybody to make love to, you must make it out of self-defence; simply because you have nothing else to do, unless you go to bed, or commit *felo-de-se*. See how Dabzac was situated! His host was in his library, at his private business; Elizabeth and her privy counsellor were transacting their own affairs; there was no other resource but chatting, laughing, and flirting with Miss Spenser, and it was by no means a disagreeable alternative, particularly as the colonel could not but see that she had every disposition to chat, laugh, and flirt with him. You may say, why did not the colonel take a book, and sit down and read it in a corner, or on his back on a sofa. Now, would that have been exactly quite polite, unless the lady did the same thing, which in this case the lady did not do? But the idea of a lieutenant-colonel of the Londonderry Militia reading! The probability is that Dabzac had never read a book in his life—at least since he left college; no, not even a trumpery three-volume novel from a circulating library. He never thought of reading; he scarcely knew there was such a mode of passing, or killing time; he would scarcely have thought of taking a book, had he been sentenced to solitary imprisonment for life in the Vatican or Bodleian. No, he had positively no resource but flirtation. Now flirtation is not love-making, but it is a good introduction to it. It is the skirmishing of the light troops, before the heavy brigades come up, and the action commences. They flirted sitting and standing, and walking up and down the room, sometimes round and round a conservatory, which communicated with the drawing-room. There was not a chair, couch, sofa, stool, any thing that could be sat on, or lounged on, which they did not chat and flirt on. They chatted of balls in Derry, and balls in Dublin; about the Rotunda, and the Castle, about diamonds, trains, feathers and lappets; then about horses and carriages, of all kinds and colours, subjects in which Arabella was knowing to a degree that astonished and captivated her gallant companion, who was only eloquent on such a theme as a hunter, or a curricle. Then they played back-gammon for a fit. Tired of back-gammon, they talked again, and by this time the colonel was beginning to think Arabella very pretty, and her hand particularly beautiful; he had seen a great deal of it during the back-gammon. The next thing was a discussion on liveries. The Dabzac colours were white and scarlet, which Miss Spenser approved of highly. Then, passing the piano, she ran her white fingers coquettishly up and down the keys, and the colonel insisted on having one of the French chansons, which she sang so agreeably.

vas just the soulless music to charm an empty man, and it had its decidedly in heightening flirtation into love-making. But what —there was still half-an-hour before luncheon. In a corner, on a f music-books and newspapers, Dabzac spied a battledore, but the le-cock was not to be found—there was a chase and a rummage for it · the newspapers and music-books. and at length the shuttle-cock d up, and very prettily did Arabella toss the feathered emblem of ity to and fro with her admiring play-fellow. It had only flown back orwards twice and thrice, when there was a flash of light through the —was it lightning? No, it was the sun himself! Arabella flew to a ow, and saw, with a delight only known to those who have been ed up for a week in a country-house, a clear rent in the clouds, igh which the cheery flash had issued, with several still larger chasms it, revealing the deep blue firmament, and proclaiming that the storm ver.

.th still livelier joy, you may well imagine, were the same glad phe- ena observed almost at the same moment by Elizabeth in the hall. e to yourself a dove escaping from the talons of a kite. Just so did .beth spring from the side of Mr. Trundle to join her sister in the co, where the warmth and dryness of the air assured them that the ring up of the clouds was not merely partial or temporary, but a ive guarantee for a charming afternoon. A ride was proposed by Spenser, and heartily seconded by Colonel Dabzac. Both were vain eir horsemanship, and each ambitious to shine in the other's eyes. .beth acquiesced, even though it was to separate her from Mr. Trundle, never rode for pleasure, and as seldom as he could upon business er. The horses were ordered, and the girls went to put on their estrian dresses. Mr. Trundle had agreed with Dabzac that they were to protract their stay at the parsonage after the first appearance of fine ther; and he looked annoyed, and a little suspicious, when the nel intimated his intention to continue Mr. Spenser's guest until r Sunday.

The state of the roads, my dear fellow—recollect the state of the ls."

I fear it is the state of something else," said little Trundle, laughing giving the colonel a poke in the side.

Never fear," said Dabzac, turning away. "All safe in that region; Miss Spenser is a deuced fine girl, it can't be denied."

But she is the daughter, you know, of a d—d Whig parson," said ndle.

And pray, Mr. Trundle, how have you passed the morning yourself?" ed the colonel. "Perhaps you thought nobody remarked *your* doings?"

Come, come, colonel, that's too good—that won't do—as if you don't ow very well what our *tête-à-tête* was about."

If it was not about love," said the colonel, cruelly, as he left the room put on his spurs, "it must have been about Loch Swilly."

Mr. Woodward, being a living barometer, had foreseen the improvement the weather an hour before the change actually took place, and (pro- ed with a new cudgel, in the place of that which he had broken on the e or the ribs of the footpad) had started once more for Redcross. His jugal affections were as staunch and orthodox as his religious opinions, d were always urging him homewards, while his rather latitudinarian lanthropy and benevolence impelled him to all points of the compass.

Anxious, indeed, to appease his wife's solicitude, he had despatched a bare-footed envoy, at break of day, to assure her of his return that evening, *Deo volente*, without fail; and he was already three good miles from the parsonage when the horses were brought to the door.

Mr. Spenser, fond of exercise on horseback, jaded with confinement, and uneasy and dispirited by what had occurred, was easily prevailed on to ride with his daughters. However, he paid his wife a visit before he mounted his horse, and had the satisfaction of leaving her heartily dining on a fried sole and a boiled chicken, though she assured him her appetite was entirely a morbid and nervous one—in fact, one of the worst symptoms of her case.

You know nothing of highland glories, if you only see them in calm and sunshine. It is in the coming on and the passing off of showers, and clouds, and tempests, that the magnificence of the mountains is revealed. It still continued a little blustry, but not so much as to prevent the party from enjoying their ride extremely. Their route was superb, one which, gradually climbing the heights over the estuary, commanded the scenery on the opposite side, and ultimately led to the verge of the cliffs over the ocean, whose agitation after so heavy a gale was always a spectacle of singular grandeur. The gradual uprolling of the mists, as the sun exhaled, or the breeze chased them, and the continual coming forth of one object after another, crags, trees, ruins, on the face of the hills, until only the tops remained, turbaned with white vapours, in wavy folds, sometimes transparent like gauze, charmed Mr. Spenser and Elizabeth, but were not much attended to by Arabella and her colonel. Here and there the vapours were obstinate, and clung with lazy tenacity alike to the bottom of the cliffs and the loftiest peaks, while the intermediate region was perfectly free.

"Not unlike what takes place," said the rector, "with respect to prejudice, which is the mist of the understanding;—the middle classes are usually emancipated from them first; their hold is much stronger at the base and in the high places of society."

"But, papa," said the bright girl on her prancing pony, "it is only a question of time and patience with mists of both kinds: the sun has only to shine a little longer, and the wind to assist him; then all will be clear from top to bottom. Look—the head of Knocknagoonagh is now quite uncovered."

"Oh, yes," said Mr. Spenser, fond of following out such little analogies, "the triumph of truth and of free discussion—the sun and the wind—is eventually certain, and we must be patient, as you say; but it must not be the patience of inactivity or indifference, but the patience of virtuous perseverance, waging a perpetual, but tolerant and good-humoured conflict with bigotry and error."

Arabella and Mr. Dabzac were cantering on before, the road just here admitting of that agreeable pace. She rode well and looked particularly handsome and distinguished on her pretty brown jennet. The broad-brimmed round beaver hat became her extremely; her complexion was freshened by the air and motion, and the disorder into which the puffs of wind threw her luxuriant hair, greatly improved its effect and beauty. Her passionate love of riding, and her fearlessness on horseback, gave her features more than usual animation. In short, Arabella Spenser was never seen to such advantage as in equestrian exercise, and Dabzac, alternately ambling or cantering at her side, never once recollected that after all she

was the daughter of a liberal parson, the character which of all others he and his clique most abhorred. But what cares Cupid for political distinctions, he whose glory it is to confound every thing human, the high with the low, the rich with the poor, the brilliant with the dull, the virtuous with the unworthy, nay, even the lovely with the ill-favoured; not even respecting beauty itself, licentious leveller that he is, the only thorough-paced apostle of *égalité*. It is little to him to mingle the blood of Whig and Tory, to get up a match between a Spenser and Dabzac.

But to many an eye (though there was no eye that day to regard her with gallantry), Elizabeth, on her humbler steed, in her straw bonnet, coarse in material but graceful in form, would have been far more piquant. She was not so fond of riding as of walking, and preferred a mountain pony to a showy horse like her sister's; still she carried herself well, not with the Amazonian air of Arabella, but with an easy, fearless, lady-like seat notwithstanding. The breeze brought out her rich colour also, and blew the curls of dark-brown hair about her shoulders, and sometimes into her eyes, making her bite her lip in pretty vexation, and often raise the whip-hand, without slackening her smart pace, to keep the rebel locks in subjection.

On they rode gaily, making for the summit that commanded the Atlantic, sometimes all abreast, sometimes in detachments, as when they started, while once or twice, just for a few moments, the girls were side by side, Mr. Spenser and his guest conversing together in advance of them. Mr. Spenser was not as animated and fluent as usual, and Dabzac preserved the same air of grim cold civility, which he never laid aside in his intercourse with men, unless, perhaps, in the tumult of political conviviality, a dinner on the 12th of July, or a revel on the 5th of November. The rector liked him less and less every moment of their acquaintance, little dreaming that his daughter's feelings were of so very opposite a nature. When men of intellect and wit are damped and chilled by dull or uncongenial company, their conversation is apt to sink into a mere common-place, which, from any lips but their own, would excite their contempt and ridicule. Mr. Spenser began soon to be sensible that he was talking not only down to the colonel's mark, but even below it. The consciousness of this was uncomfortable, and it was a great relief to him when Arabella again joined Dabzac in a canter, and he was left once more with his younger daughter.

They soon reached a point that commanded a near and wide view of the ocean, and, having enjoyed for some minutes the magnificent spectacle of its agitation after the late storm, they turned their horses' heads homewards. Nothing occurred of importance during the ride, except that Arabella invited Colonel Dabzac to join them in a pic-nic party to the island already mentioned, proposing the following Monday for the expedition. Elizabeth was pleased at the prospect of resuming the island scheme in her brother's absence, which promised to secure her against the intrusion of his friend Dawson; and Mr. Spenser never opposed any proposition upon which his daughters were agreed. Chatting of the necessary arrangements for the voyage of pleasure, they reached the parsonage, which they found in a state of confusion nearly as bad as that in which they had left the Atlantic. The secret of the robbery had been ill kept; it had reached Mrs. Spenser's ears with twenty frightful exaggerations; her husband found her in the state that Tabitha Bramble calls "asterisks;" and Rebecca (at her wit's ends) informed him that a groom had been sent for Doctor Wilkins.

CHAPTER XXII.

HOW THE SECRET WAS KEPT.

"You would pluck out the heart of my mystery."
HAMLET.

IT was idle to think that a thing of the kind could possibly be kept secret very long, one of the servants being privy to it, and Randy Maguire, the chief actor, or rather sufferer in the transaction, being the most garrulous of men, at the most garrulous stage of life, and actually under Mr. Spenser's roof, confined to his bed with the effects of the outrage. But it was not Randy who broke faith with the rector. In fact, it was Mr. Woodward's careless directions to Cox, the butler, to steep some brown paper in brandy, and clap it on Randy's broken head; it was that made all the mischief. The poor little proctor did roar like a bull, exactly as the curate had anticipated, the moment the smarting application touched him; and it unluckily happened that Rebecca was passing at the instant, on her way to the kitchen to make a toast for her mistress to take with her glass of Madeira. Now, Rebecca had the vice of curiosity (a vice in a lady's maid, though so admirable a quality in a philosopher), to counterbalance, perhaps, the virtue of patience, which she possessed in so high a degree; so she first tried to open the door, and failing in that (the cautious Mr. Cox having bolted it inside) she popped down her head to the key-hole, and was very much surprised, you may think, to see an old man in bed, writhing and bellowing in the hands of the butler, who was plastering his temples with something that seemed more piquant than was agreeable. Rebecca of course did not wait to be caught peeping, but went down to the kitchen, determined to get a full explanation from Cox, who was her declared lover, at the earliest opportunity. The opportunity was not far off. As she returned up-stairs with the toast, Cox was just coming out of the room, having done his best to carry out Mr. Woodward's directions.

"What ails Mr. Maguire?" said Rebecca.

"Why, what should ail him," said Cox, "but that he's sleepy and fatigated after his long jaunt, and has got his old rheumatis that he has had as long as I've known him."

"And has he the rheumatis in his forehead?" said the maid, looking very sly.

"No, he hasn't," said Cox, "why should he?"

"Because you were putting a blister on it a minute ago," replied Rebecca.

"A blisther on it!" repeated Cox.

"Yes, and you needn't deny it, Mr. Cox, for I seen you with these eyes."

"Then your eyes were where they shouldn't have been," said the detected operator.

"Never mind," said Rebecca, "but tell me all about it this instant."

I would if I could," said Cox, soothingly, "but it's a secret."

"Don't let mistress's toast get cold," said Rebecca, stamping her foot.

"Go along up with it, then," said the butler.

"Not till you tell me the secret, if the toast was to grow as cold as a lump of ice."

"It's a secret, I tell you."

"Much you know about keeping secrets," said Rebecca, "and, at all events, two can keep a secret better than one."

"Well, then, I don't like keeping a secret from you, Rebecca."

"Don't then, Mr. Cox."

A little sentimental bargain was then struck, upon consideration of which Cox covenanted to betray the confidence reposed in him. The engagement to break faith was better respected than the engagement to keep it, and Rebecca ran up to Mrs. Spenser's room, with the toast somewhat cold, but so full of the story of the Black Castle, that whatever scolding she got made very slight impression on her. A tale of less harrowing import, she might have ventured to communicate herself; but she was an humble girl, and felt that the robbery of her master's proctor was an event that demanded an historian of higher mark. Escaping from her mistress, she flew to Miss M'Cracken. You may suppose the story was coloured blood-red by the time it reached Mrs. Spenser's ear. It was, in fact, another tale of the forty thieves, all but the jars and the suet.

Mrs. Spenser recalled all she had been hearing for several months of the insurrectionary state of the southern counties, concluded that the sanguinary warfare against the rights of the church had at length broken out in Donegal, and eventually, (being well assisted,) worked herself into the hysterical state in which her husband found her on his return from riding. Perhaps there was no ringing of bells, and running to and fro with salts and tonics, and aromatic vinegar!

It was in vain the rector tried to quiet her nerves and her apprehensions. She was a woman utterly without self-command at any time, incapable of reasoning or being reasoned with; and besides, her husband's abortive attempt to conceal the occurrence from her, naturally made her incredulous now, when he tried to undo the effects of Miss M'Cracken's exaggerations, and reduce the affair to its proper level.

In the midst of all the hubbub, Sydney re-appeared. He had arrived indeed, as we have already stated, at an early hour in the morning (having pressed close on the heels of the unfortunate proctor), but being extremely fatigued, had retired instantly to his room, and to bed, where he would probably have lain till dinner-time, had not the confusion in the house prematurely roused him. Perhaps the first warm interest he ever took in the affairs of the family was upon this occasion. He felt exceedingly for poor Maguire, and was now seriously angry with himself for having parted company with the old man on the previous morning, when he stood so particularly in need of a protector.

Randy went over the whole story again, not concealing from young Spenser what he had concealed from his father, namely, how he had been surprised counting the bank notes by the fellow who had been sent for the cards, and how he had also unguardedly disclosed to the same individual that his business at Castle Dawson was to receive the arrears of tithes.

"There's nothing in that," said Sydney; "the fellow you mean was Mr. Dawson's servant."

"He looked as if he never see'd a bank-note in all his born days before," said Randy.

"Possibly he never did," said Sydney; "but are you positive nobody else saw the money, or where you put it?"

"Nobody else knew nothing about it more than the child unborn," answered Maguire, "except your own self, Master Sydney, and my bit of a niece, poor Maggy Maguire, at the inn, and she didn't see the beautiful yellow boys, and the illigant new Bank of Ireland notes, only the tattered ould provincials."

"Maggy didn't rob you, at any rate," said Sydney.

"Whoever did it was a cute chap," said Maguire, "howsomdever he got his intelligence, for he never went through the ceremony of axing where I kep the money, but in with his fist into the right place at onst, as if it was his own pocket the thief was ransackin'."

"That's an important circumstance," said Sydney; "but now, Randy, I must leave you. Take care of yourself, and to-morrow, or next day, you'll be as well as ever you were."

"Oh, it's all over with me on this side of the grave," grunted the old man; but he had been uttering the same grunt for the last ten years, so Sydney paid it very little attention.

Leaving Maguire's room, the first person he met with was his sister Elizabeth, who had not yet taken off her riding-dress. Sydney was dressed in the gay green coat which Dawson had made him a present of. Elizabeth did not ask him how he came by it, for she knew only too well. In the gentlest possible way, however, she reproved her brother for having so abruptly left home, and so long absented himself from it. She never mentioned Dawson's name, but Sydney knew that she aimed at him, and he eulogised his friend more warmly than ever. He was armed now with the fact that the Dawsons had fully discharged their pecuniary obligations to his father; and to that, of course, Elizabeth had no answer to make, only she thought it strange that a man should be made so much of because he paid a just debt of very old standing; and she intimated this opinion distinctly.

"No," cried her brother, "it was no debt of Dudley's at all;—it was his father's debt, not his; his conduct is the most honourable that ever was heard of; but you and Arabella are prejudiced against him, and for no reason in the world but that he smokes a cigar now and then, and wears a green coat."

"For which reason, I suppose," interrupted Elizabeth, archly, "he has transferred his green coat to you."

"What if he has?" rejoined her unmannered brother almost fiercely.

"Only this," said Elizabeth, with spirit, "that both Arabella and I like to see you dressed like a gentleman—not like Mr. Dawson."

"Oh, indeed," said Sydney.

"And the companion of gentlemen," added his sister, with energy.

"I am not going to consult you in the choice of my companions," cried the petulant young man, raising his voice; "but Dudley will be a member of Parliament in the course of a week or two, and then, perhaps, you will change your tune."

"The last piece of elegance from Castle Dawson!" cried Elizabeth; and glowing with vexation, she turned contemptuously away from her infatuated and rude brother, murmuring audibly as she went,—"A member of Parliament, indeed,—will that make him a gentleman?"

Sydney went chafing to his own room, where with the passion that youth of his temperament has for fire-arms and ammunition, he first employed himself in cleaning his gun and remaining pistol, polishing the barrels, and seeing that he was well provided with caps and with ball-

cartridges. Then he wrote and dispatched a letter to Dawson, to acquaint him with what had occurred, and request him to come over to the parsonage at his earliest convenience, and bring the pistol with him, which would no doubt be found in the room where Sydney had slept, or in the drawing-room where they had amused themselves riddling the fire-screens. This done, the young man made a more careful toilette than usual (partly in honour of Colonel Dabzac, and partly to avoid Elizabeth's displeasure), and went down to dinner.

A dull, distracted dinner it was; the whole evening indeed was a wretched one. Mr. Spenser was unable to pay the ordinary attentions to his guests, and Mr. Trundle had no one to listen for five minutes consecutively to his projects. All was at sixes and sevens; nothing but running up-stairs and down-stairs; ordering and counter-ordering, mixing draughts, preparing baths, and charging stone bottles with hot water. Every quarter of an hour some new crotchet got possession of Mrs. Spenser's noddle, and at last she sent for her husband, and insisted on his sending to the nearest police-station, and getting an armed party to garrison the parsonage. Mr. Spenser, reminded of "Hamilton's Bawn," suspected shrewdly that either Miss M'Cracken or Rebecca had suggested this idea; a dashing green serjeant would be such an agreeable addition to the company in the servants' hall. But there was no use in remonstrance—the rector was compelled to sit down, and in his wife's presence write to the police-officer in command (with whom he was acquainted) requesting the loan of a couple of his men for a night or two. The request was granted (the county being in fact so notoriously tranquil that it mattered little how the police were distributed), and before it was dark, three tall handsome fellows in dark green uniforms, with glittering muskets on their shoulders, and short swords by their sides, were marched into the rectory; and well pleased they were to get into such snug quarters, for they had a capital supper with the domestics, good warm beds to mount guard in, and such fun and flirtation with the housemaids that the noise of the merriment occasionally reached the library and the tea-table.

Miss M'Cracken, of course, scorned the festivities of the kitchen, above which, indeed, her manners as well as her education raised her; but Rebecca, as soon as she had bundled the young Spensers to bed, which she did as fast as the process of untrousering and unfrocking could be accomplished, hastened to join the rest of the household in entertaining the constabulary, and made herself extremely agreeable to every one but Mr. Cox, who thought she might just as well have remained in the nursery darning stockings, or with Lucy reading "Clarissa."

The police, however, did not satisfy Mrs. Spenser. She must have the lower windows of the house blocked up and barricaded; the carpenter must be sent for without a moment's delay. To this Mr. Spenser good-humouredly demurred, observing that with three armed policemen, and a lieutenant-colonel to head them, all danger was out of the question; but the moment his back was turned, his wife sent for the artificer in wood, (who lived hard by the glebe), on her own responsibility, and actually had an interview with him at the side of her bed, and instructed him to put the lower part of the house into as complete a state of defence as possible.

The circle round the tea-table were not a little astonished and diverted when the village Vauban tapped at the door of the library, and asked permission to enter and commence the fortifications. However, it was absolutely necessary to give Mr. Chip something to do, that the noise of

his hammer should resound through the house, and accordingly Mr. Spenser took him into the back hall and set him to make a large wooden case for a parcel of books which he was going to send up to Dublin to be bound. When the carpenter sent in his bill some time afterwards, one of the items ran thus—"for fortifications, including a box for books, seven shillings and sixpence."

CHAPTER XXIII.

DAWSON IN SOCIETY.

SYDNEY did not expect to receive an answer from his friend for some days, but he received a reply the following morning by the hands of his own messenger, who found Dawson at home.

Dawson's letter was only too cordial and energetic. The robbery astonished him more than anything that had ever happened in the country, and he pledged himself to strain every nerve, and spare neither fatigue nor expense, to drag the perpetrators of this sacrilegious and abominable crime to light. The sacrilege was what Dawson thought so especially atrocious.

He would drive over to the parsonage immediately, for in such a case the loss of a moment might be irreparable. Nor was this all; he proceeded to express a hope that, should the loss of so considerable a sum happen to be the slightest immediate inconvenience to Sydney's father, he would not forget that he had a friend at Castle Dawson, who, while he had a shilling in his pocket, would only be too proud and too happy to accommodate him.

Such was the tenor of the letter, more remarkable for its warmth than its delicacy, particularly the offer of accommodation, but it was written on the spur of the moment, and at all events not likely to find a very severe critic in Sydney Spenser.

Dawson kept his word (as he always did religiously, when it suited his purposes), and arrived the next day at the parsonage in a curricle, drawn by a pair of showy grays, an equipage intended, no doubt, to make a lively impression on Elizabeth Spenser, but which only succeeded in dazzling Miss M'Cracken and Rebecca. Sydney was anxious about his pistol, but Dawson reported that it had not been found.

"Is it possible," said Sydney, "that by mistake that surveyor or the strolling artist—"

Dawson laughed unpleasantly at the suggestion, but thought it unlikely that any such mistake had occurred. Sydney left him to dress for dinner.

Not a word of intimation had either Mr. Spenser or his daughters received of this unwelcome addition to their circle. You may imagine how great was the surprise and displeasure of the girls, when, entering the drawing-room, they found Mr. Dudley Dawson amongst the guests. There was another increase to their party in the person of Mr. Oliver, the rector of a neighbouring parish, a profoundly grave man, who spoke extremely little, and only to draw other people out, particularly Mr. Spenser, whom he enthusiastically admired. When he heard anything that particularly

surprised, or amused him, his eye expressed it by a peculiar twinkle, but he seldom opened his lips when the company exceeded three or four people.

I must try to paint Dawson again, as he appeared on the present occasion, accoutred, it is to be supposed, rather to kill ladies than catch thieves. Take one of those stuffy, pigeon-breasted lay-figures, on whose backs the tailors of Cheapside and the Strand advertise their "fashionable attire;" clothe it in one of their flashiest blue coats with blazing gilt buttons, and let the coat hide as little as possible of a white satin waistcoat, flowered with enormous peonies; let the trousers be the glossiest black, disclosing at the feet silk stockings of a fiery flesh colour, the toes concealed by a square inch of varnished leather, the only visible portion of what is presumed to be a shoe; stud the all-too-beruffled shirt with three massive diamonds, probably not from Golconda; then whisker your figure at the hair-dresser's, next door to the tailor who supplied the coat; perfume it with musk, or essence of lavender; feed it at the oyster-shops and Haymarket restaurants, until the cheeks become red and bloated; carbuncle the fingers with rings and the nose with brandy-and-water; then inflate it with prodigious self-conceit; animate it with a spirit of Brummagem patriotism,—any desperate nonsense will do for a political creed, any slang dictionary will furnish a vocabulary,—there is Dawson for you, as he approached with a strut and a wriggle to pay his homage to the fair Spensers, the elder of whom, certainly, returned his salute with as much contumelious disregard as a clever actress with long study could throw into a glance and a curtsey. The younger, who most disliked him, testified her aversion less, and the coxcomb had the egregious folly to construe in his own favour the mere well-bred suppression of Elizabeth's repugnance.

The table-talk was not the most interesting: there was talk, but no conversation. Those who cannot even talk are too small a minority; and Dawson was not one of them. He talked loud and big; making laborious efforts to appear at his ease, while manifestly out of his element in refined society, and also betraying by the incoherence of his observations and the excitement of his manner, a pre-occupation of mind, not uncommon, indeed, in men living from hand to mouth, and heirs apparent to estates in Chancery. As to the robbery, Dawson talked more feelingly than if he had been robbed himself; he spoke of blowing up the Black Castle with gunpowder, and agreed with Sydney to ransack it the next day armed "from top to toe." He was of great service to Colonel Dabzac in the eyes of the rector and his second daughter. Dabzac, though only a stiff, grim, vacant, well-dressed nobody, was a gentleman in appearance as well as position; he was no adventurer, or roué; his knowledge and love of horses was that of a squire, not of a black-leg; and, besides, he was disposed to taciturnity, an excellent gift in men who have no bank to draw upon for pleasant discourse. He looked to great advantage beside the presuming, swaggering, restless Dawson, who, if he had only had the tact to sit still in his chair, and hold his tongue, would have been only one half as disagreeable as he actually was. Even Mr. Trundle rose in estimation from the same cause; better loan-funds and Loch Swilly to all eternity than Dawson's gross politeness, heartless cordiality, and the continual effort to conciliate, which had only the effect of thoroughly disgusting every body. Mr. Spenser was not the man to have such a guest at his table; he neither knew how to silence, or how to talk to him. He would fain have

shunned politics, but the conversation became political in spite of him. Dawson began by admitting that the Repeal of the Union was all gammon; that good measures were all the Repealers wanted, and when asked why they raised that exciting and dangerous cry, if their real object was only to carry some minor points, he made a very lame attempt to shuffle out of the difficulty; said that the more people asked the more they got, and compared it to the practice of lawyers who lay the damages in an action at twenty thousand pounds, when they only expect, and would be perfectly content with a verdict for perhaps a fortieth of the sum. Mr. Spenser shook his head, and then Dawson protested that he did not mean to justify the principle; on the contrary, he admitted it to be highly objectionable; he was always himself an advocate for plain-dealing, and would be one to the end of the chapter.

Mr. Oliver's eye twinkled more than once during this speech of Master Dudley's.

The Church having been mentioned, Dawson pronounced a high-flown eulogy upon that institution to captivate Mr. Spenser, who would not have said half so much himself in praise of it. Observing that he had overdone this a little, he declared that the Church had monstrous abuses, not a doubt of it,—it was monstrous that any Christian Church should cost the nation two millions *per annum*. Here the eye of Oliver twinkled more than before.

"Two millions, Mr. Dawson!" said Mr. Spenser, smiling.

"Scarcely a fourth of the sum," said Colonel Dabzac, with dry asperity, and not so much as looking at the person whose observation he noticed.

Then Dawson drew in his horns, and showed his perfect willingness to estimate the wealth of the Church at any figure the company thought reasonable; after which he added, that if every clergyman in the establishment was only one-tenth part as charitable and exemplary in every relation of life, public and private, as the rector of the parish of Redcross, "far from thinking two millions a-year a single farthing too much, he would vote with all his heart to quadruple the sum."

Mr. Spenser could not but say that he was much flattered by this speech, offensively impertinent as it was.

"I only say what everybody in the world will swear to," proceeded Dawson, still more brazenly, "and what's more, Mr. Spenser, if the parish was polled this moment, you'd be the biggest bishop in Ireland to-morrow morning by universal suffrage."

You may fancy how this effusion made the eye of the silent parson quiver with merry meaning.

"Not the biggest," said Mr. Spenser, trying to smile at what revolted him so thoroughly, and devoutly wishing that Dawson had continued a tithe-defaulter, since the settlement had made him (the rector) nothing the richer, while the non-payment had the effect of keeping at a distance a man, whose style of conversation, like his style of living, was so very discordant from that of civilised people.

Dawson rose from his wine only too soon. This was a piece of affectation like the rest of his behaviour.

The conversation after he retired naturally turned upon *modesty*, and the rector said "he feared it would be found that the *assumption* of modesty thrives better in the world than the genuine quality itself. Assurance in the mask of humility carries all before it. It is in life," he added, "as in jumping; you must fall back in order to spring forward,

but you must be careful not to fall back too far. Backwardness overdone may be as fatal as excessive forwardness. There is an art in this as in every thing else."

"You would seem to give a Machiavellian turn," said Mr. Oliver, "to the divine precept, as if we were directed to take the lower seats, *in order* that the host should desire us to go up higher." This was a long speech for Mr. Oliver, and took up a considerable time, for he spoke with the utmost gravity and deliberation, as if pronouncing judgment in a case of life and death.

"The words *do* in strictness bear that meaning," said Mr. Spenser, "but it is only one of many cases where worldly wisdom coincides with heavenly. The man of the world succeeds best by conforming to the line of Christian conduct. The precept you quote hits the true mean between self-exaltation and undue self-abasement. We are commanded to take the lower seats, but still among the guests, not to go down below the salt."

"There is not much occasion," said Dabzac, "to preach the danger of excessive modesty in this country."

"Perhaps not," said the rector, "yet I know no people who, speaking of them nationally, are so deficient in the virtue or faculty of accurate self-measurement,—who are so distrustful of their own strength when they are really strong, and so apt to be over-confident exactly when they ought to be humble. I know no country where there is so much spurious modesty and at the same time so much ill-acted assurance; where the man who is conscious of superiority is so absurdly backward to assert it, and where men of no mark make such ludicrous efforts to seem of consequence."

"How is it to be explained?" said Mr. Oliver.

"I should have to write the history of Ireland to answer you," said the rector.

"No man could do that better," said Mr. Oliver with his great solemnity, "I wish you would undertake the work."

"I have neither industry, nor I fear, *conscience* enough for such undertaking," replied the rector, smiling. "'There goes a great deal of conscience to the writing of a history,' as Brown observes truly in the *Religio Medici*."

"There ought to go," said Oliver, couching his remark in the fewest possible words.

"I feel," continued Mr. Spenser, "that, like Hume, I should find it so troublesome to rise from my sofa to hunt for an authority; or, like Vertot, when he wrote his history of the Knights of Malta, and received the valuable information about the siege, after he had composed the account of it with scarce any materials. '*Ma foi, mon siége est fait,*' said the easy Frenchman. The facts came too late!"

Oliver smiled gravely, and repeated his opinion that a history of Ireland by his friend would be a most desirable accession to literature.

"I wrote one history," said Mr. Spenser, "and I do not think I shall ever write another."

"What was that?" said Mr. Oliver.

"A history of Higgledy-Piggledy," said the rector. "You shall have it to read, if you think it worth your while; I'll give it to you in the course of the evening, and you may put it in your pocket, or in the fire."

Oliver's face beamed with delight. They rose and followed Mr. Dawson to the tea-table. Had you seen Dawson enter the drawing-room that

evening you would have perceived how little accustomed he was to such apartments. He threw himself down on the chair nearest to where Elizabeth was sitting, and (mitigating his stable-yard tones as much as he could) commenced by repeating the gross piece of flattery about the bishopric which he had delivered himself of in the dining-room; adding, that her father was the most charming man he had ever known, and what a pity it was such a man should be banished to a country parish in the wildest part of Ireland. Then he spoke of Sydney as the finest, noblest, cleverest, handsomest, most promising fellow in the world, and said magnificent things about friendship, like a Pylades talking of an Orestes. His next move was to ask Elizabeth whether she did not sing; to which she replied in the negative; he felt certain that she was at least an instrumental musician, and hoped she would play something, which was, of course, respectfully declined. Then he reconnoitred with his eye-glass the inch of patent-leather at the points of his shoes, and talked of dances and balls; making such hash of his wills and shalls, woulds and coulds; such perpetual use of the words elegant, splendid, tremendous, and thrilling; and now and then, also, on the very point of rapping out an adjuration, arresting himself so seasonably at the "by,"—that Elizabeth was a little amused, though much annoyed, by his conversation. However, she was happy to escape to Mr. Oliver and the tea-table, and she kept Dawson at an immeasurable distance for the rest of the evening. Though not very thin-skinned, he could not but feel that he was not eminently successful in the drawing-room; but he had vanity enough to support him under still greater discouragements: nay, he formed that very night, for the first time, a deliberate scheme for the conquest of Elizabeth Spenser, far less, however, by gaining her affections (of which, indeed, he could have had but a slender hope) than by the use of influences and instrumentalities much more at his command than the art of captivating the heart of an amiable woman.

Dawson professed himself a passionate admirer and worshipper of beauty. Had he been so in reality, he would not have been the gross sensualist that he was. "There is no more potent antidote," says Schlegel, "to low sensuality, than the adoration of beauty; but there are souls to whom even a vestal is not holy."

He had the shrewdness not to attempt again upon that occasion to break through the rampart of formality and coldness behind which the resolute girl entrenched herself; he had even the skill to assume a distant but profoundly respectful manner towards her, permitting Colonel Dabzac and even Mr. Trundle to perform little acts of attention which he might have performed himself without the imputation of forwardness.

But if he wanted admirers in the drawing-room, he was more successful elsewhere. More than once in the course of the evening Rebecca crept to the door, and found opportunities for peeping in and feasting her eyes upon the white satin waistcoat, strewed with red peonies, and the dazzling toes of Mr. Dawson's shoes. She gave such a report of his splendour to Lucy, that it was with difficulty the latter controlled her inclination to slip down and enjoy the same spectacle in the same clandestine way; but it was against her system to demean herself without a sufficient motive, so she not only restrained her curiosity, but lectured Rebecca for peeping, and told her sharply that she would have been better employed teaching the children their catechism, or putting them to bed. Rebecca took the latter part of the hint without delay, and then hastened to the kitchen,

where she enraged Mr. Cox exceedingly, by dancing a jig before supper with one of the policemen.

Mr. Dawson certainly did exhibit amazing vigour in the rector's service the following day; he started with young Spenser and one of the police-constables in quest of the robbers at daybreak, provided with arms of various kinds, a hamper of provisions, and a powerful and ferocious bull-dog, to whose society Sydney was not a little partial, and of whose exploits he had wonderful things to tell.

Sydney was active and brave. The prospect of a raid through the hills was just the thing to excite to the highest pitch a boy of his turbulent disposition, and who plumed himself so much on his animal strength. However, nothing came of that day's expedition; Sydney wanted to explore the Black Castle, but his comrade thought it would be mere waste of time to do so, so they contented themselves with scouring the country between the parsonage and Castle Dawson, diverging here and there into the wild glens to the right and left of the road, but not getting a shot the live-long day at any thing more important than a hare.

CHAPTER XXIV.

MR. SPENSER'S ACCOUNT OF THE ISLAND OF HIGGLEDY-PIGGLEDY.

"In the Commonwealth I would by contraries
Execute all things, for no kind of traffic
Would I admit; no name of magistrate;
Letters should not be known; no use of service;
No use of metal, corn, or wine, or oil,
No occupation; all men idle, all,
And women too." THE TEMPEST.

THE grave Mr. Oliver, enthusiastic about every thing that Mr. Spenser said, or did, thought he would never be permitted to retire soon enough, so anxious was he to peruse the paper which the rector put into his hands on the night recorded in the foregoing chapter. Putting on his spectacles and his *robe-de-chambre*, and establishing himself in a great chair with his feet on the fender, he read as follows:

"Higgledy-Piggledy is an island in 96 deg. 0 min. 0 sec. south longitude, and 396 deg. 70 min. 3 sec. west latitude, as laid down in the maps of the Swiss Admiralty, from the accurate surveys of the Great Chartists. Its place on the globe is almost the antipodes of the *Insulæ Fortunatæ*. Strabo has not mentioned it, probably, because he was ignorant of its existence; and the silence of Malte-Brun in later times may plausibly be accounted for upon the same hypothesis.

"The island is so called from the Higgledies, who constitute the smaller and wealthier part of its population, and the Piggledies, who constitute the greater and poorer portion. The Piggledies again derive their name probably from 'pig,' either because that animal abounds amongst them, or because in its character and general habits it resembles them very strikingly. In fact, it is a common saying that there is nothing so like a Piggledymy

"The country is divided into four provinces, called Bluster, Funstir, Spunster, and Donaught. Funstir is the finest and most remarkable; what a pleasant land it is, you may conclude from its appellation; the Piggledies have it nearly all to themselves, and it includes the celebrated and eccentric district or shire of Topsiturvia, where, in peaceable times, the people are always in insurrection, but, when rebellion is afoot, they are actual models of good behaviour. Spunster, the northern part of the island, is the province where the Higgledies are found chiefly. Many of them are as gay fellows as the Topsiturvians themselves; but others are as orderly and shabby as any population can be,—low industrious creatures, who work for their bread, generally at weaving, or spinning, whence comes probably the name of the province.

"The metropolis of Higgledy-Piggledy is the great city of Hubbub, in the neighbourhood of which is held annually, about the time of the summer solstice, the elegant festival of Brokenhead, corresponding to the Olympic games amongst the barbarous Greeks.

"The Piggledies lodge for economy in the sties erected for their swine and they live upon a certain root, which they are so passionately fond of that they prefer the risk of starvation to propagating any other. Although a certain mixture of blue and yellow is the colour of the nation, they can not abide it in crops, and a Piggledyman will cultivate even nettles and ragweed rather than turnips or mangold-wurzel. There is corn grown in many places,—wheat, because the climate is singularly unfit for it, and oat and barley, not to make the vulgar article of bread, but for the wiser and nobler purpose of extracting from these grains a certain liquor, which has a marvellous effect on the eyes, making the drinker see objects twice over so that all the blessings of Providence seem doubled, and man is, of course doubly grateful and twice happy.

"The ancient constitution of Higgledy-Piggledy was a Mixed Anarchy, form of government on which De Lolme is strangely silent, and of which Locke says nothing. But it was a glorious constitution notwithstanding and, if not 'the envy of surrounding nations,' it might certainly have been said to be 'one of the wonders of the world.' At all events, the Higgledy Piggledidians enjoyed under it for many a century a degree of happy confusion, such as no other country in the world has ever been blessed with and as it promoted all the great objects of misrule and merriment, the devotion to it is not very difficult to understand.

"Up to the beginning of the present century, the island had a sort of legislature of its own, not extremely unlike the British Parliament in form called the National Harem-Scarem. Marvellous things are recorded of the Harem-Scarem of Higgledy-Piggledy, which the Higgledies kept all themselves, with all its profits and honours, in order that the Piggledies by their efforts to get into it also, might never want a motive to keep the country in its normal state of uproar and disorder. At length a more powerful neighbouring state, the Whitelanders, envious of the prosperity the people of Higgledy-Piggledy in the possession of this inestimable domestic treasure, determined to rob them of it, and actually committed the robbery about the beginning of the present century. To the Higgledies this was perhaps a serious blow, but the Piggledies might have been expected to have rather rejoiced than grieved at it. The contrary, however, took place. The Piggledies have been howling like maniacs from that day to this for the restoration of their native Harem-Scarem, an assembly into which the

complain that the stronger state has inflicted many good laws, or afflicted them with much good government, yet nothing will content them but to have the mismanagement of their own affairs in their own hands, the indefeasible right of *self-misrule*, or (as their demagogues sometimes express it) –*'Higgledy-Piggledy for the Higgledy-Piggledymen!'*

"There are two codes of laws in the island, one the dullest system imaginable, diametrically opposed to public opinion, at least, to the public opinion of the Piggledies, the other called the code of Topsiturvia, the work of an illustrious native of that part of the island, who may be considered as the Numa, the Zoroaster, or the Moses of Higgledy-Piggledy.

"The courts by which this admirable code is administered are held, like the Areopagus of old, by night, or in the dark; nothing can be simpler, cheaper, or more expeditious than their processes; they bring justice to every Higgledy gentleman's hall-door; in fact every thing is done by the plaintiff himself; he is prosecutor, witness, judge, jury, and executioner, by which it is inconceivable what a saving is effected both of time and money; and so uninfluenced by personal feelings are those august tribunals, that even after judgment in capital cases, the traverser is allowed to appear by his attorney or agent, and is shot, or otherwise executed by *proxy*.

"Whenever the Piggledies have the power, they proceed against the Higgledies (who are generally the nominal lords of the soil), according to Topsiturvian law. On the other hand, the Higgledies, when they have the advantage, take care to cite the Piggledies before their own judges, and try them by their own formal, tedious, and ruinously expensive system. However, when the object is to regain possession of the soil, the processes of Higgledy justice are rapid enough in all conscience, nearly as swift and *mortal* as those of the other code.

"One of the strangest things connected with the state of the law in the island is a system they have, by which the bulk of the soil is vested in a high legal functionary, corresponding with our Chancellor. In fact, the entire island may be said to be 'in Chancery,' and the general state of tillage is exactly what might be anticipated from such a droll arrangement, for, except the process of *draining*, what branch of agriculture can any court, either of Law or Equity, have a *practical* acquaintance with?

"There are two religions in the island, the Piggledy religion established in fact, and the Higgledy religion established in law; the opposition of law to fact being an admirable provision for keeping the country in that highly comic and convulsive state, without which it would not be worth living in. Indeed they draw largely upon their religious institutions for what they consider the prime comfort of existence; and in this they are highly to be commended, inasmuch as religion, no doubt, ought to constitute the happiness of every people. The great temple, or state pagoda of the island, only frequented by the Higgledies, though supported at the cost and charges of the Piggledy-men, is a gorgeous and astonishing pile; it stands on the edge of an awful precipice, and is in the singular form of a cone, or sugar-loaf, turned upside-down, the broad summit representing its ample possessions, the small point in contact with the earth being perhaps emblematic of the small fraction of the community which enjoys its benefits. Nothing can be more terrific, seen at a distance, than this strangest of edifices that the hand of man ever raised. Foreigners who visit the island shudder to think of such a dangerous pile overhanging them and threatening to topple on their heads every moment. But this state of unstable and perilous equilibrium is what charms the people themselves, and particularly the

Piggledies, who might long since have reversed the fabric and placed it on its base, had such been their will and pleasure. As to the Higgledies, their zeal in defence of the sacred structure is perfectly natural, for they must take it as it is, or forego its advantages altogether. They are always fidgetty about its safety, and keep a vast army on foot ready at a moment's warning to surround the building and prop it up with their lances and spears.

"The vernacular language of the country is a sort of dialect between high Bluster and common Rigmarole. It is so highly figurative that it is found to be almost impossible to state facts, or convey simple truth in it. The accent is also a mixed one, something between a roar and a whine, which makes it excellent either to bully or beg in. You may fancy what a Babel the isle is, particularly in the chief cities, where the most notorious whiners and bawlers congregate.

"Besides Hubbub, the metropolis, there are other important towns, for instance Riotville on the mighty river Trash, and Hocus-Pocus on the banks of the Drivel. In every town there is a great chamber, or senate-house, called Balderdash Hall, and the loudest and longest speaker is the Demosthenes of the place. The principal subject of discussion is always the restoration of the Harem-Scarem; but when strangers demand of the Piggledies, what the Harem-Scarem did for them when they had it, or what they expect it would do for them, if they had it again, not an orator of them all has a word to answer; but so much the worse for the interrogator, for he is sure to be bespattered with mire from head to heel, and runs a serious risk of being flung bodily into the Trash, or the Drivel.

"Being a proud and haughty people—most of them descended from kings, and not a man of them who is not a gentleman born—they generally despise trade. In their cities you will see but few cheesemongers, or fish-mongers; but some branches of industry find more favour with them; there are enough of news-mongers and grievance-mongers, these occupations not being deemed disparaging to their gentility, on which no people plume themselves so much. You are not to suppose, however, that there are no degenerate, low-minded creatures amongst them, who use their heads for thinking, and their hands for working, more than their tongues for talking. There are several such perverse, poor-spirited people, sprinkled over the island, but they are in a wretched minority, and are despised, as they deserve to be, pretending to be better than their neighbours, and not having the patriotism to conform to the genius and character of the country.

"So thoroughly averse to commerce is Higgledy-Piggledy in general, that the most popular cry in the island is for the total destruction of the only branch of commerce open to them, the exportation of their own superfluous food, for they raise food in enormous quantities, the soil being as fertile as any in the world. Nothing enrages the orators at Balderdash Hall more than the spectacle of a drove of pigs going to market, or a sack of corn sold to a foreign merchant. They insist upon cramming the farmers with their own bacon, and would throw the corn into the Drivel sooner than see it exported abroad. Nor is this school of political economy confined to the Piggledy provinces. Many of the Higgledies take the same wise views of the interests of the public. Indeed, this is one of the few points upon which the orators of both races concur in opinion, but as their agreement in this respect tends to promote the general happy confusion, it must be regarded as a fortunate circumstance; and the great pity is, that

both parties have not their old Harem-Scarem back again, that they might have to say, that, for once, they acted cordially together, and *ruined* their country *in concert*.

"It ought to be mentioned that the Higgledies of Hubbub have a hall of their own, like their poor fellow-citizens. It is a vast round building, which perhaps accounts for the frequency with which Higgledy debaters argue in a circle. The prevailing mendicant turn of all classes, Higgledies as well as Piggledies, will sufficiently explain another of their logical characteristics, namely the habit of begging the question. In short, the round building we speak of is named with justice the Temple of Twaddle. Faction, Fanaticism, and Fashion preside there in turns, and there the general congresses of all the States in Noodledom are holden annually, about the time of the vernal equinox.

"At Balderdash Hall is to be seen one of the greatest curiosities in the whole country, an enormous engine (said to be of forty-ass power) for keeping the island constantly in *hot water*. The hot water, however, is not for the purpose of bathing or ablution, for there are no public baths, and cleanliness is not one of the besetting virtues of the people. It is a political and social institution altogether, and has hitherto worked admirably, to the great credit and content of the engineers.

"There is a famous castle in Hubbub, for the possession of which the Higgledies and Piggledies are for ever squabbling, and in truth it seems of no great use except as a bone of contention between them. The Castle itself is in the possession of the Whitelanders, the same people who formerly plundered the island of that wise and virtuous legislature which was once its glory. The Whitelanders commit the fortress from time to time to the custody of some great giant, who is occassionally, but *not often*, a wizard also. The giants of Hubbub Castle had such indifferent characters in former days, that one of the wits of Higgledy-Piggledy is reported to have said that their deeds ought to be found recorded in the history of Rapin(e). However, the more giant-like the giant, he pleases the people the better, for he keeps the fun stirring which they love so dearly. When he is more wizard than giant, wise as well as strong, he is not so popular by half. Either the Higgledies, the Piggledies, or both combined, are sure to assail and besiege him, while he has no support from any quarter, but from the good-for-nothing and shabby minority already mentioned, who, being capable of industry (the greatest vice in a citizen), are equally prone, of course, to be loyal, which in Higgledy-Piggledy is considered the greatest vice in a subject.

"The state of education in the island is one of transition, and measures are now in progress, which threaten the best interests of Ignorance with ruin, if the mind of the country is not awakened in time to so awful a danger. How great the danger is may be judged from the unquestionable truth that Higgledy-Piggledy educated would be Higgledy-Piggledy no longer. However, the sprightly feuds of the two races will probably prevent the poison from spreading with extravagant rapidity, so as to save the island from anything like a deluge of enlightenment, or at least afford time for the construction of an ark.

"Nothing, indeed, can be more presumptuous than the attempt to instruct the Higgledy-Piggledidians, as if they did not, or could not, instruct themselves; the fact being that they have one of the completest systems of public instrution in the world.

"Of all things, no traveller should omit to visit their Polytechnic School.

I found (when I inspected it) a professor of mathematics teaching a great many curious things, which had bearings on other subjects as well as on algebra and geometry. He taught, for instance, that a crooked line is the shortest between two points; that enormous social virtue resides in *sixes* and *sevens;* that researches after *impossible* quantities is one of the noblest pursuits that a Piggledy or a Higgledy can engage in; that the most interesting spiral is the common cork-screw; but of all things, he took the greatest pains to explain and apply the principle of the inverted cone, which he contended was the very type of stability, naturally dwelling on it the most, as, in fact, it is the fundamental *idea* of the Higgledy-Piggledy constitution.

"Passing into the hall of Ethics, the chair of morality was filled by a learned doctor, who was just then developing some curious views on the subject of *meum* and *tuum*, to which he stated that he had been led by analytical reasoning from the religious institutions of the island. 'Assuming,' he said, 'our great conical temple (with the renown of which the whole earth is filled) to be in reality, as it is professedly, a moral and religious fabric, it follows that the endowments it possesses cannot have had any origin but a strictly moral one; now that those endowments were forcibly taken by the Higgledies from the Piggledies, merely because the former were stronger at the time, and had a fancy for the pious property of their neighbours, is beyond controversy. It, therefore, cannot be immoral (he argued), in any case, to deprive people forcibly (nor, of course, fraudulently) of anything they possess that you happen to covet, for if such an action were criminal at all, it could not but be criminal in the highest degree in a case where religious uses are in question, for there it would not be a simple robbery, but one aggravated by the profane dedication of the spoil to heaven.' It was impossible not to be forcibly struck by a train of reasoning, which sent away a large ethical class thoroughly convinced that the immorality of rifling a pocket was nothing more heinous than the process by which the great inverted cone came by its property.

"The school of oratory is held at the fish-market. Indeed, whatever little encouragement the exhaustless fisheries of the island receive is to be attributed to the immemorial connexion between dealing in fish and dealing in foul language. The very professors of rhetoric at Hubbub and other places are fishwives. One of them has reduced the art of scolding to a system, and given it to the world in a treatise called 'The New De Oratore.' I was formally introduced to this lady, and picked up some curious information from her. Amongst other things she told me that the word *harangue* was derived from the French *hareng*, a herring; and that it was not for the purpose of shouting with pebbles in his mouth, that Demosthenes was accustomed to frequent the beach, but to invigorate and enrich his style by listening to the invectives of the *poissardes* of Athens. For the same reason, she added, eloquence had always flourished most in maritime states, and most of all in islands; witness Rhodes in ancient times (where the Romans sent their sons for those advantages of marine instruction which the inland position of the imperial city did not afford); and in the present day, Higgledy-Piggledy itself, where orators so abound, that the only difficulty is to find a man who is not one.

"Passing through an obscure quarter of the city, after leaving the fish-market, I was surprised to observe a modest building dedicated (as an inscription announced,) to Industry and Independence. It proved to be a sort of academical institution. Curious to hear how far a lecture

would presume to go upon subjects so distasteful to the bulk of the community, I entered, and opening the door of a chamber, where I was told the business of the school was going on, saw a professor delivering from his chair a most elaborate and interesting—*soliloquy*. Pleased at having at length an auditor, if not an auditory, he was proceeding with considerable increase of animation, when the shouts of an infuriated multitude were heard distinctly, and in a few moments the institute was beleaguered by a rabble of Piggledies, hot from Balderdash Hall, who with furious noises and gestures expressed their resolution to pull the edifice down, and tear the unfortunate professor of industry piece-meal. How I escaped I never distinctly understood, but the lecturer was not so lucky, for he fell into the hands of the mob. In vain he protested that he was only a *professor*,—that he had never *practised* what he taught,—that in his heart he despised both industry and independence as much as any man could do, and that as to his lectures, it was impossible they could do much mischief, inasmuch as he had uniformly delivered them to empty benches. The crowd was not to be appeased; a variety of frightful deaths was proposed, and I learned afterwards that he only escaped ending his days in some appalling way by the humane suggestion of one of the bystanders, who cried out that the fellow was a madman, and that a whip and a straight-waistcoat were the proper treatment for him.

"Going some while afterwards to visit one of the hospitals for lunatics in Topsiturvia, I saw my poor professor there, amongst the other maniacs and idiots. This lunatic institution is one of the greatest curiosities in the country, for all those things which elsewhere in the world are looked on as the characteristics of a sound mind, are regarded in Higgledy-Piggledy as evidences of an incurably disordered one. In the next cell to the frantic professor of industrial philosophy was an insane political economist, who had protested against a project for the exclusive use of Higgledy-Piggledy manufactures. 'When Higgledy-Piggledy cloth is as good and as cheap as the cloth of other countries,'—this was his argument—'it will be time enough to buy a coat of it.' The doctrine procured the poor wretch a Higgledy-Piggledy waistcoat, which, however, was not so tight but that he managed to amuse himself, in the usual manner of Tom-o'-Bedlams, by scribbling the walls of his cell with a bit of coal, an employment at which I found him busily engaged; and being curious to see what the scrawl was, I examined it, and found it consisted of scraps from authors as mad as himself, named Smith, Malthus, and Ricardo. In the next cell was a crazy agriculturist, who had announced the doctrine of rotation of crops, and drivelled upon draining, until at length a commission of lunacy was issued against him. The keepers would allow him nothing but potatoes, but I threw him a few Swedish turnips, which seemed for the time to make him very happy, and he 'babbled of green' *crops* as long as I remained near him. The next wretched being that I met with seemed so profoundly melancholy, that I could not refrain from asking him what folly he had committed to bring him into such dismal company.

"'I denied,' replied the idiot, 'that the Piggledies were the finest peasantry in the world,—I said that they had their faults, like other people.'

"'But you do not say so still?' I asked him in a tone of profound

"He mumbled a reply in the affirmative and turned mopingly away to

confer with the mad agriculturist, who charitably shared his turnips with him. 'Them's a pair of the incurables,' growled the keeper, a tall, savage Topsiturvian, who then took me into a ward where I saw a variety of singular cases, including one of a grocer, who insisted on placing his sugar-loaves on the broad end, to keep them from falling, and an astronomer who adhered to the Copernican system, in opposition to the received opinion of the island that the sun goes round the earth, and the earth round the moon, a celestial arrangement which would certainly be in perfect accordance with the institutions of Higgledy-Piggledy.

"Shocked and distressed at those sad spectacles of mental imbecility, I left the asylum with much more satisfaction than I entered it. It was such a comfort to be with the sane people once more.

"Amongst them I observed a waggoner yoking his cart before his horse;—several farmers were shearing their pigs, and great was the cry and little the wool, as usual;—a Piggledy ostler was carefully locking a stable-door, while a Piggledy thief was riding off with the horse;—some industrious old women were making silk purses out of sows' ears;—a wife was burning her candle at both ends;—Old Piggledy was throwing the house out of the windows, and Young Piggledy was flinging his loaf into the kennel, and scampering after a rainbow. Failing to catch the airy glory, the boy commenced bawling lustily, and fell into a fury of childish passion, whereupon his mother, instead of correcting, appeased him by setting him to blow bubbles, the only use made of soap and water by the great majority of these fantastic islanders.

"The natural history of this country is well worth attention. Its zoology is rich and curious. The sloth there attains a gigantic size, and, notwithstanding its habits of torpor, commits greater ravages than wolves and tigers in other countries. The common jackass abounds, chiefly in the precincts of the cities and the neighbourhood of Balderdash Hall, where it is not easy to distinguish its braying from that of the politicians and economists. There are wolves in sheep's clothing to be met with in many parts, and it is odd that bears are not more numerous, for the island has the strongest possible resemblance to a bear-garden.

"Amongst birds, the wild goose is prominent. The chase of it constitutes one of the favourite amusements of all classes. There are numerous owls, too; and the Higgledy grandees provide ruins liberally for them, by expelling the poor Higgledies, and demolishing their habitations. But the bird that is most plentiful is the gull,* and though the kites and cormorants devour them in great quantities, they seem never reduced in number. The insect and reptile tribes swarm; the working-bee is indeed rare, and one species of flea is also deficient—namely, the industrious variety.

"Fish is extremely plentiful, and not more plentiful than excellent; so much so, that it is universally abjured by the people as an article of food. They will perish of hunger sooner than eat fish, and, to strengthen this aversion, their priesthood enjoins the eating of fish as a religious penance. You may conceive how light the yoke of a religion is where the mortifications are to dine on Turbot and John Dorys; but there is no end to the eccentricities and comicalities of this strange people.

"Higgledy-Piggledy is the country for meteors. The chief employ-

* In Latin, the *Larus communis*. It is observable that Larry (evidently from *rus*) is one of the commonest names amongst the Piggledies.

ment of its natives is running through their bogs after Will o' the Wisp, Jack o' the Lantern, and other *ignes fatui*.

"Vegetation flourishes. The country would be a garden, only that the taste of the people is for wildernesses. A richer field to go *simpling* in does not exist in the world. In Topsiturvia, and most parts of Funstir and Donaught, the herbs that flourish most are wormwood, rag-weed, monk's-hood, and the wild variety of Justice, generally found in the crops of hemp. But the same districts are also fertile in numerous other plants, such as docks, nettles, tares, brambles, considered weeds in most countries, but by the Piggledies cultivated with almost as much attention as is elsewhere bestowed upon the gifts of Ceres. There are but few bays and laurels in the island, and those few are but little cultivated. The soil seems totally unfit for the olive; attempts have been made to domesticate it, but hitherto without success.

"Higgledy-Piggledy has produced some great men, but it is not the delight of that singular island to erect statues to Genius, or monuments to Public Virtue. In revenge, however, they honour *Little Men* exceedingly. In some parts are to be seen colossal statues of Mediocrity, and the Temple of Faction *there* corresponds with the temples raised in other nations to Fame and Public Spirit. Literature is of no account whatever. Men of letters are as much despised at Hubbub, as they are honoured and courted in other capitals.

"The national music is the Hurdy-Gurdy. That instrument is sculptured on their coins, and its melody is supposed to inspire the population with that national *Higgledy-Piggledy spirit* to which they are, no doubt, as much indebted for their wild institutions, as England is to the spirit of liberty for her tame ones.

"Sore puzzled is the chronicler of this bizarre commonwealth to determine what is most curious in such a profusion of natural and artificial curiosities. Upon the whole, I am disposed to admire nothing more than the little eating that satisfies the bulk of the inhabitants. They are as indifferent to the loaves as they are to the fishes, and content themselves (as we have seen) with a few roots, requiring little culture, and constituting a not more wretched than precarious subsistence for the people. The art of cooking is not much more known and practised than the art of embroidering or sculpture. Yet, to crown all, there is a state kitchen, kept up at prodigious cost, with cooks and arch-cooks, not only to the unspeakable comfort of the Higgledies, who are amazing gourmands, as well as passionately fond of ruling the roast, but (what would be incredible, if related of any other nation in the world,) apparently to the no less contentment of the Piggledies, who have not so much as a bone to pick, or even the crumbs that fall from the State table."

BOOK V.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE BLACK CASTLE.

"'The danger hid, the place unknowne and wilde,
Breedes dreadfull doubts: oft fire is without smoke,
And perill without show: therefore your stroke,
Sir Knight, withold, till further triall made.'
'Ah, ladie,' sayd he, 'shame were to revoke
The forward footing for an hidden shade,
Virtue gives herself light through darknesse for to wade.'"

FAERY QUEEN.

It is a question often asked, what it is that makes the lives of some people so full of incident, that they seem never to make so much as the tour of their chamber, without meeting with some entertaining or remarkable adventure, while those of others are so dull and monotonous that, place them in Faeryland itself, in the midst of giants, Saracens, dragons, and enchanters, nothing would ever occur to them out of the ordinary routine of the vulgarest animal life. The answer is, a radical difference of character; and the particular traits of character which, perhaps, more than any other, often make one man's career almost a novel, while the want of them renders that of his neighbour as unromantic as a treatise on logarithms, are certainly enthusiasm and courage. Both qualities were possessed by Hercules Woodward in an eminent degree, and accordingly it was not often that he took one of his prodigious walks, or made a journey on his pony, or, indeed, in any other way, without seeing, or doing, or at the very least hearing, something notable or extraordinary, of either a serious or a ludicrous description. When we saw him last, he was starting from the parsonage, on the day that the weather cleared up. His homeward route (as the reader must be aware, if she has ever so little of the organ of locality) led him to the Black Castle, the scene of his exploits the night before; and from thence his course (in fact the only course left him, now that the bridge was gone) was to proceed to the stepping-stones, far up the estuary, which his experience in the tides and floods assured him he would find, at a certain hour in the evening, high and dry above water.

On arriving at the ruins, it suddenly occurred to him to make a short halt and search them, not with the idea of catching the villains themselves who had perpetrated the robbery, but because he thought it just possible that they might have inadvertently left a weapon, an article of dress, or something of the kind behind them, which might prove hereafter an important link in a chain of circumstantial evidence.

These ruins (whatever their story was) afforded not only a picturesque object to the landscape-painter, but a most convenient ambush to highwaymen; they stood within a few yards of the road, and their extent and

intricacy were such, that miscreants familiar with them might use them with the greatest confidence, either for personal concealment, or a receptacle for booty. Three circular towers (one of an imposing height) remained: the loftiest provided with stairs, which, though disjointed and in decay, were not impracticable to a supple climber; the parapets connecting these towers were broad, and in some places mantled with ivy, or overgrown with long grass, thistles, fox-glove, and even brush-wood, and it was commonly said, and probably not untrue (like some tales of a ghostly nature, which were also rife), that there were subterraneous passages likewise, to add to the mystery and perils of the place.

In fact, there was not a little risk in the examination which Mr. Woodward proposed to make, but he was not the man to think of danger when he had what he considered a duty to perform, and as to fear, he did not very well know what it was. The spaces between the walls on the level of the ground were mostly stuffed with heaps of fallen rubbish, or choked with brambles, docks, nettles, and other plants that exult and expatiate in stony places. They grew there with the utmost luxuriance, affording most enviable cover for foxes and other wild animals, but the most uninviting harbour imaginable for any human creature, even for an outlaw, or a thief. Still it was possible, in two or three places (with the help of a stick for beating down the insurgent briars), to penetrate this thorny and tangled labyrinth; and Hercules laid about him vigorously, being determined to leave nothing unexplored. Once or twice he thought he had made a discovery; some shining object caught his eye; it might be a pistol; it might be a knife, or a dagger;—but it turned out, after he had stung his fingers, and prickled his legs, over and over again, to be nothing but a fragment of mortar, or a piece of wet slate glittering in the sun. With but a single exception, he detected nothing in this part of his investigation from which he could so much as divine that any thing living had lately resorted to the place. In one spot, opposite to a breach in the outer wall, on the side towards the road, the brambles and weeds appeared to have been recently crushed, as if somebody, or something had couched there. Struck by this little circumstance, Mr. Woodward made the minutest search for several yards round amongst the bushes and fallen materials (literally leaving no stone unturned), but to no purpose; he found absolutely nothing, and accordingly proceeded to prosecute his inquiries in the upper part of the ruins, availing himself of the dilapidated stairs already mentioned. He commenced with the lowest of the turrets; the ascent and descent occupied but a few minutes; he startled a small white owl, and saw either a mouse, or a lizard (he was uncertain which) run out of one crevice into another; but not a trace of a robber or a robbery. The second tower gave him a little more trouble, for the stair was in such decay that, to reach the first step that was trustworthy, he had to swing himself up by the branches of a vigorous young mountain-ash which sprang out of the rubbish underneath, as it were expressly to supply the place of the broken-down masonry. It was a feat of strength thrown away; he pulled some bunches of the red berries, to amuse his little Woodwards with on his return, and swung himself down again, debating in his mind whether it was worth while to climb the third turret, which was twice as high as the higher of the other two. A school-boyish feeling decided him; he recollected that he had never been at the top of it, and no doubt it commanded an extensive and bold view. The ascent for about thirty feet was almost quite dark; the loop-holes being choked with ivy,

or loose mortar. For the next ten or a dozen the winding stair was lightsome enough, but proportionally dangerous, for the outer wall was gone entirely, and he had to mount the small, triangular, slippery steps, with no protection upon one side whatsoever. It required caution as well as courage to achieve this in safety. The next and last stage was easier, though longer than the first and quite as dark. Hercules, however, soon surmounted all difficulties, and emerging into the light, stood instantly face to face, and within less than a yard, of one of the fiercest and wildest-looking men he ever remembered to have encountered in his life, even when he used to go out on amateur revenue duty, still-hunting through the Innishowen moors, or to protect the police.

If the fellow who confronted him so startlingly was not one of a gang of robbers, he certainly looked sufficiently like one to warrant the strongest doubts of his respectability and good intentions. He had the countenance of one who had seen the inside of prisons, and the pale ferocity of a man who was abroad more by night than by day. He was at least as tall as Hercules himself; his shoulders were broader, and his figure more erect and compact, suggesting (along with something in the style of his dress, shabby as it was) the idea that, if he had received any education, it must have been that of the drill-sergeant. However, he did not appear to be armed, which was something. It was a fearful spot, however, to encounter such a fellow in,—a small circular platform, not more than five or six feet in diameter, surrounded with a parapet indeed, but one that was broken down in several places, and not more than two feet high when it was perfect; in fact, no protection at all, considering that if you fell, or were flung over it, there was a sheer descent of full thirty or forty yards into the road, or the court-yard beneath. The plain honest man and the palpable villain scrutinised and measured one another instinctively—the curate with a deliberate, dauntless eye, the other with a keen, but unsteady glance, which, with all its atrocity, betrayed apprehension, and even some degree of dismay and confusion. Woodward saw in an instant that the ill-looking stranger was there upon no lawful business; it alarmed him, but he showed no sign of it—his colour underwent no change, his eye never wavered. The stranger was equally swift in making the discovery, to him still more alarming, that the formidable figure before him was that of a true man, although externally nearly as rough and formidable as himself. For a moment neither spoke a word. The stranger broke silence first, muttering some common-place allusion to the state of the weather. Hercules observed him, while he spoke, eyeing the cudgel in his hand with intense interest, not unmixed with suspicion and fear.

"You have chosen a commanding place for making your observations," he replid, with a fixed look and a firm voice.

"Aye," said the ruffianly stranger, shrugging his brawny shoulders, and forcing a haggard smile, "it would be an ugly fall from this into the court below."

"I shouldn't like to try it, my man," said Woodward, with the utmost coolness possible, but taking a swift comprehensive view of all the perilous circumstances of his situation, in such a place, with such an antagonist, should a contest ensue between them. In fact, it was utterly impossible that any two men (much less such men as these) could have a personal struggle where they stood without both going headlong over the parapet. Perhaps it was the conviction of this inevitable result that kept both parties from resorting to or provoking violence. At all events the peace

was kept. Hercules took as leisurely a survey of all that was to be seen from the tower as if he had only his wife by his side, and was about to descend, when the stranger made a motion to do so likewise. Instantly, Hercules recollected the part of the stair where the wall was broken down for so many feet, and, resolving not to put himself in the ruffian's power by going foremost, made a step back—one was all there was room to make—and civilly, but standing firm as a rock, and, with another of his most determined looks, desired, or rather commanded his unpleasant companion to take precedence. Whether it was the power of the strong man's honest eye, or the tone in which he spoke, or that the other had really no violent purpose, certain it was that he obeyed; and Hercules followed him at an interval of a few steps. When they came to the dangerous part, how easily could he have dashed the fellow to pieces! The slightest push would have sufficed; there was nothing to grasp, nothing but the weeds or the ivy; the fall would have been inevitable and mortal; how pleased he was that he had so courteously waived his precedence. The last stage was perfectly safe, as we have already seen; the curate now lost sight of the stranger in the dark, and began to turn over in his mind how to act when he rejoined him at the bottom; but he was spared all trouble upon that head, for when he issued from the low arched doorway of the tower, amongst the weeds and briars, the robber (for such it was now impossible to doubt that he was) was nowhere to be seen.

All quest was fruitless. Hercules recalled the traditions of subterraneous passages connected with the ruins, and at length, but very reluctantly, continued his journey. He found the stepping-stones barely passable, so that he had lost no time, and, having crossed the water (not without some hazardous jumps), was not displeased also to find that his wife had sent a gossoon with Sligo (his eccentric pony), to meet him, for it was growing late, and between climbing, walking, and other modes of motion, he was beginning to feel that he had exercised his muscles enough for the day. As fast as the pony could carry him he rode into Redcross, but before he went home, he called at the police-station in the village, and gave the *renseignements* of the mysterious miscreant he had encountered; height, size, hair, beard, complexion, expression, dress, just as they do in the "Hue and Cry," or in a French passport; and not even satisfied with this degree of accuracy, the zealous curate drew a clever sketch of the fellow in pen and ink, and left it with the constabulary: for Hercules possessed in a degree the double talent of Titmarsh, whose pen, however, does not want the aid of his pencil to ensure his works a permanent popularity.

Perhaps there was not a stack of turf flaming on his hearth, when he regained his dear crazy old home; and perhaps the copper kettle was not singing its ancient song, nor the preparations for tea shining in the light of the fire, nor a wife, as good as she was great, waiting to receive him in her loving arms.

Carry was deeply grieved at the robbery, alternately delighted and terrified at her husband's share in the dangers, and amazed beyond measure at the simplicity of the rector and curate, in thinking it practicable to keep such an event a secret for twenty-four hours.

Hercules then took his tea, and protracted his potations so long, that it was past midnight when his temperate carouse was over. He then poked out the fire with the nose of the bellows, although the poker was just as near him, and followed his blooming Omphale to her bower; where the

last thing he said before sleep o'er-mastered him, was to deplore, for the hundredth time, that he had not been successful in tracking the desperado to his den.

"Indeed, Hercules, I am heartily glad you were not," was the last speech of his spouse.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE BOROUGH OF REDCROSS.

"Whether the bulk of our Irish natives are not kept from thriving by that cynical content in dirt and beggary, which they possess to a degree beyond any other people in Christendom?"

"Whether it be not true that the poor in Holland have no resource but their own labour, and yet there are no beggars in the streets?"

"What should hinder us from exerting ourselves, using our hands and brains, doing something or other, man, woman, and child, like the other inhabitants of God's earth?" BERKLEY'S QUERIST.

IT was the custom of Mr. Spenser and his children to breakfast on Sunday mornings at Redcross, with the Woodwards, and upon the Sunday that now came they were accompanied by Colonel Dabzac, and by Mr. Trundle, who was always quiet enough upon horseback. It was a balmy bright morning in July; just air enough on the water to curl the surface, and upon the hills beyond to make every plant that had a sweet breath yield it abundantly.

As Redcross was a corporate town, it is only respectful to give some account of it before we enter its jurisdiction. It was a small and a poor place, but might have been a respectable one, both in size and wealth, had the inhabitants devoted half as much time to honest industry as they spent in complaining about anything, or nothing, shrugging their shoulders, whining about the times, lounging about with their dirty hands in their empty pockets, and wondering what the Lord-Lieutenant, and this Board, and that Board, meant to do for them, or whether they meant to do any thing at all. The Protestant population belonging to the Established Church consisted of a grocer, a publican, two tailors, three policemen, and four revenue-officers, with their respective complements of wives and children. The Presbyterians numbered one shoe-maker, two blacksmiths, a baker, a carpenter, and a wheel-wright. There was one Quaker, who met in his own house; and the rest of the burghers of all trades and vocations, a vast majority of the entire population, were Roman Catholics, principally McSwynes, with a few O'Gogarties, races of old renown in the county, but generally at feud with one another, for no assigned reason except a tradition that, fourteen hundred years ago, an O'Gogarty had pulled a McSwyne by the nose; which most legitimate cause of quarrel had been honestly transmitted from generation to generation, and was indeed at present the only inheritance that remained to either of those illustrious tribes. The scenery of Redcross was remarkably fine in its way; I mean, of course, the dunghill scenery. There was a charming picturesque mount, not so sweet as Hybla, fronting almost every house, the

loftiest towering before the piggeries of the McSwynes, who were as vain of them as the Swiss are of their Alps. The streets of Redcross (for it possessed three or four) were never swept except by the wind, or watered but with *aqua celestis;* they were consequently as dusty in dry weather, as African plains, and in wet weather perfectly Parisian—in point of mud. The Protestants, who were mostly Hoggs, threw all the dirt of the place upon their fellow-townsmen, the McSwynes, and even went so far as to say that dirt and Popery always went together. Unfortunately, however for this theory, Amby Hogg, the sexton, and Ralph Hogg, the Presbyterian shoe-maker, were the slovenliest fellows in the borough, save the Quaker who was perhaps the slovenliest fellow in the world, and had probably for that reason taken up his abode at Redcross. Then there was Mary Jane Hogg, wife of Luke Hogg, the grocer, who was a match for any slattern in Europe; but, to be sure, she made up by her finery on Sunday for the neglect of her person on the week-days. Besides, in these days of Protestant ascendency the Hoggs had an authority and power which the McSwynes and O'Gogarties had not. The town had a corporation, and the members of it were all Hoggs, or of the Hogg faction. They might have paved, and swept, and washed, and whitewashed the municipality if they pleased. There were two aldermen of the name, three burgesses, two water-bailiffs, an officer called a bang-beggar, and another styled a butter-taster. The butter-tastership was a very snug thing (two hundred a-year with perquisites), and the holder of it lived at Carrickfergus. The bang-beggar was resident, and terrified the Celtic lazzarone by a furious display of authority annually, every Michaelmas. The rest of the year (three hundred and sixty-four days), mendicancy flourished better than any other profession, calling, or trade, in the borough of Redross. There were beggars of all sorts, young and old, male and female, lame and blind, feeble and able-bodied,—ay, even rich and poor. The majority were strapping women and powerful men, women who should have had the alternative of the spinning-wheel or the stocks, and men who should have been put in a dilemma between the tail of the plough and the tail of the cart.

As to the theatres, museums, academies, halls, and institutes of the town, there are good reasons for being silent about them. But it had one or two establishments deserving of notice—a savings' bank, a dispensary, a circulating library, and two schools. The circulating library had been established by the joint exertions of Elizabeth Spenser and Carry Woodward. They had greater difficulties to encounter than you will easily believe; their funds were so limited, and there was so much fanaticism to be encountered in some quarters, and so much selfishness in others. The wives and daughters of many of the neighbouring squirearchy wanted to stock the library exclusively with the usual trash of sentimental novels, and romances of "thrilling interest," (to use a favourite phrase of Mr. Dawson's), ghosts and mysteries, love and murder. The ladies of the evangelical party would hear of nothing but sermons and tracts, lives of godly children, biographies of Calvin, and all manner of keys and antidotes to Popery. But what Elizabeth and Mrs. Woodward wanted was a useful little library for the poor people of all persuasions, not excluding religious books (except such as were controversial and probably offensive), but including everything moral, amusing, and instructive, suited to the young, and to people in humble life. However, nothing is to be done in this world, even the foundation of a village circulating library, without mutual concession and compromise; and fortunately the Spenser party were not

as obstinate as others, or the library would never have been formed. As it was, it contained intellectual diet for every sort, condition, and taste; and the books, (most of them in a very hoggish and swinish condition), were jumbled together on the shelves, or paraded at the little unclean window, mixed with nuts and gingerbread, tops, balls, sealing-wax, and pop-guns, for Betty Hogg, the librarian, was allowed to improve her situation by dealing a little in other toys and sweets besides those of learning.

One of the schools, too, was entirely Aunt Carry's. It was a school for boys and girls under ten, and the school-mistress was an Ellen Hogg, who understood her craft, every art and branch of her profession, as well as Shenstone's school-mistress herself. She was a tall, stern-looking, middle-aged, powerful woman, kindly to the industrious and docile, but the terror of truants and evil-doers. There grew no birchen-tree in her garden, but there were birches on the neighbouring hills, which provided her with abundant discouragements to sloth, and stimulants to virtue. Mrs. Woodward was a disciplinarian herself, and discipline reigned wherever her influence reached. Then Ellen Hogg was as neat in her person (though people did not expect it from her name), as any woman could well be. Before *her* door there were no beauties of dunghill scenery to be seen. Brushes and brooms were known to her. She used, and she enforced the use of them.

Encouraged by Aunt Carry, she aspired to reform the personal habits of the rising generation radically, and the urchin who was not washed by his mother at home was sure to be washed by Ellen at school, and whipped at the pump into the bargain. The blooming Carry visited the school frequently, always after church on Sunday, with her swarm of children about her, like little satellites about a great primary; and then and there was a muster of all the pupils, and much catechising, and a report made of the doings and misdoings of the previous week.

The party from the parsonage reached the village and the curate's house in the highest spirits; the cheeks of the girls glowing with healthy colour, after their brisk mountain ride, Mr. Spenser sedately cheerful, Mr. Trundle perfectly inoffensive, and the colonel looking not quite so grim as he generally did. Hercules and his wife received their company in their several styles, but both with the utmost cordiality. The cordiality of the curate was blunt and rustic, with his Lizzy, his Vals, and Mags, cutting every name down but the repulsive Arabella's, in his homely, affectionate way.

Carry's reception was as ladylike as it was hearty. She was habited in her dark blue Sunday silk, with a plain straw hat, or open bonnet, with cherry-coloured ribands, which streamed upon such a bust and pair of shoulders as you may see in Rubens's picture of the abduction of the Sabine women, or in his works *passim*. Her bulk gave a momentum to her embraces that was almost alarming when she pressed a child to her breast, or even grown girls like her nieces. Elizabeth, whom she clasped twice as fondly as she did Arabella, seemed for a moment lost in the arms of her portly aunt, whose bracelet, indeed, might almost have served either of the Spenser girls for a girdle.

"Carry, let me introduce Colonel Dabzac," said Mr. Spenser, when the first rush of the embracing and ardour of kissing was over.

Carry curtsied with buxom dignity, and said she was very happy to see Colonel Dabzac in her house. Trundle was presented next, and received the [illegible] notic[illegible] Th[illegible] mad[illegible] som[illegible]

they were needless, for the apartment was neat and clean; the repast substantial and excellent, the table-cloth the most beautiful fabric of Downshire, and white as the driven snow; in short, everything was quite good enough for Dabzac, had he been a field-marshal. The only thing that happened untoward during breakfast was the sudden incursion of a couple of very pretty pigs (a particular breed which Carry was rearing) into the parlour. This was certainly a little amiss; but the pigs were the cleanliest little animals of their kind you ever saw, and the excuse for their escapade was that the door of their sty was off its hinges, and Hercules had neglected to repair it, no doubt with a little of the procrastination of his country.

"I hope I don't intrude," said Aunt Carry, pleasantly, being the first to perceive the invaders.

The little Woodwards jumped from their seats with the greatest glee to pursue the little pigs back to the yard. Everybody laughed, even the dry Dabzac.

"Do you remember, Val," said Hercules, "the morning the gander paid you a visit while you were dressing in my study?"

"It was in the Observatory," said Mr. Spenser, with the gravity of a man correcting a serious historical mistake.

"Come, Val, it was not quite so good as that."

"It *was* the Observatory, papa," said the eldest boy, from the side-table, "for that was the morning the refractory telescope was broken—the gander broke it."

Another laugh, of course, at the boy's blunder, which, after all, was no very great one, for the telescope *was* a refractory one, sometimes showing none of Jupiter's moons, sometimes double the actual number.

The curate repeated the nursery rhyme, certainly very appropriate,

"Goosy, goosy gander,
Whither do you wander?
Up stairs,
Down stairs,
And in my lady's chamber."

The Woodwards had five children, two fine, flourishing, large-limbed boys, and three rosy, bright-eyed girls. They had their breakfast apart, and were not very silent at it, but, at the same time, not very boisterous either. Carry, and her nursery-governess, had them in too good order for that. Her children were striking proofs that affectionate and judicious discipline has no tendency whatever to break the spirit—at least, that it breaks no spirit which ought not to be broken.

There was never, perhaps, a more animated breakfast—plenty to talk about as well as plenty to eat. The curate had his last adventure at the Black Castle to tell, and the rector related the explosion of the secret and the garrisoning and fortifying of the parsonage, with a quiet humour that diverted everybody extremely. When Carry heard of Dawson having dined and slept at her brother's house, her features assumed their severe and displeased expression instantly, though perhaps only Elizabeth observed it; but when she learned that her nephew was actually at that moment ranging the country with his scampish friend, she roundly expressed her opinion that it would have been much seemlier in him to have accompanied his father and sisters to church. Mr. Spenser made

Children are sharp observers! Before breakfast was half over, the little Woodwards had settled that Dabzac was courting their cousin Arabella, and we need scarcely say that their mother was not less quick in arriving at the same conclusion.

The two families and their visitors went to church in a long procession, taking the middle of the street, the better to avoid the odoriferous mountain chains which adorned the fronts of the wigwams to the right and to the left,—almost everywhere, except opposite to the academy and residence of Mrs. Ellen Hogg, whom they found at her door, flaming in pink calico, marshalling a troop of her Protestant pupils, all scrupulously washed, though by no means all as well clothed and fed as philanthropy could have wished. Boys and girls made the most respectful obeisances to the majesty of Aunt Carry, as she paused for a moment in her stately progress to review the line and drop a word of gracious civility to the "crassa Minerva" of the village. Two of the children, who had stuck orange lilies in their breasts, got alarmed as Mrs. Woodward approached them, and dropped them on the ground by stealth. Elizabeth, also, received not a few rustic salutations, of a less ceremonious character. As to the rector and curate, they were so engrossed by the interesting subjects they had to talk and consult about, that they had no eyes for Mrs. Hogg and her herd, who very properly, therefore, economised their genuflections for another occasion.

The police station was hard by the church; Hercules looked in to see whether any steps had been taken in consequence of the information he had given the night before, and was pleased to find that a search had been made that very morning, at break of day, through the ruins, and for several miles round about them. The police had made no capture, but they reported that they had discovered a pit, or chasm, in the ground floor of the castle, nearly concealed by weeds and rubbish, and communicating with a vault underneath, into which it was not improbable that the villain seen by the curate might have disappeared. Two of the party had ventured down, and it was an enterprise that required no little courage. The smell of tobacco established the fact that something human had recently harboured there, for (as one of the men observed) it couldn't have been a rabbit or a fox that was smoking. They struck a light, and minutely examined the vault, but found nothing but the back of a letter, which the chief constable produced. The direction was in a gentlemanlike hand, but such a hand as the acutest clerk in the post-office could scarcely have deciphered. Mr. Spenser said it looked like the name of Dawson, but Hercules thought it was Lawlor; one of the constables suggested Roberts, and another was positive it was Moran. There was an initial before it, which might have been almost any letter of the alphabet, but it certainly bore a strong likeness to the first letter of the surname. On the other side was a scrawl in another hand, but in pencil, and so much defaced as to be nearly as illegible as the writing in ink. It looked like an inventory of some kind, and the word "pictures" was tolerably plain at all events. Hercules took the paper from the officer, saying that his wife was very skilful in deciphering bad writing, and now the bell ceasing to toll announced that it was time for divine service to commence.

It was a small, modest, whitewashed church, a little ruinous, and not like the picturesque old village churches in England, screened and adorned with those ancient yews that furnished the British infantry with their good bows, before the bow was superseded by the firelock. But the ivy for

which Ireland is justly renowned had taken a great fancy to one side of the rude edifice, and had crept up to the very summit of the belfry, so as to impede the swinging of the bell a little. This relieved the otherwise naked aspect of the building, and harboured flocks of sparrows, which made no scruple of chattering often in the very midst of the Litany. The churchyard was small, and so populous with the fathers and forefathers of Redcross, that the green graves rose in hillocks, up to the level of the windows, and sometimes still higher, obstructing disagreeably both the light and the air. It was an ancient burial-place. One or two of Mr. Spenser's predecessors had inhumanly endeavoured to monopolise it for Protestant interment, but there had been no such detestable bigotry and foul injustice in his time: it was the common resting-place for the dead of the parish; the Hoggs, McSwynes, and O'Gogarties slumbered side by side, their differences at an end; their feuds forgotten; setting an example of peace and tranquillity, which few of them set when they were above ground.

Nothing happened very remarkable during the service of this Sunday. Hercules read the prayers with stentorian voice and energy. Mr. Spenser read his quiet, rational, and impressive sermon, upon brotherly love and Christian charity, not without reference to an approaching anniversary, on which it was too much the custom of his Protestant parishioners to indulge in demonstrations which gave umbrage to their Catholic fellow-townsmen, and led to counter exhibitions of the opposite colour, not always terminating without infractions of the peace. In the midst of the discourse, the sparrows happening to be particularly loquacious in the ivy, the curate (who, orange as he was in principle, made it a point himself to be as soothing and pacificatory as possible at this exciting time of the year) gave a nod to Amby Hogg, the sexton, to go out and chase away the disturbers, but Amby either performed this (an ordinary duty of his office) very imperfectly, or not at all, for the chattering continued all through the sermon. The truth, indeed, was, that the sexton was very far from approving of Mr. Spenser's dissuasives from strife and faction, for he kept a small public-house which did twice the usual business when the orange lilies were in blow, and the sparrows, in his opinion, were doing no great harm in drowning a discourse so prejudicial to his trade. The shrewd Aunt Carry, too, whose roving and piercing eye let nothing pass that passed around her (even when the little Hoggs in the aisle whispered one another on a matter of gingerbread), could easily perceive, by the slight scornful curl of Colonel Dabzac's insolent lip, that he was saying to himself "we wouldn't stand that sort of talk at Tanderagee."

But Dabzac was doomed to undergo something still more revolting to his feelings before the day was over, for Mr. Spenser met the benevolent and burly Father Magrath in the street after church, and invited him home to dinner. Magrath (who had been as zealous that day at the altar as the rector had been in the pulpit to inculcate the doctrines of peace and charity) accepted the invitation cheerfully, and promised to overtake the party on the mountain. It was a chapter of Irish history to mark how the colonel looked at the priest, just as if he was a dog, or the priest of a religion in which a dog was the divinity. Father Magrath, on the other hand, eyed the colonel with the defiant air of a man who felt that he represented the people, and that the cause of the people was "conquering and to conquer." The intense enmity with which they regarded one another was, indeed, the means of keeping the peace between them; for, feeling

that any converse must inevitably lead to a warmth of altercation incompatible with good manners, particularly in ladies' company, they refrained, by mutual consent, from holding any intercourse whatsoever.

But what had become of Mr. Trundle? He certainly came out of church with the rest, yet, when Mr. Spenser began to collect his little flock of relatives and guests, whom he was that day to provide with carnal as well as with spiritual food, "the little, fat, round, oily man" of projects was not to be seen. There was a game of "hide and seek" about the precincts of the church to find him; and where should he turn up at last but in Mrs. Hogg's school-room, getting the strapping Ellen herself and all her scholars, male and female, down to the smallest thing that could make a scratch with a pen, to sign his petition and address to the Crown for the ship-canal between Loch Foyle and Loch Swilly.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE RETURN.

"Here we go up, up, up,
And here we go down, down, downy."
NURSERY RHYMES.

THE return to the parsonage resembled the march of a caravan. In front rode the Spenser girls and Colonel Dabzac. Then came the curate's inside car, a curious, square, spacious vehicle, of very rude construction, painted dark-green, and drawn by a mule; it contained Carry herself (no bad proof of its capacity), one of her little girls on her knee, another by her side, rather pinched for room, and the two boys, great Billy Pitt and little Hercules, both still petticoated, on the opposite seat, their red and white legs now and then appearing amidst the ample folds of their mother's dress. The car was followed by the rector on his brown mare, Mr. Trundle triumphing in his accession of signatures, the curate bestriding Sligo, and Dr. Wilkins, the doctor of the neighbourhood, who always paid Mrs. Spenser a Sunday visit, and generally dined at the parsonage on that day. Sometimes Elizabeth fell back to chat with her aunt, and point out some beauty in the prospect; sometimes Hercules bolted forward to join his nieces, take his little namesake up before him on the pony, or ask the elder boy the Latin for a goat or a seagull, just to see how he was improving under his mother's tuition. He had a prodigious stock of nursery hymns, too, for the entertainment of children, and tales of Æsop's immortal fox, to whose deeds he sometimes gave a political complexion, so much so, that the rector used to say—"Hercules, your fox is always a Whig."

Doctor Wilkins was a remarkable man; he had the most lugubrious countenance you ever saw, yet he seldom spoke but he made you die laughing. He was well worth a college of your grave formal physicians. It was hard to say how it was Doctor Wilkins made you laugh, but he did it, never once smiling himself; on the contrary, seemingly quite unconscious that he was at all amusing, and looking the picture of the profoundest melancholy, while every body within hearing was holding his sides. He knew every body, and had a dry, solemn, historical way of reproducing the

preposterous things he heard or witnessed, which (enhanced by a smooth rich brogue) was absolutely irresistible. He embellished very little, but he brought out the ridiculous points to admiration, and in the most artless way in the world, more as if he was talking to himself, than trying or wishing to entertain the company. It was in reality comic talent of a high order, but he was an able physician likewise, and justly popular with both rich and poor all round the country.

It was a sultry day in the valleys, but on the heights and on the water there was a delicious breeze. Mrs. Woodward, not being partial to boating, lamented the destruction of the bridge, and began to stir up the gentlemen to have the mischief repaired promptly.

"I was over at Major Armstrong's yesterday," drawled the doctor, "and they were talking on that subject. O'Madden was dining there, and one or two more."

"The bridge is, or I should say *was*, on the Major's property, I believe," said the rector.

"One side of the water is the Major's ground," replied Wilkins, "and the other, it appears, is The O'Madden's."

"The expense will be trivial—I should say under twenty pounds," said Mr. Spenser.

"So they were saying," said the doctor, "but, from all I could collect, I doubt if the work will ever be done, necessary as it is, unless the county takes it in hand, or His Excellency the Lord Lieutenant."

"The Lord Lieutenant!" exclaimed Mr. Spenser,—"why it's not a bridge in the Phœnix Park!"

"The Major says it's the business of the Grand Jury; O'Madden is for throwing it on the government. I'll tell you more," added the doctor,—"there was a bit of a memorial drawn up in my presence, and I left them seriously talking of sending up a deputation to the Castle, to-morrow or next day."

"You astonish me," said Mr. Spenser, "though I have been long enough in Ireland, too. Why, in England—"

"But we are not in England," said the doctor.

"I sometimes think we are in Higgledy-Piggledy," said Carry Woodward.

"And The O'Madden, too!—a man who never opens his lips but to bluster on patriotism and independence," cried Mr. Spenser, with unusual warmth.

"And isn't it the height of patriotism to keep our own money in our pockets, and get as much as we can out of Johnny across the water?" drawled the doctor.

"I've a good mind," said the curate, "to go up with the deputation to Dublin, and put in my private claims at the same time. I want a hinge to the door of my pig-sty, as *you* know, Val."

"A capital satire it would be," said Mr. Spenser.

After some time the rector and curate recommenced their argument on college education, and Hercules, as before, had the best of it decidedly, clearly proving that it was far more difficult for a young man to go through the Dublin University without some improvement, than through either Oxford or Cambridge, and again enumerating with enthusiasm all the legs of mutton he had eaten, and all his ambrosial nights with Tom Beamish.

While this dialogue was going on, Elizabeth was riding close alongside

of the car, conversing on the same topic with Mrs. Woodward. They talked also of Mr. Dawson, whose connection with Sydney was growing every day a source of greater uneasiness to the ladies of the Spenser family.

"Has your father no control?" asked Mrs. Woodward, earnestly.

"He is so occupied with Mrs. Spenser, and his books," said Elizabeth.

"I have no patience with my brother," cried Carry, in great vexation; "the worst of this unfortunate robbery is, that it seems likely to entangle Sydney still more with that dangerous man. What an evening you must have had with him! Was he as coarse as usual?"

"Indeed, aunt," said Elizabeth, smiling, "his coarseness is not half so disagreeable as his refinement; but I would freely forgive both, if he would only not be so excessively attentive to me as he always is; he was particularly odious the other evening."

"My poor girl," said Carry, with compassionate vehemence, "if I were your father, or your brother, I would not allow such a person as Mr. Dawson to come within twenty miles of you, if there was a pistol, or a horse-whip to be had in the world."

It was curious to observe the looks of admiration and awe with which Mrs. Woodward's children regarded her, when she delivered herself in this impassioned sort of way. Their eyes were riveted on her face, and the play of her animated though massive features was indeed very imposing.

"I am sometimes surprised at papa," said her niece, after a moment's pause, "he is so observant, and so naturally fastidious; but I never saw him so annoyed by Mr. Dawson's manners and conversation as he was on Friday."

"Very well," said Mrs. Woodward, "but will he forbid Sydney to keep his company?—that's the question."

"But my uncle, you know," rejoined Elizabeth, "sometimes takes Mr. Dawson's part, so we must not be so hard upon papa."

"Oh, many a battle I have with your uncle on that subject," said Carry; "indeed, I think it's the only thing we ever fight about—except the state of his study."

Before dinner there was a grand levée held in Mrs. Spenser's boudoir; Miss M'Cracken and Rebecca officiating as maids of honour; and the salts and tonics, with a bouquet of magnificent greenhouse flowers, duly arranged on a little oval table covered with a fair napkin. Doctor Wilkins, the state-physician, had recommended her to receive visitors, knowing the efficacy of a little gossip and excitement in female disorders of the nervous class. The bed-room was the prettiest room in the house, overlooking a flower-garden, with the water and hills beyond, and furnished both with taste and luxury, the taste being the husband's and the luxury the wife's. The lady sat near the window, with pillows behind, pillows under, and pillows on each side of her, richly attired in black satin, and looking so very pale, that you expected to hear some news from the other world every time she opened her lips. Mrs. Spenser was one of those women who know something about everybody in a certain sphere, and who are expert at discovering some sort of relationship or connection more or less remote between themselves and everybody else in the same privileged circle. She graced Dabzac at once with her special favour, knew some near relatives of his intimately, and presumed he was related to Sir Thomas Dabzac, of Shropshire. Her reception of Aunt Carry (whom she

stood slightly in awe of,) was civil enough, more because she was a Spenser, than because she was the best of women: but she returned the friendly greetings of the curate with a coldness which, however, hurt the rector, more than it did Hercules himself, who despised the lady too much to care for the temperature of her courtesy, had it been down to zero. Mrs. Spenser, indeed, looked on curates in the light of tutors and such low people. As to the doctor, he was too useful to be snubbed; but, indeed, he would not have brooked it from her; he was one of the few people who kept her in any subjection, contradicting her with a courage that astonished Mr. Spenser, and returning slight for slight, the true way to deal with impertinent women, whether in their boudoirs or their drawing-rooms.

"Who preached to-day, my dear?" she said to Elizabeth, who sat close to her. She knew very well that her husband had preached, but she had her own small reasons for asking.

"Papa," replied her step-daughter.

"Papa!—again!" exclaimed the white lady in black satin, in a weak but perfectly audible tone.

The point of this short speech was in the "again," or rather in the tone and look with which the word was pronounced. It conveyed most distinctly, and was intended to convey "what is the use, Mr. Spenser, keeping a curate, if you preach yourself so often?"

Carry fired up, and bit her lip—only for the strangers present she would never have put up with it. She sometimes gave Mrs. Spenser a bit of her mind, as well as Doctor Wilkins. The fact, however, was, that Mr. Spenser did preach much more frequently than most rectors do who have curates to preach for them. People sometimes said that he was the curate and Mr. Woodward the rector. It arose from Mr. Spenser's considerate regard for his brother-in-law, who, having so large a family, and so poor a stipend, was compelled to have other irons in the fire to make out a respectable livelihood.

The rector now expressed his hope that Mrs. Spenser would join the family at dinner: "What do you say, Doctor Wilkins?"

"I say yes, by all means; it will do her all the good in the world," answered the doctor, bluntly and decidedly.

"Ah, I am not equal to it—I am not, indeed, Doctor Wilkins;—the very idea of dinner makes me ill—doesn't it, Miss M'Cracken?"

Miss M'Cracken assented, of course;—it was in the routine of her office.

Mrs. Spenser continued, speaking as if it was an effort far beyond her strength, "She hoped Colonel Dabzac would excuse her, she was always such a wretched invalid; the climate of Ireland was killing her; and you may imagine," she added, "that the late awful event has almost finished me; I can bear anything—anything in the world—but this dreadful state of things, when we can't call our lives our own, without having one's house fortified like a castle, and the police at one's very door."

"Oh, be asy, my darling," audibly muttered Doctor Wilkins, in his long-drawn, comical way.

Mrs. Woodward had been watching his countenance, which had been growing longer and longer during Mrs. Spenser's speech, until at last it grew as lugubrious as possible, and then he came out with his amusing "Oh, be asy."

"Indeed, Valentine," the lady went on, affecting not to hear the doctor,

"I would greatly prefer having a military force; soldiers are so much better disciplined; I'm positive, if you would write to your friend Mr. ——, at the Castle, he would order a regiment to be quartered here."

"A regiment, my dear!" exclaimed Mr. Spenser, smiling.

"Well, a company," said the silly invalid.

"Fudge, nonsense, humbug," interrupted Wilkins, unable to stand this any longer; "the best company for you is our company at dinner; that's the company you want, ma'am. Come, we must strengthen your nerves; rout you about, and put some flesh on your bones, ma'am. 'Faith, I'm not so sure that if Captain Rock was to pay you a visit in earnest, it wouldn't do you more good than the doctors. I'll order you an insurrection if you don't behave yourself."

Everybody laughed but Miss M'Cracken. Mrs. Spenser was struck dumb by the doctor's audacity, and enraged at the effect it produced on the circle.

"The doctor's a regular trump," said Hercules to his wife, as they went down-stairs to have a little conjugal stroll on the sands and examine together the paper found by the police.

"I trust they will not persuade her to come down to dinner," said Carry, highly incensed at Mrs. Spenser's impertinences.

"So do I, devoutly," said her husband; "I sometimes think that poor woman is possessed with a fiend."

"God help the fiend," answered Carry, "that were possessed with her; I should say poor fiend, not poor woman."

"What a person for your brother to place at the head of his family?" said Hercules.

Something between a sigh and a groan that came from the abysses of Carry's voluminous person, heaving up her stomacher like a great billow, testified her cordial concurrence in the sentiment.

Directly Mrs. Woodward glanced at the paper, she said the name was Dawson, but the curate still insisted it was Lawlor, and said he had no doubt about it. His wife was just as positive on her side.

"But, my dear," said Hercules, "how is it possible a paper belonging to Mr. Dawson could have found its way into a vault under the Black Castle?"

"Easily enough," replied Carry, looking very mysterious; and speaking very deliberately, "if Mr. Dawson had a hand—"

The curate was too indignant to allow her to finish the sentence. He gave her an awful lecture on what he called the female vices of suspicion and detraction. Carry bit her lip, but made no answer.

BOOK VI.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE ISLAND.

"Oh, had we some bright little isle of our own
In the blue summer ocean far off and alone!"

MOORE.

"Blanda pericla maris."

CLAUDIAN.

MR. SPENSER proposed to put off the pic-nic voyage to the island until the return of his son;—a cruise without Sydney seemed, indeed, like a fleet going to sea without an admiral;—but his daughters and their aunt were unanimous against the postponement; not that they were pleased to be without Sydney (rough as he was), but his presence would probably involve that of his friend Dawson, the feeling against whom was so strong, that the party would have been broken up had the postponement been insisted on. Mr. Spenser intended to have made one of the voyagers, but he was compelled to do service on that day upon terra firma. At an early hour in the morning he was waited on by the commandant of the police force, whose object was to intimate that he was under the necessity of withdrawing the garrison from the parsonage, as the services of the men were required in a neighbouring parish, where some slight disturbances had actually broken out connected with the collection of tithes. This intelligence was doubly unpleasant; the agitation was approaching alarmingly near, and protection was about to be withdrawn at the very moment it seemed to be really desirable to have it. How to communicate the news to Mrs. Spenser was, however, the practical difficulty that first occurred. There was, of course, another hubbub, quite as great as what took place when she discovered Maguire's robbery. There was no resource but to write to the Under-Secretary for the aid of the military. Mr. Spenser doubted the absolute necessity of the application, but he was compelled to sit down by his wife's bedside, and an urgent letter, dictated by that lady's own lips, was sent by the next post up to Dublin Castle.

The Woodwards (having pressed Dr. Wilkins into their service) sailed from their own place of embarkation close to the village. The curate had a good stout well-built smack of his own, called the Caroline, after his wife. The arrangements were rough, but not very uncomfortable, and when a pic-nic on the island was in view, the smack was always provisioned for a week, to guard against casualties, such as an unlucky shifting of the wind, or a sea-fog. Hercules was never so glorious as on a day like this. It developed his animal strength, and excited his animal spirits. It made him a boy again, and no boy could have more fully, or almost more boisterously, have enjoyed it. Carry promoted such expeditions on his account chiefly; it was his only relaxation after weeks of such pastoral

ıbours as no pastor in the church but himself could have gone through. ıdeed, his very relaxation would have broken down most other men.

The Spensers had their trim cutter, the Gipsy, and a pretty boat she ras, though not to be mentioned on the same day with George Markham's lirce. Dabzac understood something of navigation, but there were better eamen on board the Gipsy, or Mr. Spenser would not have committed his hildren to the Atlantic in her. The girls went on board immediately ıfter an early breakfast, accompanied by the colonel, and Miss M'Cracken, rith the second brood of the Spensers.

There was so little air on the water near the parsonage, that the cutter ıad to be towed for a couple of miles down the creek, where she caught ı breath of wind from the hills to the northward, just sufficient with the ıelp of an ebbing tide to waft her gently towards the sea. The scenery was beautifully bold, and grew wilder and loftier every moment, while the inlet narrowing at the same time towards its mouth brought the heights on each side closer and closer, until at length the voyagers found themselves in a marine gorge, through which for some minutes there seemed to be no passage. The height of the mountains just here was so great as to exclude the direct rays of the sun at that early hour, so that a certain air of sombre magnificence distinguished the scenery at this spot, which had therefore acquired the romantic name of the Dark Glen of the Ocean. A few knots further changed the view remarkably. As you emerged from these gloomy waters, you passed as it were through the jaws of the gulf, and the prospect of the Atlantic burst upon you in all its splendour. There was always a little agitation here on the stillest day in summer. The Spensers were always distracted between their admiration for the view at this point and the disagreeable motion that uniformly accompanied it. Here, too, when there was any breeze, you were sure to get either all the benefit, or all the disadvantage of it. The breeze was now as propitious as possible. The cutter showed all her canvas, and flew through the waves merrily.

"Why, that is a castle before us!" cried Dabzac, struck by the singular appearance of a pile about half a league distant, in the direct line of their course.

It was not a castle, but only a huge castellated cliff, forming the eastern face of the islet towards which the Gipsy was bound. The resemblance to an extensive castle, like that at St. Goar on the Rhine, was very remarkable; geologists accounted for it by the basaltic character of the rock of which the islet was composed. It seemed a group of ruinous turrets, of various heights, some very commanding, and connected by parapets and battlements, in which the eye, aided a little by the fancy, discovered embrasures and portholes, and everything that a regular fortress ought to be provided with. The mouth of a cavern near the centre of the mass had all the appearance of a low-browed arched gate with a portcullis. The deception, on the whole, was very complete and singular. It was sometimes called The Isle of the Tower, either from this remarkable peculiarity, or from a real tower or fort, the ruins of which still existed in the interior. But the name it commonly went by was Tory Island, probably a corruption of the other appellation; or it may have been a Tory fastness in bygone days, when Tories were synonymous in the north of Ireland with robbers and rapparees. Mr. Woodward, who was a passionate antiquary, had a long and learned story from that extremely barren chronicle, "the Annals of the Four Masters," about the original occupation of this island

by the Fomorians, a race of gigantic corsairs, or sea-kings, sons of Ham, and consequently grandsons of Noah. Mr. Spenser used to say that Hercules looked extremely like a sea-king himself.

The Gipsy was joined, amidst mutual cheers, by the Caroline, immediately under the gigantic crags we have described. The water there was deep enough for a frigate to ride in, almost up to the very edge of the rock, so that (the sea being smooth as crystal) the smack and cutter cast their anchors within a yard of the shore, and the party actually jumped on land, all but Aunt Carry, for whom a stout plank was provided.

At first sight you thought there was no issue from the short and narrow strip of beach on which you stood, after landing at this spot; it seemed as if you were completely hemmed in by the water on one side and the tall towered cliffs on the other. But a steep stair, as winding as a cork-screw, had been roughly, but ingeniously, hewn out amongst the fissures and crevices of the rock, enabling you to climb with considerable labour, but without much risk, not exactly to the summit, but to a cleft, as it were, between two bastions, from which a hollow slope of beautifully smooth and verdant turf introduced you at once into the ferny interior of the island, right amongst the panic-stricken conies. The whole extent was not more than some dozen of acres; a little hollow or basin, with the richest wild vegetation, presenting a rocky front to the ocean on every side.

You may fancy how the young Spensers and their cousins, the still bolder little Woodwards, revelled in a place like this. The latter were first to gain the top of the ascent, and they were a little scared and surprised to find the island apparently in possession, not of the rabbits as usual, but of an enormous Newfoundland dog, whom they saw careering through the brake, lost in its deep masses, now appearing again, rushing up to them with apparent hostility, and as swiftly scampering off once more, in exuberance of canine spirits. It puzzled them extremely to find such an animal on the island, and it puzzled the wiser heads of the party, too, as they toiled up the craggy parapet in succession. Carry Woodward always felt this part of the expedition sensibly, and often and often declared that she never would undergo it again; but still there had never been a party to Tory Island without her.

The proper way to go down the green slope was running; the curate, Doctor Wilkins, and the boys, were already up to their hips in the fern; the great Hercules, quite as wild as the little, who was as wild as one of Cadwallader's goats. The curate had already shot a brace of rabbits. Carry stood puffing and panting to rest herself, looking quite overcome and exhausted. Dabzac offered her his arm to make the descent, but she said she always managed it best by herself, with just the help of her parasol. The girls made the race with their usual activity and success. Miss M'Cracken got down with the help of Doctor Wilkins, and poor Mrs. Woodward got down too, only that just at the last the bank was too slippery, or her parasol too frail, or her momentum too considerable, for she fell in the most amusing manner, with the utmost possible safety, and came sliding down to where the turf was level, and further slipping was against the laws of nature. Elizabeth was at her side in an instant, and there was merry laughing, of course, Carry laughing herself as pleasantly as the rest, as soon as she got on her legs again. Meanwhile the dog continued to make his evolutions through the fern, occasioning a dozen speculations as to how he came there and who could own him. Once or twice he disappeared on the opposite side over a brow which led to the

ruin already mentioned, under which, upon a spacious flat rock, about thirty feet long by twenty broad, the Spensers had long ago fixed a rustic table of great massiveness, and surrounded (except on the side next the sea) with a bench formed of huge stones, cushioned with green sods. This was the point to which parties of pleasure (always more or less sensual) generally made in the first instance. The boatmen carried the panniers with the provisions, and Mrs. Woodward herself superintended the dispositions for what many people consider the most indispensable part of a *fête-champêtre*.

"There must be other people, papa, on the island beside ourselves, to-day," said Billy Pitt to his father.

"I can't think it possible, Billy," said the curate, "my fear is that there has been a wreck; it is only too probable that the yacht we saw in danger during the gale has been lost here; I cannot account in any other way for a dog like that being on the island, and see, he has a collar round his neck."

The dog rushed past them at the moment up the slope that commanded the ruins and the rustic table beneath them: Billy Pitt ran forwards with nearly equal speed, and in a few moments made a signal to his father to hasten after him, which, of course, he did with his giant strides, expecting to see something surprising, and he was not disappointed.

At the rustic table, about fifty yards beneath the place where he stood, sat two young men, attired in seemingly naval uniform, actively engaged in discussing an excellent dinner, and seemingly as much at their ease, and at home, as if the island belonged to them in fee-simple. The dinner was not entirely a cold one, for a wreath of smoke was perceptible ascending from one of the dishes, which seemed to consist of broiled fish; a supposition which was confirmed by the circumstance that a fire had been kindled, and was still burning within the adjacent ruins, which had an arched gate-way communicating with the flat rock.

"They have turned the hall of Conaign's Tower into a kitchen," said Billy Pitt, highly excited and irritated at what, to his ingenuous and enthusiastic mind, appeared a most sacrilegious proceeding.

"Yes, and I am mistaken," said Mr. Woodward, "if that is not the cook lying on his back in the shadow there under the wall, resting from his labours."

"See, papa, they are drinking cider."

"More probably champagne, Billy," replied his father; "upon my word, they seem to be a pair of luxurious young pirates." The curate knew what champagne was, probably not so well by the report of the cork, as the report of the world. Even Mr. Spenser did not drink expensive wines, and as to episcopal dinners, the curate had only read of them, and scarce believed half that he read.

"They do look piratical," said Doctor Wilkins, "the taller of the two wears a cutlass, and I see something behind the other like a blunderbuss—it is either a blunderbuss or a telescope."

At this moment, one of the banqueters on the rock gave a shrill whistle, and cried Pedro in a sonorous voice, which made the cliffs and caves ring again. Pedro was chasing the rabbits and other innocent little wild beasts many a yard away, too far to be within hearing of the signal, and the young man who had made it stood up to look after his dog, and in so doing discovered Mr. Woodward, his son, and Doctor Wilkins peering down upon him from the edge of the precipice. If the curate had been sur-

prised at the sight of the strangers in naval dress, they, upon their part, were far more startled at the sight of him. He was indeed a figure that might well have been taken for a pirate, and a formidable one. His gigantic size, his features, which looked at a distance so truculent, his round, broad-brimmed, low-crowned glazed hat, his blue jacket, and the fowling-piece on his shoulder, formed an *ensemble* which led irresistibly to the conclusion that he was some bold smuggler, or sea-attorney, who had made this almost inaccessible islet his stronghold. Doctor Wilkins wore a blue jacket also, and might be very well taken for a mate or a cockswain.

The curate was soon made sensible of the impression he produced, for the young man who was on his legs seized a rifle which had been lying beside him, and made a sign to his comrade to arm himself, too, which he immediately did, grasping the gun which Billy had taken for a telescope. At this critical moment arrived Aunt Carry, escorted by the colonel, and followed by her beautiful nieces and the rest of the party. The young men looked at one another, and conversed in a low tone.

"The pirate or smuggler, or whatever he is, has got a jolly fat wife," said George Markham.

"And a fine family," said Vivyan.

"I fear it will turn out that we are the intruders," said Markham.

"I fear so," said his friend; "these people may possibly be the proprietors of this island, they look wild enough for it;—*we* certainly are not;—in my opinion we ought to parley with them."

"And invite them to join us," added George, "the women look civilised, at all events, and so do two of the men,—that tall fellow in the pea-jacket with the gun is certainly a very ill-looking desperado."

"Probably a kind of amphibious gamekeeper;—remember we are in Connaught."

"Well, here goes," cried Markham, "I'll face the party, strong as it is; do you make that lubberly Lawrence stir himself; threaten to mast-head him, and set a few flasks of champagne to cool in the water; there's a great lobster left in the square basket—make him dress it;—I'll give a whistle should I want you to come to me,"—and so speaking, the active young sportsman sprang up the rocks in an oblique direction by a track he had before discovered, and which conducted him in less than five minutes to the group on the top of the cliffs, who were eagerly discussing who the invaders of their island might be, and where they should spread their dinner, now that the flat rock had been usurped so unceremoniously.

The curate, feeling himself the leading personage of his sex present, advanced to meet Markham, who did not at once renounce the opinion he had formed of him at a distance; but the misapprehension was removed directly Woodward spoke, which he was the first to do, apologising most civilly for having interrupted the young men so unseasonably.

"It is our part to apologise," said Markham, with a gesture of courtesy intended for the ladies who stood close by, as much as for the strange personage with whom he talked,—"but our story is simply this: we are mariners in distress—all but shipwrecked—we have been cast upon this island, where we are doing our best to make ourselves comfortable; amongst other things, we have been trying to-day to make out a dinner; and if you and your party will only honour my friend and myself with your company down on the table-rock yonder, we shall esteem it the

greatest kindness you can possibly confer upon a pair of weather-beaten tars."

The curate looked at his helpmate, and she in her turn looked at the curate, and the looks of both were so decidedly affirmative that very few words were necessary to conclude the treaty of peace and hospitality between the parties. Markham stated his own name and his friend's, and Mr. Woodward (at his wife's prompting) observed the same formality, following it up by presenting the young Englishman to Carry, his nieces, and the rest of his faction in order. This done, he directed the crew of the Caroline to proceed to the usual place with the baskets (for he insisted on contributing to the entertainment), and in less than a quarter of an hour the whole human population of the island was assembled on the flat rock, as happy and animated a circle as ever met together on a convivial occasion. If Markham made a favourable impression on the women, you may conceive how much they were struck with Vivyan, whose appearance had been much improved by the exposure to the sun and air, which had slightly bronzed his complexion, and giving him a manlier look than he wore when he sailed from Southampton.

His address was grace itself, his smile the blandest and brightest; there was a quiet joyousness about him, a love of pleasing, and a disposition to be pleased, which, joined with his elegant person, cultivated taste, and a natural facility of expressing his thoughts in lively and agreeable language, made him one of the most fascinating young men of his time.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE PIC-NIC.

"Medio in *fonte* leporum,
Surgit amari aliquid, quod ipsis in floribus angit."
LUCRETIUS.

THAT probably was the most remarkable and romantic pic-nic that ever took place. What a spot it was! In the front of the party lay the glorious expanse of the Atlantic, with not an inch of dry land, no, not so much as a rock for a sea-mew to perch on, between the place where you stood and the mouth of the Mississippi. Behind, a gray ruin, with a legend, of course, and many a controversy, which we shall not molest the reader with, about its date and its architecture, amongst the Oldbucks of the Irish Academy. The curate (a little of a bore on Irish antiquities) is already warm on the subject with Markham, quoting Doctor Petrie, and warning him not to let himself be led astray by the heresies of Sir William Betham. Markham is looking at the ladies, and uncertain which of the girls to admire most, or whether the matron is not better worth looking at than either. Vivyan is speaking to Arabella, just because she happens to be nearest to him; he has scarcely seen Elizabeth's face yet. All is tumult, surprise, and gaiety, on that strange wild place for a dinner-party. Miss M'Cracken is opening the hampers from the parsonage, and repaying herself for her pains by taking a foretaste of their contents. Mr. Lawrence (heartily weary of his "voyage pittoresque") is dressing the great lobster (a superb one it is,

calling for lettuce, as big as cabbages), and Peter, the curate's butler, is committing all manner of *gaucheries* in the discharge of his office, and somewhat undecided whether the blunderbuss is a flask of champagne, or the flask of champagne a blunderbuss.

"We have heard a great deal," said Markham, at length escaping from the curate and the archæology, and addressing Mrs. Woodward, "we have heard a great deal of the 'wild sports of the west,' but we never dreamed of enjoying anything at once so wild and so charming as this." The "charming" was meant for the lady he was accosting, and she replied with her goodliest smile that "she feared the wildness was all upon the side of *her* party, for, often as *she* had visited the island, this was the first time she had found it in the possession of such a civilised and agreeable population."

It was a compliment to the Englishmen at the expense of the rabbits.

"We are only adventurers," said Vivyan, "something like Stephano and Trinculo, only we don't think of usurping Prospero's island."

"Our Prospero is not with us," said Aunt Carry. "I mean my brother, the Rev. Mr. Spenser, (father to those ladies," she added, in a parenthetic tone), "who will regret not meeting you here; but I hope before your cruise is over he will have that pleasure upon an island of more respectable dimensions than this."

Spenser!—the name struck Markham, and added to his surprises. He was on the point of inquiring whether the Mr. Spenser mentioned was Lord Bonham's friend, when one of the sailors came up to receive some directions from Mr. Woodward, and, addressing him, called him "your reverence."

If they had called him "your holiness," or "your majesty," they could not have more electrified the young Englishmen. Wild sports of the west, indeed!—they both exclaimed internally, for the idea that Mr. Woodward was a clergyman had never occurred to them, nor was there anything about his appearance at all suggestive of it, but entirely the reverse. It heightened their spirits to find so much to divert mixed with so much to attract and delight them. Men so odd and uncouth, and at the same time so replenished with good nature as the curate and Doctor Wilkins neither Vivyan nor Markham (who had been in the East, and seen Arabs and dancing dervishes) had ever encountered; and to find them in the society of three women, not merely with fine persons, but well-bred and accomplished, was one of those surprising things which people like to meet on their travels, and it was agreeably surprising, too, which made it so much the better. They saw some surprising things in Ireland that long vacation which were quite of another character.

Elizabeth that day looked supremely bright and joyous; she was passionately fond of nature, a girl who loved the gaiety of the open air, in the fern and heather amongst the rocks, the wild flowers, and the wild birds, better than the gaiety of any ball-room. Though her father was absent, she had people with her who were very dear to her, and to whom she knew that she was dear; she idolised Carry Woodward, and was greatly attached to Uncle Hercules, without being blind to his oddities and mannerisms; then she had Arabella, and her little step-brother and step-sister, towards all of whom she felt exactly as a pure, healthy-minded girl ought to feel, solicitous for their happiness, and happy herself when she saw them happy. What an inestimable quality it is that deriving of pleasure from the mere prospect of it in others;—that basking in the light reflected from

other faces;—how it multiplies the enjoyments of those who are fortunate enough to possess it; how it exceeds in intensity as well as dignity, and in durability still more than either, all satisfaction of a selfish nature; how wise and independent, as well as how good is it, to be capable of being thus made happy! Elizabeth Spenser abounded with this beautiful attribute; it was this, and nothing else, that gave that sweet, soft, glad lustre to her eye, that serene, sunny, musical expression to all her features, which, before his cruise in the Circe was over, flung its dazzling spell over one of the young Englishmen, and made that day on the Atlantic islet the most important and critical of his life.

Markham (who was not long in establishing the identity of Mrs. Woodward's brother with the gentleman to whom he had introductory letters) took the lead on the part of the English invaders, as the curate did on the part of the Irish residents, during the protracted festivities of the rock. Vivyan, in the beginning of acquaintanceships naturally shy, conversed a little with Mrs. Woodward, who sat upon his right during the banquet, seldom addressing the whole party, and never except when Markham stimulated him to the effort. Elizabeth was his neighbour to the left; he often marvelled afterwards how little impression she made on him in the first moments of their acquaintance.

The expertest reporter of a London journal would probably have failed to give a tolerably correct report of the mirthful, hearty, enthusiastic, and motley conversation of that day. The curate's spirits were naturally somewhat too exuberant, but they were just sufficiently controlled by the less turbulent hilarity of the rest of the party. In a company of Irishmen Hercules was Irish, but when you diluted the Hibernian alcohol with English milder spirits, you produced a very agreeable and indeed civilised mixture.

Mr. Lawrence's lobster was applauded by all who tasted it, and the champagne did not diminish the vivacity of the circle. The very opening of it caused considerable merriment, for Peter, being the Ganymede of a man with an income of seventy-five pounds a-year, and having consequently never witnessed the phenomenon before, was very near tumbling over the cliff into unfathomed water, when the first cork bounced into the air. Mrs. Woodward is reported to have drank three glasses on that ever-memorable day, one with Markham, one with Vivyan, and one with Colonel Dabzac, who, on the whole, behaved himself very socially, for a lieutenant-colonel and a grand master. Then uprose the curate, and "in his rising seemed," not "a pillar of state," but rather a church-steeple: he rose to propose a general health to a reunion as agreeable as it was unexpected and picturesque, accompanied with a jovial prayer that the same society might assemble again at some future time on the same rock with hearts as light and faces as cheerful. The glasses were filled, the sunbeams danced on the sparkling foam of the Epergnay grape, when a shrill shout from the younger members of the party, who were disporting themselves in the heath above the cliffs, attracted attention and interrupted the libation. The cry was "Sydney, Sydney." Mrs. Woodward and her nieces were disturbed and vexed by it; Elizabeth, indeed, reproached herself with feeling as she did when the approach of her brother was announced, but it was not her brother whose approach she dreaded,—it was that of Dawson, and almost the next moment he stood at her side.

He and Sydney had returned to the parsonage that morning, soon after the expedition set out, and on receiving information of the pic-nic, they

instantly took a boat and rowed to the island, Dawson not hesitating to join the party on his friend's invitation.

You could not, without the eyes of Argus, eyes to see everybody at the same moment, have had an idea of the effect produced upon this occasion by the sudden apparition of Sydney and his companion. The Irish party fell at once several degrees in the estimation of the Englishmen. Sydney of himself would not have produced such a result, for his face was not yet fevered by dissipation, or deformed by passion; his eye had not lost its ingenuous light; he looked a wild, ungoverned, but still a handsome and well-born, if not well-bred, boy. With Dawson, however, in conjunction with him, it was different. Markham instantly thought that he had seen Dawson somewhere in London, whether smoking in the Quadrant, betting at Tattersall's, or lounging and whispering in the gallery of the House of Commons, he was not certain. Both he and Vivyan soon learned that Sydney was brother to the fair girls whose acquaintance they had just made, and that Dawson was Sydney's friend, relative, or both, required no sagacity to discover. Let the reader imagine what must naturally pass through the mind under such circumstances; the disappointment of the Englishmen on the one hand, the uncomfortable feelings of the Spensers and Woodwards on the other, the feeling of being ashamed of an acquaintance and a relative, and that relative such a very near one.

There was an end of all hilarity and easy conversation. The efforts of the new comers to restore both only made the effect more remarkable. The curate alone received Dawson with anything like cordiality; he rose to make a place for him at the table, but Frank Vivyan rose at the instant with the same object, and little dreaming of the pain he was causing both to Mrs. Woodward and Elizabeth, was instrumental in planting Dawson between them. In the act of performing this civility he encountered Dawson's sinister and ambiguous eye with one so freezingly disregardful, that the look was never forgiven or forgotten.

Both aunt and niece had dined as well as Vivyan, so they saw no reason why they should linger at the table, while Sydney and Dawson satisfied the cravings of nature, particularly as another gorgeous sunset was on the point of taking place. They rose simultaneously, and a proposition was soon made and accepted to ramble over the island. The broad-brimmed white hat which Dawson wore, concealed the scowl with which he regarded the graceful Vivyan, as now conversing with Elizabeth he mounted the steep path that led to the top of the cliffs. However, he applied himself to his dinner notwithstanding, devoured the remnant of the lobster, and divided with Sydney a flask of champagne, neither inquiring from what cellar the wine came. Miss M'Cracken paid him little attention, knowing that he was no favourite with Mrs. Spenser; but the honest curate, who never deserted a friend in need, took the best care he could of him, and conversed with him for some time. Amongst other things he asked Dawson whether the report was true that he was on the point of going into Parliament for Rottenham.

The question excited Dawson's vulgar vanity, and made him swagger a good deal, and talk and eat simultaneously. He replied, that there was something in the wind, he believed, on the subject; but he would look before he leaped; no constituency should make a cat's-paw of him, and he was equally resolved to be no man's warming-pan; he didn't deny he was a liberal, and he didn't assert that the country had no wrongs and grievances, but he wouldn't pin himself to the tail of any agitator; he would

blush, so he would—he pronounced it bloosh—to be a mere shillelagh in the hand of Daniel O'Connell himself.

Dawson often talked of blushing, but he never did.

The curate, however, felt that his principal obligation for the time being was to entertain the young Englishmen, and accordingly he now strode after Markham, who was following the women, having been intensely disgusted with Dawson's display.

Miss M'Cracken, however, had overheard the conversation between Dudley and the curate, and taking a very different view of the former gentleman when she learned that he was of sufficient mark for a seat in parliament, she now did all she could to make him comfortable, helped him plentifully to tongue and chicken, and not only smiled and curtsied graciously when he proposed a glass of champagne to her, but drank off the glass with the same amiable complaisance.

"Your country is remarkable for the magnificence of its sunsets," said Markham to the curate, as they walked together, immediately behind Mrs. Woodward, her nieces, and Frank Vivyan.

"Men of your profession, sir," replied Woodward, "have constant opportunities of observing and enjoying such phenomena."

Markham smiled and undeceived the curate as to his profession, acquainting him that both himself and his comrade were only amateur sailors, though they wore a costume something resembling the naval.

"But where is your yacht?" asked the other. "You did not lose her, I trust, in the late gale."

"No," said Markham, "but how we preserved her, or indeed saved ourselves, I can hardly inform you; I fear it was less by our seamanship than our good fortune. However, we sustained so much damage that this morning we ordered our men to carry her into the port of Derry, to undergo the necessary repairs. We lost our bowsprit and our rudder."

"We could have managed all that for you at Redcross," said the curate; "but what do you propose to do while your boat is repairing?"

"We propose, with your permission, to bivouac here, on this pretty isle of yours," answered Markham, coolly. "We are tolerably well armed and provisioned; we have a tent, plenty of cloaks and blankets, lots of books; oh, we shall do very well, I assure you."

"But we must try to provide you with somewhat better quarters, sir," said Woodward. "I hope you will kindly prefer our hospitality, rude as you will find it, to that of the rabbits and the sea-gulls. Besides, I don't think your friend looks as if his frame was quite equal yet to the hardships of a Robinson Crusoe life."

"Oh, is it Vivyan?" said Markham. "I assure you he is a hardier fellow than you take him for. He was squeamish enough for the first week, but, faith, now he is the best hand in the Circe. However, your proposal is a very kind and agreeable one, and I have no doubt my friend will concur with me in accepting it very thankfully."

Markham then gave the curate a full account of the plan and the course of their voyage; told him a good deal about Vivyan, a little about himself; assured him that pleasure was their sole object; and that they were visiting Ireland, neither as politicians to meddle with state affairs, artists to paint her scenery, or commissioners of the *Times* newspaper, to investigate the relations of landlord and tenant. He could not help thinking, as he said this, that finer subjects for sketches, either for pen or pencil, than the

singular personage he was talking to, and his fair vast wife, it would not be easy to find between the tropics, or beyond them.

That fair wife was now sitting on a cushion of turf, soft as Lyons velvet, and green as oriental emerald, save where a tuft of purple heath broidered it, contemplating the glories of the evening, the sun, the ocean, and the mountains, with an eye to enjoy, and a mind to feel them. She had partly conquered Vivyan's reserve, and was now holding with him the sort of conversation that cultivated women are so fond of, fanciful, poetical, lively, sentimental without melancholy, a grain of philosophy in it to make it serious, a strain of wit to make it brilliant, and a little touch of gallantry to throw a rosy hue over all. Perhaps no woman loves this sort of parley so well as a clever and handsome one of ripe years, with such a companion as Vivyan, young enough to be her son, but capable, as he was, of holding such discourse with her. Carry, too, enjoyed it the more, because it was rarely now that she met with a man of elegant mind and soft acquirements, with the exception of her brother, Mr. Spenser. Elizabeth sat in her shadow, on the same natural couch of green and purple, eagerly listening, but taking no part in the dialogue, except with her eyes, which incessantly chatted with those of her aunt, though they seldom encountered Vivyan's, who indeed was not seated so as to have the same full view of her that he had of Mrs. Woodward.

The curate had one fault on a pic-nic—he was as eager to get home as he was to set out.

"Your uncle is getting fidgety," said Carry, to her niece, as Hercules approached with Markham.

"It is still early, aunt," said Elizabeth, reluctant to leave the sun-set, and finding the conversation pleasing, though participating little in it.

Much, inded, as Carry herself loved her husband, and dutiful wife as she was, she would very gladly have lingered another half hour on the green couch with her fascinating new acquaintance. But Mr. Woodward was commodore of the squadron, and when he gave sailing orders, his wife was not the person to mutiny, so she gave her hand to Markham, who helped her to rise, while Frank gave his arm to Elizabeth just in time to save her from the offer of Dawson's, who came up at the moment with the rest of the party, all now in motion for the beach. Dawson next addressed himself to Aunt Carry, who repelled him in a certain dry way she had, and which she well knew how to employ on proper occasion. She was a porcupine to men of his stamp, or rather a rhinoceros, for she was content with defensive operations, and made herself as impenetrable to the people she disliked, as she was affable and buxom to her favourites.

It ended in Dawson being obliged to put up with the governess, who, indeed, wanted the assistance of his arm to descend the rude winding stair amongst the rocks, and it was the least return he could make for the tongue and chicken she had helped him to. Lucy, being an accomplished coquette, managed to make herself extremely agreeable; and perhaps Dawson foresaw that so clever a girl might possibly hereafter be useful to him, for, though he was a little morose at first, he grew even more than polite after some moments, and formed on that occasion a sort of flirting friendship with Miss M'Cracken, which continued to the end of his career, and was not without important results.

Hitherto the day had passed without any incident more provoking than the intrusion of a disagreeable guest; but a painful occurrence took place just as the party was all mustered on the little narrow quay already

described, and on the point of embarking in their respective vessels. Billy Pitt Woodward was playing somewhat riotously with his little cousins and the dog Pedro, and though several times warned that the space was too limited for such gambols, persevered in the intoxication of his boyish spirits. Elizabeth Spenser happened to be standing within a foot of the edge, just between the yacht and the smack; and the boy in passing was pushed against her by the dog. She stumbled, lost her equilibrium, and before any body could grasp her dress, or give any assistance, she fell into the water. A general shriek accompanied the horrid splash. Instantly it was followed by another. A young man had thrown off his coat and plunged after her,—it was Mr. Dawson!

It was gallantly and admirably done. Not two minutes elapsed between the fall and the rescue; but nothing, of course, was thought of but attention to the almost lifeless girl. She soon, however, came to herself, and was carried by her afflicted uncle (who was almost as skilful in cases of drowning as Doctor Wilkins himself) on board the Gipsy, which was fortunately provided with blankets in sufficient quantity, and several other appliances useful on such occasions. It was a disastrous termination of a day of pleasure, and not the least annoying part of it was the circumstance that the girl's deliverer was the last man in the world whom she would have chosen to owe her life to. But the curate, as soon as he returned upon deck, embraced Dawson (dripping as he was) in the transports of his gratitude, and Markham and Vivyan agreed that he was a fine bold fellow, after all, and only another Irish anomaly. Sydney pressed his friend to return with him to the parsonage; but Dawson accepted Mr. Woodward's invitation to go to Redcross in the Caroline. Neither Mrs. Woodward nor Doctor Wilkins thought it prudent to leave Elizabeth. As to Vivyan and Markham, they decided, under the circumstances, to revoke their acceptance of the curate's hospitality for the present, and they passed the night adventurously on the island,—the hares and rabbits their bed-fellows, the heather their pillow, the blue concave their canopy, and the moon their night-lamp.

CHAPTER XXX.

BIVOUAC ON SPENSER ISLAND.

"For now I stand as one upon a rock,
Environed by a wilderness of sea."
TITUS ANDRONICUS.

"I DON'T apprehend any serious consequences," said Markham, as he and his cousin walked leisurely back to the place where they had dined; "she seems a hardy as well as a handsome girl, and I never saw or heard of a rescue so prompt—almost so instantaneous; in fact, I scarcely knew which of the party had met with the accident, until I saw her in the arms of that reverend Goliath, who, it appears, is her uncle."

"I feared she was drowned," said Vivyan.

"I knew that was impossible," said Markham; "I have seen cases of

"Well, George," said Frank, after some pause, "if our Irish expedition goes on this way, it will be romantic enough, at all events."

"But either you or I should have saved the lady," said Markham, "by all the laws of romance."

"Ah, if things would only happen in life as they do in a novel," said Vivyan.

"However," said his cousin, "we have no great reason to murmur, wrecked upon such a picturesque islet as this is, and after a day so full of startling events."

"Such strange men, and such lovely women," added Vivyan; "only think what a charming little realm this was only an hour ago—in the whole female population not a woman who was not a beauty. Even the lady who seemed a governess was decidedly good-looking."

"Handsome, but decidedly not *good*-looking," said Markham. "You mean that fair fierce girl?—she made me think of arsenic."

"A little fierce, certainly," said Vivyan; "but only think, George, what a world this would be, if there was nothing physical but beauty, and nothing moral but love."

"The word moral has a very convenient vagueness in it," said Markham.

"The pleasure in beauty is moral, surely, essentially moral," said Vivyan, who was at the age when the night and the ocean make young men desperately sentimental.

"Then, if a man admired a plain woman, you would say he was immoral," said Markham.

"Not exactly," said the other; "but, as a general proposition, I maintain that the love of beauty is virtue, and the love of deformity vice."

"Well, it is a vice we need scarcely preach a crusade against," said Markham; "but while we have been talking metaphysics and sentiment, how splendidly the night has advanced upon us!"

"How brilliant the stars are," cried Vivyan; "let us sit down on this smooth rock and gaze on them."

"Like Jessica and Lorenzo," said Markham, who was tolerably well acquainted with Shakspeare; and he that is so has an encyclopedia of poetry in his memory.

"I think I never saw the heavens so glorious as they are to-night," said Vivyan.

"Do you know the names of the constellations, Frank?"

"Only a few," said Vivyan. "I am of Biron's opinion on that subject. Is it not Biron who says,—

> "Those earthly godfathers of heaven's lights,
> Who gave a name to every fixed star,
> Have no more pleasure in their starry nights
> Than those who gaze, and know not what they are."

They were both mute again for a few moments, their eyes riveted upon the blazing firmament.

"How solemn, how beautiful, how grand all this is!" exclaimed Vivyan, breaking the silence. "Never shall we forget our first night on the coast of Ireland."

"Never," said Markham, deeply feeling the splendour of the scene.

"Had I ten thousand prejudices against the country, George, upon this

memorable rock I should abjure them all;—if this island were my property I should have a cottage on it assuredly—but look, the moon rises yonder, let us move towards the beach, and watch the effect upon the water."

The moon rose that night of a pale gold colour, a flickering causeway of the same delicate tint seemed to traverse the face of the waters from the base of the cliffs to the lower limb of the planet. They made their way out to the extreme point of a lofty ledge of rocks, and seating themselves on the uttermost gray splinter, fancied that they could almost step on the radiant road that terminated trembling at their feet.

"One can't help believing in the planetary influences," said Vivyan. "I try in vain of moonlight nights to recollect my astronomy, and think of nothing but the moon's nodes and librations; but to no purpose—the poetry still returns, Diana won't allow me to think of Newton."

While Frank was thus rhapsodising, his relation was watching with his keen nautical eye an object upon the water, apparently at about a quarter of a mile from them. He called Vivyan's attention to it, and in a few moments it was evident that it was a small brig, and that it was standing in right for the island.

"Our adventures, perhaps, are not yet over," said Vivyan.

"Probably smugglers," said Markham,—"the wise course is to arm ourselves and be prepared for an attack, at the same time avoiding observation as much as possible."

They rose, and proceeding to the spot where they had left Lawrence with their arms and other accoutrements, both pacific and warlike, each provided himself with a gun and cutlass, and thus equipped they moved forward amongst the rocks, keeping out of view of the brig, until they found a convenient station for watching the behaviour of her crew.

Almost immediately a boat left her, rowed by two men, who pulled lustily for the beach, and in a few minutes disappeared in the shadows of the cliffs. Markham and Frank, like Crusoe and Friday, crept as close as they safely could to the spot where the boat seemed disposed to land; but when they saw her again, she was pushing back rapidly to the brig.

Vivyan was for clambering down the rocks and searching for the cave where it seemed likely the free-traders had been depositing some articles of their irregular traffic.

"Not yet," said Markham, "the boat may return."

It did return; and now they distinctly saw the men run her into what appeared to be the mouth of a cavern, almost directly under the crags from which the young Englishmen were watching their proceedings. The boat was invisible for about twenty minutes. When she reappeared, Vivyan could perceive nothing but the sailors who rowed her (the moonbeams glancing on their broad-brimmed glazed hats), but Markham, who had the vision of a falcon, saw that she contained several large wooden cases, to carry off which it was now evident she had been sent ashore.

The young men remained still until the boat returned to the brig. What took place then, the shadows prevented them from observing, but the boat did not come back; on the contrary, the brig weighed anchor, and stood out to sea on a southerly course, as if she intended to make for the port of Galway.

Never did a chamois-hunter in the Bernese Oberland spring from rock to rock with the speed of George Markham, in his eager curiosity to discover the haunts of the pirates, or smugglers, whatever they were, and

detect the nature of their operations. He called to Vivyan not to follow him, and indeed there was not much occasion for the remonstrance, the descent was so rugged and perilous (particularly by the faint light of the moon), and Frank was so unused to exploits which his cousin, from his habits of deer-stalking, thought as little of as if he had been bred a smuggler himself.

Markham was soon lost to Vivyan's view, and after some time the latter became uneasy, and followed his footsteps as far as he could with any consideration for his personal safety, shouting at intervals, but receiving no answer. Just as he was beginning to be seriously alarmed, he heard a slight noise close to him, and he was rejoined by his cousin, who had found a shorter and easier way back than that by which he had descended the cliffs.

"Well," said Vivyan, "and did you find the cave?"

"I did," said Markham, looking as if he had discovered something a great deal more surprising.

"And what did you find there, George?"

"A hall of statues, or a sculptor's studio," answered Markham, "the light was so bad, I could not decide the question, but I found two marble busts unquestionably."

"You are jesting," said Vivyan.

"I am not," said Markham, "and I can tell you more, I strongly suspect that the cave contains a picture-gallery also. It seems incredible, but it is true, I assure you."

Frank was disposed to be incredulous,—not very unreasonably,—and Markham, instead of repeating his story, conducted his cousin down the comparatively easy path he had struck upon, and in a few seconds they stood at the mouth of the marvellous cave, the floor of which seemed to be just above the ordinary high-water mark. Had the moon been commodiously situated with respect to the cavern, or the cavern with respect to the moon, the interior might probably have been accurately surveyed, but the light fell obliquely, and was half interrupted by the rocks upon one side, so that the illumination was very dim and imperfect.

Markham led his cousin by the hand, and stopped at what seemed at first to be a mere lump of white, or grayish stone.

"That's not a bust," said Vivyan.

"Pass your hand over this part of it," said George.

Vivyan did so, and at once confessed that his cousin was in the right.

"Now, come on a little further," said Markham.

Frank followed him, and could hardly discern the next object of vertu to which his attention was called; but on again applying his hand, there was not a doubt on his mind but that he stood in a museum of the fine arts, strange as it was to find such an institution in such a place.

"Now come this way," said George, "you see I am a capital Cicerone; but tread cautiously."

Immediately Frank's foot struck against something that returned a hollow sound.

"I thought at first it was a coffin," said Markham, "but I ascertained the shape; it is a square box, such as pictures are packed in; and as the cave contains the works of the chisel, it is only natural to expect a few works of the pencil also."

"*Nothing* would surprise me after this," cried Vivyan. "What a high notion it gives one of the refinement of this part of Ireland to find a contraband trade in statues and pictures carried on so actively."

"Unfortunately for that view of the matter," said Markham, "the trade seems to be an export one. I own there is something in this that surprises me extremely. One cannot help suspecting that it is not the rightful owner of these articles who has concealed them here, and who seems to be shipping them off by degrees in this clandestine manner."

The young men having further searched the cavern, groping with hands and feet, but without succeeding in finding any thing more of consequence, were very glad to find themselves under their lady the moon again, for the air of the cave was extremely cold, and the floor was damp, although not with the influx of the ocean. Fortunately there was no dew upon the heath, which was their couch that night; and luckily, too, they had abundance of blankets and cloaks above and beneath them, or a cold and a fever might have discouraged their somewhat rash enterprise of sleeping *al fresco* even at Midsummer, in the humid and fickle climate of Ireland.

At break of day, while Lawrence was making their coffee, they hastened back to the cave and found sufficient light to confirm fully all the conjectures they had already made. It then occurred to them to try if they could move the busts and carry them close to the entrance, so as to see what they were. It required all their strength to effect this object, but they ultimately achieved it, and found that one was a bust of Socrates; the other they were not so clear about, but both were apparently well executed, and in the finest Carrara marble. When they returned to examine the wooden box, it was not to be found. The smugglers had carried it off during the night.

After a wild but substantial and various breakfast, the young men decided upon availing themselves of one of the boats of the Circe, which they had retained, and pulling over to Redcross to pay their respects to the Woodwards and inquire for Miss Spenser, for they were not sufficiently acquainted with the coast to have found their way to the parsonage, if they had proposed to make their first visit there.

They found the great and good curate in that extraordinary study of his, and the apartment amused and astonished them as much as its occupier had done the day before. The ruins of a morning meal were scattered over several tables, the chief one not much more than half covered by the cloth, and the curate was sitting amongst them, like Marius in the wreck of Carthage, only that Marius was not employed darning his toga, as Hercules was repairing a rent in his huge pea-jacket, not having his wife to perform that delicate little office for him. The manly simplicity of the rustic clergyman, so cheerful and independent in the midst of his sacred poverty, struck his visitors forcibly. He chased a glossy and corpulent black cat from an oaken chair, to present it to Markham, and dusted a stool with a sleeve of the jacket to make it fit for Vivyan to sit on. Then he flung the jacket aside, and, forgetting that he wanted it on his shoulders, entered lustily into conversation, suffering the cat to jump on his knee, to compensate her for ejectment from the chair. Hercules had a partiality to cats, in common with many other remarkable men (including Tasso and Newton); and had surprising stories to tell of their affection, as well as their sagacity, contrary to the prevailing opinion with respect to that most domestic of all animals.

The first inquiry of the yachtsmen was, of course, for the lady whom so alarming an accident had befallen. Hercules had been actually preparing to walk over to the rectory, to satisfy himself on the same point, and he

was in raptures at the proposition which Markham made to bear him company.

"But will your friend be equal to it?" he asked, compassionately contemplating Vivyan's slender frame, much as Pantagruel may be supposed to have contemplated the pilgrim whom he found in the salad.

"Anything under ten miles, sir," said Vivyan, smiling.

"Not five, by the route I shall take you," said the curate; "so I'll put on my coat and my shoes, and we'll start immediately."

"I foresee I shall fall in love with this curate," said Markham, when he left the room. "How odd that Bonham said nothing of him!"

They were not half done admiring the detail of the study, when Mr. Woodward reappeared, wonderfully metamorphosed, for, out of respect to the travellers, he had put on his full black suit. The coat, indeed, was an iron-gray, but he called it his black one and it answered the purpose. His wife was the only person living who thought the clerical dress improved him; and indeed his frame and his features were more in keeping with the garb which he commonly wore on week-days.

"Now," said he, taking down the hat that was intended to match the suit (a low-crowned and broad-leaved one, but nothing of the shovel), "now, gentlemen, let us take the road,—but come, I must provide you with sticks."

"We have been admiring your formidable store of them in the corner," said Markham, smiling.

"Aye," said Hercules, "I'm a stick-fancier. There's a cudgel *there*, I believe, of every wood that a cudgel was ever made of, oak, ash, hazel, holly, blackthorn, and bamboo, and some there have seen service. Take your choice, but I recommend you, Mr. Vivyan, to choose the bamboo; you will find it stout enough and light into the bargain."

Vivyan took the curate's advice; Markham selected a powerful oak-sapling, and Hercules himself sallied forth with the blackthorn.

"And so you actually bivouacked!" said Woodward, as they crossed the court-yard, "that's a thing I never did myself, and I thought I had done most things of that kind."

Markham gave a full account of the night they had passed, and the story of the cave excited the curate's curiosity greatly. It was utterly incomprehensible, and for some time he could talk of nothing else, minutely inquiring into all the circumstances, and framing theory after theory to explain them, then demolishing them himself without mercy. At length the charms of the scenery diverted the conversation into another channel.

The walk was enjoyed prodigiously by all three. The curate was never so vigorous, either in mind or body, as when he was on the hills; he seemed to grow greater and greater as he got higher and higher; his mind became elastic as the turf he strode on; and his heart as expansive as the concave over his head. Markham resembled him in his passion for the heath and his insatiable love of muscular exertion.

"You would make a capital mountain curate," said Hercules, as George kept pace with him manfully, Vivyan lagging a little behind, and thinking that men might be very good pedestrians, without walking quite so fast.

"I fear," said George, "I should have no other qualification but a love for the mountains."

"You would soon begin to love the mountaineers," said Hercules; "the only fault I find with my brother-in-law is that he can't walk,—or won't

walk; it comes to the same thing;—but now we are on the brow, and there is Redcross Rectory, that white house in the wood, beyond the water."

"How quiet, how very beautiful!" exclaimed Vivyan.

"The descent is nothing," said Woodward, resuming his speed, and giving Frank very little time to admire the prospect, so anxious was he to get news of his niece.

CHAPTER XXXI.

THE PARSONAGE VISITED.

"In recreations be both wise and free;
Live still at home, home to thyself, howe'er
Enriched with noble company."
THE LADY'S TRIAL.

GEORGE MARKHAM was right. Elizabeth Spenser was not the girl to succumb under a couple of minutes' immersion in cold water; her strong and elegant mind was cased in a frame, which also united elegance with strength. It was as much, indeed, as Carry Woodward could do to keep her in bed the next morning until after breakfast.

"Really," she said, "my dear aunt, I was not much longer under the water than if I had been bathing; and the water was so beautifully bright!"

"But it's not pleasant to be ducked wi one's clothes on in the brightest water," said Carry.

Elizabeth was sitting up in her little dimity-curtained bed at her breakfast; Aunt Carry sat expanded by her side: the casement was open, the sun was brilliant, the air fresh and balmy, and the long shoots of the monthly roses and woodbine, that covered the front of the house, were flapping every now and then into the room, encumbered with flowers. It was a picture better worth seeing than many a modern cartoon.

A tap at the door. Enter Lucy, curt and ceremonious, with Mrs. Spenser's compliments (that was her style with her step-daughters), to know how Miss Elizabeth felt herself, and would she try just five drops of the "Royal Soothing Restorative," recommended for all cases of sudden fright or over-excitement; indispensable for fires, hurricanes, inundations, and earthquakes, in fact, every disorder in nature, as Carry said, except moving bogs.

Then came the rector himself, kissed his pale daughter affectionately, and received an account from his sister of the agreeable young men whose acquaintance they had made the day before. Mr. Spenser was happy to hear of the safe arrival of the Circe, for he had been anxious about her fate during the gale. He then mentioned all he knew about Markham and Vivyan, which was not much; but Elizabeth was pleased to learn that the former was the friend of the Bonhams, a circumstance which had not transpired on the previous day. In making new acquaintances it is always agreeable to discover some link or another to connect them with old ones.

Tap the third.—Now it was the head girl of Elizabeth's little school,

with an address of condolence from the scholars, in the misfortune of their young mistress, and also to know whether they were to tarry or disperse to their several homes. Carry sent them a cheering account of her niece, and took upon herself to proclaim a truce with popular ignorance for a day or two. It was not often she was so pacific in that way.

Shortly after noon the fair girl rose, the first time for many a day that the meridian sun had seen her head on the pillow; and, still a little weak, leaning on her portly relative, descended to the library, where she found her father on the point of setting out with Doctor Wilkins for Redcross, to thank Mr. Dawson, both in his daughter's name and his own, for his heroic conduct.

"We are all very thankful to him, I am sure," said Mrs. Woodward. What would she not have given, notwithstanding, that her nicce's life had been saved by almost any one else in the world?

"You have very good reason," said the doctor, "promptitude is every thing in such cases; minutes count for hours when young ladies are at the bottom of the Atlantic. I am grateful to Mr. Dawson, myself," he added, "for I haven't so many patients in the neighbourhood that I can afford to lose them in so summary a way."

Smiling at the physician's speech, the rector kissed his rescued child, who repaid his smile in the same bright coin, and proceeded to the door, where he had not been standing a minute, before he heard a well-known shout from the water, and saw a boat within a bow-shot of the land, containing the redoubted curate, and two other gentlemen, whom he had never seen before.

Grateful as niece and aunt were to Mr. Dawson, neither regretted that he had not come to receive their acknowledgments in person. It was much more agreeable to see the Englishmen enter. As to Dawson, Mr. Woodward only knew that he had slept the night before at the hotel at Redcross and had started by an early mail for Dublin. A note, however, which Sydney received from him, gave the important additional information, that his friend had been suddenly summoned to town, in consequence of a vacancy having unexpectedly occurred in the borough which he had for some time past aspired to represent.

Carry welcomed Markham and Vivyan in her radiant, overflowing manner, and Elizabeth as became a maiden receiving agreeable strangers in her father's house; her cheek at the same time almost recovering its wonted colour, that lovely brown with a delicate under-current of carmine in it.

The yachtsmen called to pay a morning visit, and remained the guests of the polished parson many days. Charmingly wild as Tory Island was, and enthusiastic as Markham and Vivyan were about its scenery, and the luxury of the life they had led there, not much persuasion was necessary to induce them to shift their quarters to the cosy and rosy parsonage. Mr. Spenser prevailed on them to promise him a week's sojourn in his pastoral cot; and the Woodwards consented to remain also, Carry having a very discreet nurse, to whom she did not hesitate now and then to confide her brood for a few days; all but Billy Pitt, who still required her own immediate supervision, and whom she had not yet promoted to the paternal oak, or blackthorn, though strongly tempted to do it by his late pranks on the island.

The parsonage, however, lost a guest that evening in the person of Colonel Dabzac, and nobody but the rector himself was in the least sur-

prised at the circumstances under which his departure took place. He completed the conquest of Miss Spenser on Tory Island, and just before he mounted his horse, he drily asked, and reluctantly received, her father's consent to the match. In fact, there was no valid objection to it. Dabzac was a young man of good fortune, without a stain upon his insipid character, and though very far from being the person whom Mr. Spenser would have chosen for a son-in-law, he was not to allow his own tastes, and still less his own politics, to interfere in a matter of the kind. Besides, Mrs. Spenser highly approved of it, which was enough to settle the question. In short, there never was a matrimonial affair arranged with much less fuss. A not distant wedding-day was provisionally fixed, and Mr. Spenser gave his brother-in-law notice, that he might not be on his rambles when wanting to tie the knot.

Beauty and gaiety, wit, wine, and worth, made that day's dinner the most charming of domestic convivialities, and it was succeeded by many equally delightful. The custom was (when the elements were propitious), after the removal of the cloth, to enjoy the dessert and wine *al fresco*, in the portico. One of the pastimes on such occasions was the remarkable echo, mentioned early in our story, and which the rector called his oracle, the mode of consulting it being to frame the question so that the last word, or syllable, would be a plausible answer, on the plan of the well-known dialogue of Erasmus.

"Now you shall hear, Mr. Vivyan, how well our Echo understands the state of Ireland."

Then he proceeded to catechise the nymph as follows, taking care to pronounce the final words of each sentence in a sufficiently loud tone.

What is the chief source of the evils of Ireland? *Echo*—Land.

What is the state of Munster?—Stir.

What are they doing in Connaught?—Naught.

Why don't they reclaim their morasses?—Asses.

Should we not excite them to industry?—Try.

Inform us what the derivation of Erin is?—Erinnys.

Then the curate, with his stentorian lungs, proposed the following interrogatories, shaped with a view to show that the Echo was of his way of thinking.

What would you give the Catholics?—Licks.

Who best deserves a fat rectory?—Tory.

But the Echo answered questions of another kind, equally to the satisfaction of the company; for, on being asked

"In what wine shall we drink the health of Colonel Dabzac?" the airy tongue replied, with the same promptitude and sharp distinctness—"Sack."

It made an amusing variety in an Irish night's entertainments; and, what with a lively tea, a little music, and another hour's miscellaneous conversation, the rector had every reason to think that the first day was a tolerably successful one.

At breakfast the ensuing morning a singular discovery was made, which connected Vivyan in a way none of the most agreeable with the fortunes of the Spensers. This was nothing less than the fact that the principal part of the money of which Maguire had been robbed consisted of the rents of Vivyan's small Irish estate, to which it turned out that the little proctor was bailiff, or collector. These were the rents which Maguire had received at Mr. Branagan's inn, near Castle Dawson,

when he was surprised counting his money, as has been related in a former chapter.

"A provoking discovery for a landlord to make on his first visit to his property," said the rector.

"Perhaps only a fit punishment for his not having visited it before," said Vivyan, smiling, although the loss of so much money was no laughing matter to a young man with his limited income.

"You deserve extremely little credit for visiting it now," said Markham; "only for this unfortunate affair, you would probably never have known that your estate lay in this part of the country."

"It must be submitted to, I suppose," said the easy Frank, "as a sort of local absentee-tax."

"You take the loss of a gale of rent very coolly," said his friend; "but since we are on the spot, we must use our best exertions, in conjunction with Mr. Spenser, to probe this business to the bottom."

The curate was delighted with Markham's energy; it was a quality which he possessed himself in almost a superabundant degree; so he declared his readiness to cooperate in any plan that might be agreed on (and the more prompt and strenuous the better) to discover the offenders, and bring them to justice. The parties who seemed apathetic and remiss were the rector and Vivyan, the principal losers in the transaction. The former thought that everything that was right to be done would be done by the police and the authorities, while the latter seemed infinitely to prefer the pleasures of boating, sauntering, and chatting with Mrs. Woodward and the Spenser girls, to the fatiguing amusement of hunting bandits through the mountains. The weather, however, was now exceedingly warm, so that for several days nothing was attempted, even by the energetic part of the company, which could give the most sensitive malefactor in the country the slightest uneasiness for his personal safety.

One of those sultry days was agreeably spent in a second party to the island, to which the discoveries of the strangers had attached a new interest almost as great as if they had found an Herculaneum there. No accident threw a shade over that day's pastime; not even Carry slipped on the verdant slope, the muscular Markham sustained her so ably. The breeze palliated the heat; there were no guns to scare and slaughter the *feræ naturæ;* all disagreeable thoughts and disagreeable people were left behind. As to Sydney Spenser, nobody knew where he was that day, but this was no uncommon occurrence; and displeased only Elizabeth and Mrs. Woodward, who were always anxious to keep him in the safe circle of his friends, however little the pleasure they derived from his company. The truth was, that Sydney's spirits had just received a serious shock, which unfitted him for partaking in any social enjoyment; he had seen the clever sketch drawn by his uncle for the guidance of the police, and had recognised with horror the tall ruffian with whom he had dined at Castle Dawson. He had also inspected the paper found at the Black Castle; and though he could make nothing of the writing in ink, the pencilling, faint as it was, bore a striking resemblance to his friend's hand.

The party scarcely expected to find the busts still in the cavern, it seemed so likely that the brig would have completed her business, but, whatever the cause was, Socrates and Mirabeau were found just where the yachtsmen had left them, gazing with their lack-lustre eyes on the Atlantic, which had evidently risen to do them homage, for a wreath of sea-wrack was twisted round the brawny neck of the French orator, and the claw of

a crab was sticking in the forehead of the philosopher. The latter incident caused great merriment, for the rector insisted it was one of the fingers of Xantippe, and ought not to be removed upon any account.

In order to show the ladies the wonders of art which their favourite island contained, the curate performed one of his great feats of bodily strength. Markham suggested that as the women could not come down to the grotto, the contents of the grotto should be carried up to them.

"By all means," said the curate, "do you carry the Frenchman, and I'll carry the Athenian."

Markham and Vivyan together had with difficulty moved the busts from the interior of the cave to its mouth, but, nevertheless, the former had no doubt but that he could do what Hercules proposed. Now, however, he had not only to bear the load a greater distance, but he had to carry it up a steep and broken path. He carried Mirabeau about a third of the way, and was then very glad to deposit him on a shelf of the rock. The curate then cried "Come, old fellow!" addressing the marble Socrates, and heaving him up in his brawny arms, he strode up the precipitous ascent, and never paused until he deposited the bust at the feet of his wife, who was sitting with her nieces in the heather. Markham was loud in his applause, and acknowledged that Mr. Woodward was the most powerful man he had ever met with. But the curate was not satisfied with this; he went down the rocks again and completed the task that Markham had left unfinished, after which, indeed, he was glad to stretch his giantship on the turf, and refresh himself with beef and mustard.

They puzzled themselves in vain, during their repast (for a visit to the island always implied dining there), to frame some plausible theory to account for the mysterious apparition of Art in the wildest domains of Nature; but it is no disparagement to their sagacity to relate that the shrewdest guesses were wide of the mark.

What to do with the spoil was the next question. Mr. Spenser decided it sensibly and promptly; the presumption was, he said, that the marbles had not been brought from the main land for honest purposes, or by honest people, and consequently it was his duty (especially as he was a magistrate) to take possession of them in the name of the law, until the rightful owners should appear to claim them. This opinion having been received with general approbation, the crew of the Gipsy was sent for, and it was as much as four lusty seamen could do to transport the busts on board the cutter. The rector was excessively amusing all the way back on the subject of Socrates and Xantippe, and said, amongst other things, that "it was very hard on the philosopher two have had two demons," implying of course, that Mrs. Socrates was *one*.

"*One* is quite enough for any man, even for a philosopher," said Markham.

"As my poor brother knows to his cost," said Mrs. Woodward, *sotto voce*, to her husband.

"Well," replied Hercules, in the same tone, "she has allowed Val one pleasant day at all events."

"And how he has enjoyed it!" said Carry.

That same evening the busts were enrolled with those of Burke, Grattan, Fox, and Curran, in the rector's elegant library. He happened to possess two vacant scagliola pillars, to one of which he elevated Socrates, and promoted Mirabeau to the other, placing the latter by the side of Mr. Fox,

whom he resembled in the fervour of his character and the impetuosity and abundance of his eloquence.

The rector had, indeed, spent a happy day, and he continued comparatively tranquil, as long as his application to the government for troops remained unanswered. The longer the reply was delayed, his wife, though fidgety, continued to cherish stronger and stronger hopes that her wishes would be liberally complied with. At length arrived the official letter with its huge seal, and if Mrs. Spenser was the most disappointed, her husband was certainly the most astonished at its contents.

It ran as follows :—

"Dublin Castle, July 17, —31.

"Sir,

"In reply to your letter of the 5th instant, applying to the Government for military aid to protect your house and property from attacks which you seem to apprehend (without, perhaps, sufficient grounds, considering the general tranquillity of the county in which you reside), I am commanded by the Lord Lieutenant to state that His Excellency considers the safety of the district in question amply provided for by the police-force stationed there, supported as it is by the troops quartered at Letterkenny and other towns at no great distance; but *under no circumstances whatsoever could His Excellency consent to allow artillery to be employed for the defence of a private house*, even that of a clergyman of the Established Church.

"I have the honour to be, Sir,

"Your obedient humble servant,

* * *

"To the Rev. Valentine Spenser,
Redcross Rectory, Redcross."

Conceive the rector's amazement on reading this!—He had never said one word of artillery in his letter. It was an afterthought of his wife's, which she had added in a postscript, without acquainting him with what she had done.

BOOK VII.

CHAPTER XXXII.

PRELIMINARY CONQUESTS.

"Folk that loved idlenesse,
And not delite in no kind besinesse,
But for to hunt and hawke and pley in medes,
And many other such like ydle dedes."
THE FLOURE AND THE LEAFE.

THE curate and Markham soon fraternised; not in the shallow sentimental way of French or Irish clubbists, but honestly, heartily, as one brave man should cleave and cotton to another. They both loved sport and exercise, and both abhorred a sedentary life. Woodward excelled Markham in physical strength; but the latter had the advantage in every thing that required skill and address. The curate was the better pedestrian, Markham was the better horseman. Markham was a better shot with a rifle; but the curate killed more hares and rabbits in a given time. The curate was as poorly armed for the field, the moor, or the loch, as any sportsman could possibly be,—a rusty single-barrelled gun, a powder-horn and shot-bag which had been worn at the fight of the Boyne, a wicker-basket instead of a game-bag, and dogs that set at grouse and partridge when they met with them, but took the same polite notice of larks, corn-crakes, and water-wagtails. Now Markham piqued himself upon the completeness and accuracy of his accoutrements. He could afford to spend the double of Mr. Woodward's income upon his sporting apparatus; his gun never missed fire, his rifle was infallible, his fishing-tackle was perfect, and his dogs knew what was game, and what was not, as well as if they read the *Sporting Magazine*, or had assisted in passing the game-laws. It was wonderful what execution Hercules did with his deficient machinery, and how close he trod on the heels of Markham, who had every sportsmanlike equipment, and made the expertest and ablest use of them. Had it not been for Mr. Woodward, it is possible that Markham might have felt his time hanging somewhat heavily on his hands at the parsonage; his tastes were so widely different from his cousin's, who seemed to have found in the rector and his family the exact kind of society and kind of life which by its freedom from restraint, and its intellectual cultivation, was best adapted to his temperament and his talents.

The life, indeed, which Vivyan now led was almost as happy a form of existence as he had ever imagined in his castle-buildings. The rector's conversation, combining classic taste with polished pleasantry, various discursive, fanciful, suggestive, with a strain of seriousness in its gaiety, and most sparkling when it was most solid, exercised a powerful fascination over all who had the faculty to appreciate it. His beautiful and luxurious library was just the place for an indolent lover of books like Frank to revel or repose in. Out of doors were the Oreads and the Naiads, if his

fancy led him to wander on the hills, or loiter along the warbling brooks, or sonorous torrents; and within doors, when the sun or the showers interdicted roaming, in the company of his new female acquaintances he had only a too charming and accessible resource, if ever he was threatened with *ennui*. Thus was everything propitious to the intensest enjoyment that the eye, the ear, the mind, or the fancy was capable of; and intensely did Vivyan enjoy everything, as oblivious of Cambridge as if he had been born to a dukedom, and as thoughtless of the pecuniary loss he had sustained (amounting to half of his slender income,) as if he had been as rich as Mr. D'Israeli's marvellous Jew.

But it was not in the nature of Vivyan to be happy himself, without being the cause of happiness to those who made him so. He was never so captivating as to those by whom he was captivated. His first Irish success was with the no less benign than intellectual Carry Woodward. His second victory was over the rector himself. He resembled Mr. Spenser remarkably in the delicate qualities of his mind, and not a little also in the ease and softness of his character. Mr. Spenser, when at College, must have been just such an engaging young man. How painfully he was struck with the contrast between Vivyan and his own son! Yet he had the gratification, not unmingled with considerable surprise, of observing that Sydney, though so rustic and unlettered, so inferior to Frank in all respects, and particularly in manners and conversation, seemed not unsmitten by his attractions any more than other people. In fact, singular though it may seem, Vivyan made a most decided conquest of Sydney Spenser; and his sister Elizabeth and his aunt Woodward observed it with the liveliest satisfaction. Just about this time a certain thoughtfulness, and even gloom, was becoming visible in Sydney's looks and demeanour; and his relatives were glad to perceive the change, attributing it to the revolution of sentiment produced by the contrast between his new acquaintance and his old associates. It was not an unnatural explanation, but unhappily it was not the right one.

It was certain, however, that Sydney was smitten deeply by the daily contemplation, in a young man not much his senior, of those accomplishments and graces in which he was himself so sadly deficent. Probably it was partly owing to the depression of spirits under which he manifestly now laboured that Markham did not attract him more than his cousin Markham, who was so athletic, so renowned with the rifle, so skilled in all manly sports and exercises, while Vivyan had so little in common with young Spenser, in fact, nothing but the love of pleasure—and in their ideas of what constituted pleasure they differed as widely as in anything else. But Markham, though not so fastidious as his friend, was less careful to conceal any dislike that he conceived; and having been from the first disgusted with Sydney, he continued to manifest his feeling by a reserve and dryness of manner which kept young Spenser at a severe distance and disposed him doubly in Vivyan's favour. On the other hand, the extreme placidity and benevolence of the latter, indeed his better breeding made him totally incapable of repelling the advances made by the son of his host, and the brother and nephew of the charming women, with whom he laughed and chatted the livelong day. Then the management of women, the most artless women, is so clever! Bent upon availing herself of the present occasion to produce a beneficial impression upon her brother, Elizabeth, carefully concealing her design, not only encouraged [illegible] to converse with Vivyan, but created opportunities for him

brought him forward at favourable moments, and threw a timely shield over his coarseness or ignorance, when she feared he was on the point of committing himself in some alarming way. She had no very great difficulty now to make him appear at dinner in the costume of society; his attire in the morning was of less moment, particularly as the prevailing taste was for the sailor's jacket, or the shooting-coat. Indeed, Markham retained his naval dress, though Vivyan laid his aside, and resumed the ordinary garb of a man who was neither soldier, sailor, nor sportsman, but a plain citizen of the world. Markham was astonished to observe how tolerant Vivyan seemed to be of a degree of uncouthness and rusticity which he himself found so offensive.

"He seems brave and good-natured," said Frank; "we must put him down amongst our anomalies."

"In the same class with Mr. Dawson; they may be very brave fellows, both of them, but they are very bad company, nevertheless."

"Young Spenser has the advantage," said Frank; "he seems to have run wild, and to have lived in a society quite different from that in which his family moves, but his father talks of sending him to Cambridge; we'll civilise and polish him there, depend upon it."

"My dear Frank," said his friend, in the tone of remonstrance, "don't engage yourself for a bear-herd. Very well to see everything on one's travels; very well to peep at bears in a pit, but to undertake to lead and teach them to dance is neither a very creditable employment, nor a very safe one."

Vivyan laughed.

"What I mean is, Frank," continued his friend, "that I would not have you involve yourself with loutish fellows in Ireland, whom you may find it difficult to shake off, when you return to England."

"But what a fascinating family this is!" said Vivyan.

"Fascinating people," replied Markham, "with relatives and friends who are just the reverse. Just be a little guarded—I ask no more."

Vivyan promised.

But circumstances threw young Spenser more into companionship with Frank than with the other stranger. Mr. Spenser was sometimes entirely engrossed by his demon-wife, torn from his books, his children, and the society of his guests. Hercules and Markham frequently paired off together upon some prodigious undertaking, far transcending Vivyan's or even Sydney's pedestrian powers. At such times Aunt Carry, her nieces, or one or other of them, with Vivyan and her nephew, would set out, assisted perhaps, by a jaunting-car, on a quieter expedition, with generally some little object in view, a lake, a waterfall, or some interesting remnant of other days. Carry, you may suppose from her tonnage, was no great pedestrian, and got particularly soon knocked up when there was much up-hill work, as there commonly is (topographers agree) in a highland region. Then she and Arabella would sometimes return and leave Elizabeth and the two young men to pursue their ramble; or, when the object was too distant, or the day too sultry, all the ladies would give it up in despair, and creep back to the parsonage, escorted perhaps by Bill Pitt, while Vivyan and Sydney would proceed to accomplish the purpose of the day.

Vivyan, indeed, would almost always have preferred returning with Mrs. Woodward and her nieces, for he much preferred young women to old castles, and Carry's conversation infinitely to her nephew's; but Carry

would not allow it, and Sydney, sometimes recovering his buoyant and too riotous spirits, was eager to show his visitor what was to be seen in the country, and was perhaps, moreover, not disinclined to try the young Cantab's mettle over the mountains of Tyrconnell.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

PIG-DRIVING.

"Believe me, sir,
That government is no holiday employment,
No velvet couch, or journey over flowers,
But a laborious, rugged, uphill task,
Demanding god-like force and faculties,
A righteous hand to wield the sword of justice,
A vigorous arm to hold her balance even,
Deep knowledge, old experience, high courage,
The hands of Briareus and the eyes of Argus."

NEW PLAY.

It blew a stiff gale for a couple of days about this time, and the party had a most agreeable excursion on horseback to view the ocean; it was the same ride which the Spensers had before taken with Colonel Dabzac, after the memorable storm with which these chronicles commenced. Carry did not often ride, and, when she did, it was a great event, and caused a sensation in the stables, and much pleasant remark everywhere. The rector had a fine old glossy black mare—a formal, sleek, monastic animal, with a long tail and a broad back, strong and steady as an elephant, and this was the mare that Aunt Carry rode. The rector and Markham helped her to the saddle, where, when she was seated, she looked like some Amazon queen, save that she was slightly nervous, and, if fierce at all, only fierce with timidity. Mr. Spenser guarded her on the right flank, George Markham on the left, and Arabella, Elizabeth, and Vivyan brought up the rear. The pace of the black mare regulated the pace of the whole party. She was just the sort of discreet and solemn creature that you read of in Spanish novels, ambling under comely priests, mitred abbots, or other such sacred burdens.

"You have immense water-power," said Markham, "in this country." The hills were pouring down torrents all round their line of march, making wild loud music to the ear, and sometimes taking dashing leaps over the rocks, forming picturesque waterfalls.

"And wind-power, too," said Elizabeth, smiling. The zephyrs were playing with her hair and riding-dress somewhat rudely.

"Yet I see no mills," continued Markham. "You do not seem to turn your advantages to account."

It pained the rector to be for ever censuring and complaining of the country, and it was with a very serious and almost melancholy tone he said, in reply to Markham's observation,

"Our very winds and waters are idle; not a wheel is turning within twenty miles of this spot. In other countries man revenges himself on the elements by making them do work enough to compensate for all their

ravages; but here the flood and the storm are our absolute masters. We are deluged one day, and blown off our legs the next, without the satisfaction of punishing a single ruffian blast, or lawless torrent, by setting them to turn a mill."

They had now gained the point that commanded the view of the ocean, and its imposing splendour abruptly terminated the conversation.

"A more agreeable way, this, to enjoy the commotion of the waves than from the deck of the Circe," said the rector, breaking the silence, and addressing Markham.

"I have no wish whatever to be afloat in that swell," said George, "I feel quite content upon terra firma."

"And I'll answer for my aunt," said Sydney; "she prefers riding the black mare to riding the billows, any day."

It was the first observation Sydney made during the ride.

Carry assented, and said she feared America would never have been discovered if Columbus had left the adventure to her; but she had no objection to a short cruise in very smooth water; and to witness the agitation of the deep from a safe position on shore, she thought a pleasure of a very high order.

The Atlantic was indeed a glorious spectacle that day. The waves thundered in the caverns, and hurled the spray in clouds over the tops of the cliffs, tossing the shells and sea-weed amongst the heather, and impregnating with saline particles the whole atmosphere. The shattered crests of the billows, as the sun glanced upon them, looked like mountains of crystal smashed into dazzling fragments by invisible sledges; and innumerable rainbows (combining the loveliest with the most formidable objects in nature) beautified the terror of the scene. They approached as near as was consistent with safety to the edges of the crags, to peep into the anarchy of the waters, where it was most triumphant; how they boiled and tumbled, as if seething in the crater of a volcano, and as if rocks of adamant could oppose but poor resistance to their fury. Here and there were enormous insulated masses of the fallen cliff, which the retiring breakers for a moment left totally uncovered, and then, recollecting their wrath, returned with fearful energy, and left not a stone unsubmerged large enough for a cormorant to perch on. In one or two instances it happened that the points of rock were sufficiently lofty to escape all but the mere spray of the insurgent flood, and these points had been seized upon by the most daring of the sea-fowl, who screamed defiance of the threatening surf, well knowing, perhaps, (feathered soothsayers that they are), by their unerring instincts, that its threats were impotent, as the exhausted winds were retiring from the fray. It looked as if the ocean would never be at peace again, as if Halcyon would never brood on its bosom more. Nothing that ever carried oar or sail could live an instant in a sea like that, to whose prodigious violence the destruction of the noblest ship that ever carried the flag of a Nelson or a Napier would have been no greater feat upon such a coast, than the cracking of an egg-shell or a vase.

They returned through Redcross, and the Englishmen had an opportunity of observing the municipal curiosities of that distinguished and important place.

"You see, Mr. Markham," said the rector, as they rode through the streets, "if we don't manure our fields in this country, we manure our streets liberally."

Markham smiled, and said that undoubtedly a commerce in manure

might be established with great advantage between town and country. The rector then was pleasant on pigs. He compared the government of Ireland to pig-driving, and said that the Lord-Lieutenant was the Schwein-General.

"You will find," he observed, "parallels in the Irish population to every variety of the pig species, as they are enumerated so humorously by Sir Francis Head in his 'Bubbles.' The pigs 'with a jaded care-worn appearance, evidently leaving behind them a numerous litter,' how only too easy it is to find their exact human likenesses! Then, there is 'the great, tall, monastic, melancholy-looking creature, which seems to have no other object left in this wretched world than to become bacon,'—there, Mr. Markham, yonder is just such an animal upon two legs. And look at that group of my young parishioners disporting themselves on their patrimonial dunghill!—in them you see the 'thin, tiny, brisk, petulant piglings, with the world and all its loves and sorrows before them.'"

Had there been a Young Ireland at the period of this conversation, how forcibly Mr. Spenser would have been struck by the resemblance of the "tiny, brisk, petulant pigling" to the members of that party!

"*Noscitur à sociis*, would appear to be extremely applicable in the present instance," said Vivyan.

"Well," said the curate's bouncing wife, who loved the people with all their faults, and, indeed, devoted much of her time and thoughts to improve them. "Well, but we must not be too hard upon the swinish multitude; I assure you, Mr. Vivyan, there is a reformation going on, and we are growing less and less piggish every day."

"The pig is excellent, when *cured*," said the rector, "but it is a perverse, grunting, bristling animal; and to drive it requires great tact and patience inexhaustible, a quick eye, and a strong hand; you must be willing to encourage, and you must be prepared to goad. The worst, too, of the office of Schwein-General of Ireland is that he is not the *only* drover; there are other drovers, unfortunately, who are quite as disorderly and swinish as the herd itself; the agitator drives one way with his shillelagh, the bishop another with his crozier, the agrarian captain with his pike, the orange ringleader with his bayonet. The Schwein-General has to drive the drovers as well as the drove, and that is an arduous duty for the swine-herd of a people."

It was an unlucky day for the poor citizens of Redcross, for, as the party rode through that part of the town, which the McSwynes principally occupied, and where the houses were generally thatched, a most diverting and surprising scene presented itself. The inhabitants were observed, some perched like birds, others lying on their faces, upon the roofs of their humble dwellings; for what purpose the Englishmen tried in vain to conjecture.

"It is an oriental custom," said Markham, "and perhaps confirms what I have heard stated, that the Irish are of Eastern and Hebrew origin."

The Spensers smiled at this learned solution, but Vivyan naturally wondered how they could enjoy this house-top recreation in such a high wind.

"Why don't they come down," he asked, "until the gale abates a little?"

"On the contrary," said Mr. Spenser, "they will never come down while the gale lasts; if they did, their roofs would be blown into the air."

He then explained to his amazed guests this singular usage of the

McSwynes, who prefer keeping their thatch steady in stormy weather with the *vis inertiæ* of their own bodies, to taking the trouble of putting it in a state of permanent security by any mechanical means.

"It shows a degree of passive industry, and also fortitude," said Markham, "which cannot be too much admired."

"You hit the truth exactly," said the rector, "if the virtues of these poor fellows were only *active* instead of *passive*, they would be one of the finest races in the world."

"But what is it," said Vivyan, "after all, but an old school of philosophy revived, the sect of the Cynics."

"Very true," said Mr. Spenser; "I have no doubt but Diogenes was an Irishman."

"Or a native of Higgledy-Piggledy," said Mrs. Woodward. "By-the-bye, Valentine, you must show our English friends your history of that country."

Carry herself read it that evening after dinner for the entertainment of the company. Mr. Spenser made amusing strictures upon his own performance, and was never once interrupted during the reading of it by a summons from his wife.

It was never well understood what kept Mrs. Spenser so quiet, and made her so inoffensive, as she was during this last fit of tempestuous weather, and indeed during the greater part of the time passed by Markham and Vivyan at the parsonage. The rector, certainly, had not enjoyed so much tranquillity for some years. What made his wife's good behaviour at this period the more singular was that Doctor Wilkins now, for the first time, pronounced her case to be one requiring regular medical treatment. Her irritable and discontented disposition had, at length, in his opinion, produced a morbid state of the nervous system, which might contain the seeds of more than one serious disorder, and which, therefore, required to be watched with care. He recommended as much amusement and as little medicine as possible; made her a present himself of a macaw, and gave Miss M'Cracken a number of private directions for her management, one of which was to be as sparing as possible of artificial means to produce sleep. Indeed, his orders were, that no opiate of any kind should be administered without express directions from himself; but upon this point it would seem that Lucy differed in opinion from Doctor Wilkins, for she continued in secret the same liberal use of morphine which she had hitherto found so convenient, taking care, however, not to supply herself with it at the shop of Mr. Spenser's apothecary. No doubt, the firmness of the governess in persevering in her own system, though contrary to the doctor's prescription, contributed not a little to keep Mrs. Spenser in order; but other circumstances were favourable likewise. If she was denied a military force for her protection, she soon had the satisfaction, as we shall see presently, of having the little garrison of police restored, and she not only took a great fancy to George Markham, but discovered that she was related to him on the maternal side, and opened a correspondence with Mrs. Markham at Paris, on millinery and mesmerism, gloves, poodles, bon-bons, and Angora cats, which filled up many a vacant hour, and promised a little harvest of Christmas presents and New-year's gifts, which no child in the nursery was fonder of receiving.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

THE MODEL FARM.

"Intercunt segetes; subit aspera sylva,
Lappæque, tribulique; interque nitentia culta
Infelix lolium, et steriles dominantur avenæ."
THE GEORGICS.

THE curate could never be prevailed on to write a sermon, or even to set about the mental composition of one, until towards the close of the week, seldom, indeed, until Saturday morning. His plan then was to take one of his bludgeons in his hand, and wander out alone, either along the cliffs, near Redcross, or over the adjacent mountains, when the cattle might sometimes be seen scudding before him, terrified by his vociferous preparations to preach the gospel of peace on the following day.

Hercules disappeared one Saturday morning after breakfast, and Carry made no secret of the cause of his absence. The day was then spent by the remaining gentlemen in a little agricultural survey of the neighbourhood, so that the present chapter, being georgical and bucolical, will probably be skipped by those readers who want nothing in a novel but love and mischief, comedy or tragedy, forgetting that human life has something corresponding to every form of the drama, and, amongst the rest, to those enumerated by Polonius as "pastoral-comical and historical-pastoral," under either of which heads you are free to class this chapter, or under both if you please.

As Markham was something of a farmer as well as a sportsman, you may fancy how he was amused and interested by what he saw in Donegal. Indeed, he saw a great deal that was instructive as well as entertaining, for bad examples have their uses as well as good ones, and in this way some of the Donegal farmers were as good preceptors as Coke of Norfolk, or Smith of Deanston.

Mr. Spenser, too, was a husbandman after a fashion. The history, literature, and poetry of agriculture seized on his imagination, and led him to take a kind of scholarlike concern even in its practical details. He had some original English principles on the subject, but he had lived so long in Ireland that he was growing rather loose in his practice, partly in consequence of the general law, which makes popular systems and habits triumph over conflicting individual efforts, partly through his innate and invincible indolence, a quality in which he was much more of a Celt, than a Saxon or Norman.

Compared, however, with the majority of farms through the neighbourhood, the glebe lands exhibited a very superior tillage; the principle of rotation was evidently recognised and acted on; the farm-buildings were in tolerable order; draining was attended to; manure was economised; and there was none of that wretched confederacy of sloth, nastiness, and poverty, which, wherever it prevails, strips the name of husbandman of every agreeable and picturesque association.

"I need not ask, Mr. Spenser, if you are a farmer," said Markham to the rector, as they rode about one day together, accompanied, as it happened, by Vivyan,—"your lands show it plainly enough."

"Ah, they do not deserve so much praise," replied the clergyman. "I take some interest in agriculture without being an agriculturist; I sometimes think that if Virgil had not written the Georgics, I should never have known a plough from a spade, or a heifer from a kid."

"How poetry has exalted and beautified the subject!" said Vivyan.

"Yes," said the rector, "Virgil has wreathed the handle of the plough with flowers,—but, in truth, the subject has an intrinsic dignity and charm which naturally recommended it to so great and so wise a poet. The merest utilitarian, the most prosaic Benthamite, must admit the practical value of the Georgics."

"They were the work of a great poet," remarked Vivyan, "writing at the suggestion of a great statesman."

"And the state of Italy when they were written, wasted with civil wars and commotions, bore considerable resemblance," said the rector, "to that of Ireland at present. It were idle to expect a second Virgil in the same field, but it is not too much to hope that a minister may yet arise, who, with the spirit and sagacity of Mæcenas, may give the impulse so much wanting to the rural industry of this fine island."

"It were devoutly to be wished," said Markham. "What strikes me as so curious is, that having always heard Ireland described as a country essentially agricultural, I find, on coming here, that if there is one pursuit more despised and neglected than another, it is the cultivation of the soil."

"Shamefully true," said the clergyman; "I am Irishman enough to be ashamed of it. Had we your inexhaustible coal-fields, we should, doubtless, be equally neglectful of manufactures. Then, perhaps, we should take to the plough and the harrow. *Optat ephippia bos piger.*"

"The Irish, of all classes, it seems to me," said Markham, "attach over much importance to legislative reforms, instead of applying their minds to improvements within their own reach and power."

"Yes," said Mr. Spenser; "but it is also true that the legislature, by deferring measures of obvious justice, divert the public mind from the species of improvements you allude to, and delay the hour of self-amelioration. The people are foolish, and their rulers are too often no wiser."

"That doctrine seems to lead to the repeal of the union," said Vivyan.

"No," said Mr. Spenser, smiling; "I do not see that it does. When an English government is merely foolish, an Irish one would be stark mad; mal-administration is much better than anarchy; the frying-pan is uncomfortable, but the fire is much more so. Let ill alone may be sound policy, when ill can only be changed for worse."

"Besides," said Markham, "a more liberal spirit is growing up daily in the governing classes in England."

"Unquestionably," said the rector; "but at the same time I see such an abundant crop of evils on all sides (like that crop of weeds yonder), so much ignorance, so much prejudice, so much passion, so many sinister interests, so little truth or patriotism in popular leaders, so little courage in statesmen, such enormous abuses to be reformed, and such a dearth of moral power to grapple with them, that I confess myself one of those who think the regeneration of Ireland will be a very slow process; and I think it is important to keep this steadily in view, for there is nothing leads to despondency so much as indulging in over-sanguine expectations. I do not despair; but the deliverance I see is afar off."

"I perceive no green crops anywhere but on your own ground," said Markham, bringing the conversation back to Georgical matters.

"No," said the rector, "neither my precept nor my example has ever produced a single turnip beyond the precincts of my own farm. I do not predict that any one will ever induce the Irish peasantry to grow turnips, or cease to scourge the earth for grain-crops, but whoever does will be a Mæcenas indeed."

"Then you think, sir," said Vivyan, "that the glory is reserved for a minister?"

"I am positive, Mr. Vivyan, that enormous good would be effected by a statesman who would but conceive the idea of making himself Farmer-General as well as Governor-General of Ireland—who would aim at making his rule illustrious, neither by the glitter of the bayonet, nor even by the flashing of the sword of justice, but by the splendour of the ploughshare burnished by the clod."

"I have somewhere read," said Vivyan, "that the Emperor of China is annually informed of the husbandman who has distinguished himself most in the culture of the soil; and he makes him a mandarin of a certain order."

"The idea might be adopted," said the rector, "with great advantage; and I am reminded of an observation of Montesquieu, that lazy nations are generally proud, and that the effect might be turned against the cause, and laziness be extirpated by bringing the feeling of pride into play. But no! —it is not on the improvers of society and the benefactors of mankind that our governments bestow their rewards."

"Perhaps," said Vivyan, "when your Mæcenas appears, to raise with his potent hand the drooping agriculture of Ireland, this idea may occur to him, and we may see the fountain of honour in the crown playing on worthier objects than those who are now usually sprinkled with it. We shall have an order of the plough, perhaps, or something of the kind."

"There's a farmer, yonder," said Markham, laughing, "who is well entitled to be decorated with the order of the thistle. I think I never saw so fine a crop of thistles in my life as he has raised in that field to the left of his cottage."

"Magnificent," said the rector; "but you must know, that is what we call our model farm. You will see exhibited there the entire system of our Celtic husbandry in perfection, with the solitary exception of ploughing by the tail, which it is surprising farmer M'Swyne has not returned to."

"The land is not bad," said Markham.

"By no means; some of the best in this parish; that is the beauty of it," replied Mr. Spenser,—"but I see the model husbandman himself digging yonder; let us dismount, and walk over to him."

They left their horses with the grooms, and entered the fields. Vivyan plucked a superb thistle, as he moved along, and remarked, that as a cultivator of wild-flowers, the farmer was entitled to much praise.

Roger M'Swyne was a model farmer, indeed. He would have been a saint in the Indian theology, which places human perfection in a state of the utmost inactivity. He was at work, but his work was as like relaxation as one egg is to another; he dug passively; his sinews were unbraced, and so were his nether garments. Like Canning's knife-grinder,

But he was very civil and good-humoured, gratified at being visited and [illegible] natural politeness and plenty of "God

bless you's." Markham observed with intense curiosity Roger's manner of digging. At what a very acute angle the spade entered the ground, just scratching the old face of mother Terra, as if to elude as far as possible the original blessed curse of labour. Not more than six inches of the spade were bright with the friction; the rest was as rusty as you could wish the soldier's bayonet or the rebel's pike to be.

"Why, Mr. M'Swyne," said Markham, "you don't call *that* digging, do you?—why don't you go down deeper."

"Och, then," replied the pattern agriculturist, "is it deeper your honour says?—sure there isn't a man in the townland giving his bit of ground such a diggin'."

Markham gently took the spade out of his hands, put it almost perpendicularly into the earth, stood up straight to it, pressing it down with a strenuous exertion of the muscles of his right foot, and turned up thirteen or fourteen inches of new virgin soil.

"Now, *there* is a spade-full of earth," said Mr. Spenser, "that never saw the sun before since the creation of the world."

Roger gazed with a comic expression of indolent wonder at the phenomenon of Markham's exploit, and the result of it.

"That's what we call digging in England," said Markham, returning the spade.

"Och, then it is diggin'," said Roger, shrugging his broad shoulders, the chief use he made of them.

"Why, man," continued the young Englishman, "there's gold under those acres of yours, if you would only dig for it."

"There's gold's worth at any rate," replied the farmer, who perfectly understood the metaphor, not being at all defective in intelligence.

"Your thistles, Roger," said Vivyan, too pleasantly to be at all offensive, even if the farmer had been touchy, which he was not at all, "are so luxuriant, that I have plucked one to stick in your button-hole; and I must have the pleasure, at the same time, to dub you a knight of that ancient and distinguished order."

Frank then, amidst great laughter, in which Farmer M'Swyne heartily joined, invested him with the appropriate reward of his agricultural success, and Roger was known for many a year afterwards, all round the country, as the Knight of the Thistle.

They had their choice of egresses from the model farm, for though there were twenty superfluous fences, there was not one through which elephants, or even mammoths, might not have ranged with the utmost comfort and facility. Roger's cows were grazing at large on the road-side, where there was better vegetation than in their proper pastures, which were usurped by his neighbour's cattle, as indifferent to *meum* and *tuum* as their owners. There was a pound in the parish, but as straying seemed to be the established usage, it is to be presumed that only perverse beasts, which stayed at home, were ever committed to it.

CHAPTER XXXV.

A LOVE CHASE.

"If such you seek,
It were a journey like the path to heaven
To help you find them."

COMUS.

WHEN Vivyan returned from that ride he went in quest of the ladies, or at least of Mrs. Woodward, for it was only for her that he inquired.

He was pretty well acquainted by this time with all the little out-door haunts and resorts of the women of the family, and he went rapidly from one to another, his heart fluttering for no reason but that he had not heard a female voice, or seen a female form, since breakfast. A room, close to the laundry, had been fitted up in a rude temporary way, for the rector's daughter to hold her little school in, for the children of the labourers on the glebe and the cottiers in the immediate neighbourhood. Frank raised the latch. The place was silent and sunny. A robin, which had got in through the open casement, was hopping over the books and slates, picking up crumbs of bread more probably than crumbs of knowledge. The bird hopped out when Vivyan entered. The school had been over for some time; he looked into some of the books that were nearest his hand. Elizabeth's handwriting was in most of them; her name with a few kind words conferring the little rewards of infant merits, or incitements to it. There was her chair, too, and a little scarf of hers on the back of it,—trifling circumstances, but they did not escape the attention of Frank Vivyan, though the name on his tongue was still Aunt Carry.

The laundress had a little daughter, a round four-year-old, bright-eyed, rosy, merry creature, that nobody in female form, except Miss M'Cracken, ever passed without saying something, or giving something to, were it only a cowslip or a kiss. It was always clean, too, for the mother had been a pupil of Ellen Hogg. The wonder was that the little laughing lump had not long ago been kissed away, it got so much kissing; but it seemed to thrive upon the diet, and there it rolled and tumbled about with its short clothes, amongst the daisies, the livelong day when it was not raining, still laughing, playing with the laughing flowers, or munching laughing potatoes, which possibly helped the kisses to keep the laundress's daughter so florid and fat.

"Miss Lizabeth not dere," cried the little joyous she-urchin to Frank Vivyan; as he came out of the vacant school-room. The impertinence of the infant provoked him. Vivyan was no kisser of infant beauty, but he tapped the thing playfully on the cheek. It fell back crowing with its habitual glee; Venus at four could not have been a more laughing child.

The bare-armed mother, unseen by Frank, stood at the door of the laundry, hot from the tub, exulting in the precocious sharpness of her rosy rogue of an infant, and probably admiring at the same time the handsome Vivyan, a pleasing respite from the labour of washing on a

summer day. Her eyes met Frank's as he was passing on, and the sly twinkle in them almost brought the colour to his cheek, for it made him feel that everybody divined the soft current of his thoughts, from three years old to thirty.

He hastened on, not without a gracious notice of the glowing laundress; and between two lofty hedges, or rather walls, of laurel and yew interwoven, he next encountered the demure nursery-governess, wrapped in a little scarlet mantle, pacing the natural cloister alone. Vivyan still thought her handsome, but he now distinctly perceived the sinister expression which had struck Markham the first time he saw her. Lucy, indeed, looked more like a conspirator, with a white powder in her pocket, or a dagger under her cloak, than a nun telling her beads. She had for some time admired Vivyan more than she had confessed to anybody, and had frequently thrown herself in his way, and tried to inveigle him into little flirtations. The present meeting, however, was purely accidental, but Miss M'Cracken thought she might as well turn it to advantage; so she began by falling in love with a sprig of the broad-leaved myrtle in full flower, which Frank chanced to wear in his button-hole. He presented it to her, and she instantly stuck it tenderly in her bosom.

"Myrtle is my favourite tree," said Lucy, sentimentally.

Frank was compelled to remark the curious coincidence of Lucy's taste in trees with that of the Paphian queen. Lucy simpered, and wished Mr. Vivyan would tell her why Venus had made the myrtle her own. He scarcely heard the question, so impatient was he to escape from the querist, pretty as she was. She then inquired if he was a botanist. A monosyllable answered that interrogatory.

"Would you like to learn?" she pursued, gliding by his side.

"Why, to be instructed by you?" said Vivyan; of course—what else could he have said?

"I should be very happy to teach you, sir," she rejoined, with the grave air of a person solely intent upon the duty of communicating knowledge. Frank knew not how to extricate himself, for she plucked one of the flowers of the myrtle and actually began her lecture.

"These are called petals, one, two, three, four; this in the middle has a very hard name, the pistil, and all those little things round it with the dust on them, are called anthers; the dust itself is named the farina,—oh, Mr. Vivyan," she then exclaimed, with a sudden burst of enthusiasm, "there is absolutely no end to the wonders and beauties of nature; are you fond of natural theology?"

So abrupt a digression surprised Frank much more than even the voluble anatomy of the flower had done; scarcely knowing what reply to make, he said he hoped Miss M'Cracken would give him credit for not being uninterested in the sacred subject she had alluded to. She then asked him his opinion of Paley, Butler, and a host of moralists and divines.

What a heavenly-minded young woman, thought Frank, to meet between two laurel hedges! But, whether he gave her implicit credit for sincerity or not, he decidedly thought her conversation a bore, and, with all his politeness, he was unable much longer to conceal the fact, that the pains of his fair lecturer were utterly thrown away upon him. Directly Lucy perceived this, her looks and manner underwent a sudden and marked change; she bit her lip, with ill-concealed resentment, drooped a

ceremonious curtsey, and bade her inattentive scholar good evening; adding, as she turned on her heel—

"You will find Miss Elizabeth, sir, in the flower-garden."

This annoyed Vivyan, and indeed he was vexed too, at having unintentionally wounded the girl's *amour propre*, by having been so absent in her presence,—a crime that women, more angelic than Lucy M'Cracken, are slow to pardon. Besides, what crime is more heinous in the eyes of a governess, than neglect or scorn of her lessons; so that Frank had offended in every way.

He was half inclined to follow her, and make the *amende* for his abstraction, and seeming incivility, when he saw a young man emerge from a side-alley and join her. He distinguished his features but imperfectly; they were strange to him, and as disagreeable as strange. There was something, too, in the furtive way in which he glanced about him, which struck Vivyan as singular, but it was not his humour, or his business, to be suspicious, so he went his way in the direction of the garden, and soon thought no more either of Miss M'Cracken or her companion.

Against the garden wall, close to the door, grew an ancient fig-tree. Barren enough it was in point of figs, for the climate was not like that of the plains of Lombardy, but its foliage was luxuriant, so that Mr. Spenser would not hear of its being cut down; but, on the contrary, had a bench placed under it for his old gardener, Pierce Byrne, to sit and smoke on, when it was either too hot, or too cold, too early, or too late to work; or when there was nothing to be done that could not be done by proxy, which was the commonest case of all.

The gardener was now sunning himself there with his pipe; his right leg was crossed on his left knee; his blue Connemara hose ungartered; his red waistcoat open, as much for want of buttons as because of the heat; and a pair of shears at his side with a comfortable coat of rust on them, showing how charitable they were to the excesses of vegetation. He was an aged man, who had mismanaged the horticultural department under three rectors; but he was hale and hearty, having been always temperate and a singularly early riser, probably to have more time for dawdling and doing nothing. If his plants grew, well and good; he was too easy to force them. Perched now on the same bench, smoking likewise, and coughing and groaning at intervals, was another old man, very diminutive, with the oddest features Vivyan had ever seen, his nose projecting from his shrivelled face like the bill of a fowl; no chin, or the same as none, and a patch on his forehead, just under his little gray wig, as if he belonged to the nation of the pigmies, and had recently had a brush with the cranes. The reader will instantly recognise Mr. Maguire, the proctor. Vivyan ought to have known him, too, as Randy was in his employment, but Randy had gone up to Dublin, before Vivyan's arrival, and had only that morning returned to the country. The reason of his journey to the capital will be collected from the dialogue with the gardener which Frank overheard, and which, indeed, made him acquainted with the fact that the queer disconsolate little old fellow smoking and croaking under the fig-tree was the acting agent of his Irish estate. The hedge was still between Vivyan and the old man, so that he heard the following conversation unseen by them.

"Ugh, then, it's a hard, hard, world, Pierce, so it is, and there are hard people in it; but they won't be hard on myself much longer, ugh, ugh, ugh," coughed the withered little proctor.

"Och, then, it *is* a hard world," echoed the gardener, who had no right to all to say so, for not a man living in his sphere of life had found it such an easy one.

"It will be all aqual to Randy before Christmas comes round, ugh, gh;—well, I never wronged any one living, Pierce, of the value of that auld withered leaf on the ground there, and to be put out of my bread in my ould age,—ugh, ugh, ugh," coughing (much increased by the smoking) prevented Maguire from finishing the sentence, and his companion finished it for him.

"And for no crime, Randy, but the robbery," said the gardener.

Vivyan's first impression was, that the two old men thought very lightly of the crime of robbery, which seemed good ground enough for turning a person out of his employment; but Maguire soon relieved his mind upon that point by his next observation.

"Sure I didn't rob myself," said Randy, "but it's the innocent that suffer in this world, and the wicked that prospers—it's a quare world, Pierce, and I don't care how soon I lave it for a better."

"I'll take my davy," said the gardener, in a similar strain of piety, "the villains that got the money arn't much the better for it. Though I'm nothing but a poor hard-working man, up early and late, and out at all saisons, I wo'n't change with the richest rogue in Ireland, and take his conscience along with his plundher."

"And there's no country where there's such rich rogues as in ould Ireland," said Randy.

"What else is them blood-sucking absentees?" asked the gardener.

"It's no lie to say that," said Randy. "When I tould the agent up in Dublin that I'd petition the head-landlord (a chap of the name of Vivyan, rowling in luxury over in England), and see if there was no justice or mercy for a poor man, who had done no harm to nobody, he up and he tould me, that I might petition the pope, or the d—l, if I plazed, for all the good petitioning would do me."

"And so you might, Randy;—my sister's son held a bit of land onst up at Carrickmacross, under that same Mr. Vivyan, and I know all about him. I'm tould, and I believe, there's not such a desolate young man anywhere; doesn't know where his wealth comes from, only thinks of squanderin' it on horses and curricles, drinking, gaming, smoking, and divarting himself."

"Drinking, gaming, and smoking,—ugh, ugh, ugh," repeated Randy after him. You may fancy how astonished and amused Frank was to hear this account of his riches followed by such a catalogue of his vices. It was time to join the conversation, and an opportune opening in the tall hedge enabled him to do so instantly.

"That's an indifferent character to have," he said, as if he had only caught the gardener's last words.

"It's a too true picthur," said Randy, "as your honour would own, if you only knew the gintleman who's the subject of discoorse."

"His acquaintance would appear to be a very undesirable one," said Frank, "but I think," he added, glancing at the pipes which the old cocks had in their hands, "you might both have some little mercy on the gentleman, whoever he is, for the crime of smoking."

"Och, thin, we ought to be merciful, as we hope for mercy," said the gardener, rising to open the door for Frank, and growing very charitable all of a sudden.

"It's a vanial sin, partiality to baccy," said the proctor, "in either a rich man, or a poor man."

Vivyan entered the garden, explored it rapidly, found nobody there, and returned to the same door in about five minutes. The two hoary sinners were now playing cards. Oh, if Mr. Woodward had caught them! —but they knew very well that the curate was many miles away. Randy had produced his pack, and he and Pierce Byrne were deep in the old popular game of five-and-forty, for halfpenny stakes, with the bees humming about them under the fig-tree.

"What!" cried Frank, who now despaired of meeting the ladies before dinner,—"gambling, too, as well as smoking!—come, old fellows, one little vice more, and you will have all the qualities of the gentleman you were abusing just now so heartily; to smoking and gaming you must add a little drinking for my sake—only be more temperate in your liquor than you have been in your language."

He put a sovereign down on the ace of clubs, and went towards the house, resolved that poor Randy Maguire should not be deprived of his employment because he had the misfortune of having been robbed.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

HUE AND CRY AFTER HERCULES.

"*Dogberry.* You shall comprehend all vagrom men. You are to bid any man stand in the Prince's name.

"*Watchman.* How, if he will not stand?

"*Dogberry.* Why then, take no note of him, but let him go."

THE curate had a whimsical adventure to amuse the party with when they were assembled at dinner. He had taken a discursive ramble over the hills, preparing his sermon in his usual odd way that alarmed the mountain cattle so exceedingly. At length (little thinking that anything in human form was observing his proceedings), he found himself in a lonely glen, rarely visited by tourists, but of a strikingly beautiful and bold character. Only a footpath, known to shepherds or goatherds, traversed this wild gorge, whose steep sides, here and there terminating in sharp white cliffs, which at twilight looked like sheeted apparitions, showed no sign of a human habitation, or even of animal life itself, except a few small mountain sheep, and the "feeble folk that make their houses in the rocks." Roaming this deserted valley, he came to a small lake, and observed at one side, at a considerable elevation, the gleaming and flashing of a stream through some patches of birch and hazel, the noblest trees that grew there. It was evidently a cascade, and he had the curiosity to clamber up through the copse to reconnoitre it. A path wound along the side of the fall, which, as you approached it, was very beautiful in its small way, tumbling over a ragged precipice of some thirty feet into a rocky basin, where it bubbled and sparkled a moment in any stray gleam of sunshine that pierced the shade, and thence pursued its course more modestly until it identified its waters with the lake.

Hercules was a little fagged when he reached the rocky basin, and was glad to seat himself upon a stone while he contemplated the cataract. He had not been many moments thus reposing, when he was suddenly pounced on by two armed constables, and apprehended on a charge of no less a crime than highway robbery. Greatly astonished, and still more amused at such an incident, he made somewhat curt and rough replies to his captors, eyeing them very fiercely, and both by his voice and his looks strongly confirming them in the opinion that they had captured an atrocious criminal.

At length he desired to know where they intended to take him.

"Before the nearest magistrate, and that's the Rev. Mr. Spenser," said one of the officers.

"That's convenient," said Hercules, "for I'm going there myself to dinner."

Not wishing to be troubled with such companions, he then informed them who he was, and verified his account of himself by letters which he had in his pocket.

The constables looked extremely foolish, particularly when they admitted that they had been dogging him all the morning, and Woodward was curious, of course, to know how they came to make such an absurd mistake. Upon this, one of them, who seemed the most annoyed, and most anxious to vindicate his conduct, produced a paper from his pocket, and exhibited to Hercules the identical pen-and-ink sketch he had drawn himself of the fellow with whom he had the rencontre at the Black Castle.

Hearty was the laugh with which the curate's adventure was received by the company; only Carry affected to be very angry with the police for taking her husband for a bandit under any circumstances.

"Was it a very striking likeness, Hercules?" inquired the rector.

"Well, Val," said the curate, "I believe it was sufficiently like to excuse the Peelers."

In fact the sketch *did* resemble Hercules, as much as if it had been done for him, and his wife hoped it would be a lesson to him not to stroll the country in future in the same outlandish attire.

"What would you have done, my dear," she added, "if the men had been going in an opposite direction, and insisted upon taking you with them?"

"Why, in that case," said the powerful curate, "I should perhaps have taken *them* with *me*."

"I have no doubt you could have done it," said George Markham.

While they were thus conversing over their wine and fruit, three men were coming towards them up the principal avenue.

"Hey-day, what have we here?" cried the rector, directing the attention of the company to the new comers, who were advancing with a rapid but measured tread. "The police again, I protest;—Hercules, I fear there is some fresh charge against you."

It was, indeed, a party of three constables, and the curate soon recognised in two of them the identical fellows by whom he had been dogged in the morning. They halted within a few yards of the table, and one of them, who seemed to command, and who was personally known both to Mr. Spenser and the curate, advanced respectfully, touching his hat with a movement of his arm, as rigid as if it had been made of metal, and turned on a pivot.

"Good evening to you, Mr. Crumpe," said the rector.

"Good evening to you humbly, sir," answered the officer, with a second salute, the stiffest and most formal possible.

"Your business, I presume," continued the rector, with well-feigned gravity, "is with that gentlemen there, my unfortunate brother-in-law."

Mr. Crumpe now turned to the curate, made another of his cast-iron obeisances, and commenced an awkward and prolix apology for the mistake his men had made in the morning, excusing them on the ground of their being young men in the force, and only lately under his orders.

"Oh, then," said Mr. Spenser, "your business is not with Mr. Woodward *this* time."

"No, sir," said Mr. Crumpe, "my business is with you."

"The tables are turned, Val," cried the curate, with the loud laugh he had brought from college with him, and which Carry had never succeeded in moderating.

The rector affected to be uneasy for his personal safety, and rose to talk with the officer apart, leaving the rest of the party in a high state of enjoyment.

He returned in less than ten minutes, his face considerably lengthened, and evidently not too well pleased by the result of the private conference with the chief constable.

"Well, Valentine," said Carry, "the police have not come to apprehend you, at all events."

"Apprehend me!" replied her brother,—"they have come to do worse a great deal, they have come to *protect* me. I am to be garrisoned again, it appears, in spite of myself. Some obliging friend has been exerting his influence on my behalf with the Government, and Mr. Crumpe and his men have received orders to quarter themselves on my premises, and consider themselves at my disposal."

"How absurd," said Carry.

"The best way of disposing your troops," said Hercules, "is to send them trooping."

The serious looks of the rector and his relatives showed Markham and Vivyan that there were grave domestic considerations involved in what seemed, at first sight, a mere ludicrous incident. They rose accordingly from the table, and joined the girls in one of the many charming little promenades with which the glebe and its neighbourhood abounded.

"Who is your obliging friend at court, Val?" asked the curate, as soon as the party was reduced to a council of three.

"Mr. Crumpe tells me," said the rector, "that he supposes some members of parliament of my acquaintance have been using their influence at the Castle, but I know no member likely to be so officious; I am positive that I never directly, or indirectly, sanctioned such interference on the part of anybody."

"This is Mr. Dawson's doing, I have no doubt," said Mrs. Woodward, with vivacity and decision.

"I can't think it, Carry," said the curate.

"Nor I," said the rector; "besides Dawson is scarcely an M.P. of ten days standing."

"Mind what I say, Valentine," said Carry; "your friend at court is Mr. Dawson, and nobody else. Who else would take such an impertinent liberty? Is there another man living who would have the assurance to make an application to the government in your name, without your request, or your permission?"

"It's a most extraordinary occurrence," said the rector; "but I must now go up and sit awhile with Margaret, and leave you and Hercules to your conjugal stroll."

"But you will send the police packing, at all events," said the curate, as his brother-in-law left the room.

Mr. Spenser made no reply: perhaps he did not hear what the curate said.

"He will do no such thing," said Carry, with severity, biting her lips, and swelling with vexation at her brother's weakness. She then rose from her chair and paced up and down the portico, like a corpulent queen in high displeasure with a minister; she abused her brother in feminine but sharp language, and she did not let her husband escape either, but told him he was a great deal too simple even for a clergyman; that he had too much of the dove, and too little of the serpent, and more in the same strain of ladylike invective; all because Hercules had not divined what she had divined at the first glance, that not only was Dawson at the bottom of this police affair, but that his interference was a scheme of that gentleman to ingratiate himself with Mrs. Spenser.

"There are wheels within wheels, my dear," she said, at length reaching the peroration, and speaking with great earnestness, "but you and my brother are as blind as those bats that are flying past the windows."

"But you women," said her husband, a little subdued by her energy, giant as he was, "are like watchmakers—you have a microscopic eye for wheels."

"And you men," rejoined Carry, "or some of you, at least, have no eyes for wheels, until they are as big as mill-wheels."

So ended that week at the parsonage. There was one member of the household to whom the return of the police was no mystery, nor the influence to which that event was owing. The acquaintance which Mr. Dawson made with Miss M'Cracken upon the island had not been left unimproved. It was from her he had learned the fact that the police force had been withdrawn from the parsonage, and to her he privately communicated, not only the steps which he designed to take in order to secure its restoration, but the object which he had in view, namely, to gain the good-will of Mrs. Spenser. Lucy engaged in this privy correspondence, with little motive, in the first instance, but the pure love of clandestine doings. Her views of mischief, however, widened as she advanced; and she soon began to feel an especial gratification in secretly supporting a man whose addresses she knew were intolerable to Elizabeth Spenser, towards whom she bore an intense dislike, and of whom she had of late been growing absurdly jealous. How Vivyan's indifference to her (of which she had so decided a proof in the laurel walk) tended to exasperate this state of feeling may easily be imagined. The young man who secretly joined Miss M'Cracken upon that occasion was an envoy of Dawson's, and the junior of the two suspicious personages whom Sydney had met with at Dawson's house. He was the bearer of a letter to her, containing a present of a pair of bracelets, and was under the impression that Lucy was Dawson's cousin, not that he would have objected to undertake the same mission had its legitimacy been ever so open to question. His instructions from his employer were to take Miss M'Cracken's orders, and execute promptly any little commission she might entrust him with; but Lucy did not task him heavily—she merely sent him of an errand to Redcross for a surreptitious supply of laudanum for her black bottle.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

THE CURATE'S SERMON.

"His preaching much, but more his practice wrought,
A living sermon of the truths he taught."
THE GOOD PARSON.

THE exordium of the curate's discourse alarmed Mr. Spenser exceedgly, for it proclaimed roaring war with a power which the preacher probated as the grand enemy of mankind, and of Irish mankind espeally, the foe to all improvement and civilisation, a spirit in open rebellion the divine word, and against which he wished he had ten thousand ngues to testify, and as many thousand hands to lift.

The rector trembled for the Pope,—he folded his arms resignedly in his rplice, and awaited the assault on the Vatican, which seemed inevitable. efore the end of the exordium Hercules had actually made himself visible in the dust which, with his tremendous action, he knocked out f the old red cushions; and the deep thundering voice issued as it were ut of a cloud. Markham and Vivyan, accustomed to the repose of the nglish pulpit, were amazed at such a display of muscular energy and ocal power in a quiet little country church. But it was not against Rome he curate took up his parable on the present occasion; it was neither gainst the Pope, nor Anti-Christ, that he bolted his invectives, but against he sloth and indolence of his countrymen. It was a capital trenchant liscourse, full of broad sense and sound morality, but as termagant as ny harangue could be. He felt that he was entitled to inveigh against loth, being himself the most laborious and energetic of mortal men; nd inveigh against the vice he did, as if he had it before him incarnate; he espattered it with the foulest language, branded it with every crime, mputed every human misery to it, stuck it up in a pillory, and scolded nd pelted it for half an hour, with such a copiousness and variety of spithets and reproaches, as would have better become the red or the blue petticoat than the black gown. But the abuse was mixed with so much undeniable truth, and came so naturally from the curate's lips, and so palpably from his heart, that it seemed at length perfectly germane to the subject. He made his audience feel that sloth deserved all he said of it, and sent some of the Hogg family home with uncomfortable forebodings as to their fate both here and hereafter.

He went back to the beginning of things, and pointed out the deep moral in the simple tale of the Creation; how there were six working days to one sabbath; then he demanded whether earth was to dictate to heaven, or heaven to earth; what right had man to seven days of rest, when God by precept and example, had declared there should be one only, and that at the close of a week of toil? As for you, he cried, ye Hoggs and M'Swynes, a perpetual sabbath is what you would fain keep, if Providence would only send ravens to feed you, and shower manna down upon you; but I say unto you that the sluggard's sabbaths are Satan's sabbaths, and that it is wrath heaven will rain on you and not

anna; his ministers of vengeance, not of mercy, Providence will send to sit you, if you do not repent and mend your lives; and the only pentance that will be worth a button to you is to cease to be the drowsy aves you are, and work for your bread like honest men. There never as an honest man who was not a laborious one, and there never was a uggard but he was a rogue into the bargain. Now I'll let you into one the secrets of the next world, and you may publish it from the tops your neat cabins and at the corners of your dainty streets;—if there one thing under the sun that Heaven detests and abhors more than nother, it is the very thing you love most—the abominable and rascally ice of idleness. It is the will of Heaven that man shall eat his bread in he sweat of his own brow, and you want to eat yours in that of your eighbour's. See what a country Providence has given to a crew of lazy ubberly varlets, who would be only too well off in Zahara or Stony rabia! Dare you say that God is not goodness and bounty itself to ou? Aye, that he is,-a thousand times too bountiful: I could almost uarrel with Heaven for not having given this charming and fertile island o the honest, hard-working, independent Dutch, and settled you in the wamps of Holland, to pump for your lives. No thanks to you if your ields are as green as they are; though they are not half so green as they ught to be, and would be, if Providence had given them to industrious people. Beware, I say unto you, yé Hoggs and M'Swynes; Heaven withdraws the blessings that man abuses; "a fertile land," it is written, "maketh he barren for the wickedness of them that dwell therein." And do we not see the scripture already fulfilled in the meagre produce of your neglected or exhausted fields? No sirocco withers your lands; no army of locusts desolates your crops; the only blight is human sloth; the only locusts are your own selves.

Then he discharged a volley of texts at them, principally from that magazine of practical every-day wisdom, the Book of the Proverbs. "As the door turneth on its hinges, so doth the slothful on his bed."—"The slothful hideth his hand in his bosom; it grieveth him to bring it again to his mouth."—"He that tilleth his land shall be satisfied with bread, but he that followeth vain persons is void of understanding."—"The slothful man saith, there is a lion in the way; a lion is in the streets." Here the curate paused, and sternly demanded of his congregation, which of them did not see a lion every day of his life? "Why," he exclaimed, "Afric is not so infested with lions as Ireland is."

The junior part of the audience looked a little startled at this asseveration, and Billy Pitt felt abashed at his father's ignorance of the natural history of his country. But the curate vehemently protested that he affirmed the truth, and that he would proclaim from the house-tops that all the miseries of Ireland were owing to the lions. Why were the bogs unreclaimed?—For fear of the lions. Why were the fields untilled?—Fear of the lions. Why were the very streets of Redcross unpaved and unbesomed?—Because there was a lion in every one of them. Then he told them that the lion seen by the slothful is a phantom sent to scare them from their duties by him who is represented as a lion himself, and a roaring lion, seeking to devour, and who would eat up the sluggards first of all.

Having thus sufficiently terrified his audience, he proceeded to inform them how the lions were to be combated. "Face them," he cried, "and they will scamper away like hares. I have made lions run in my time,

so I speak from experience, my friends. Resist the devil, and the best way to resist him is to work. Christianity is the religion of work. Its divine Author was himself a workman; its apostles were fishermen and mechanics, expressly to teach us that there is nothing so good, nothing so holy, nothing so godlike as industry, as there is nothing so shabby and diabolical as sloth. The God of Christianity is a God of industry; he took his kings from the sheep-fold, and his prophets from the plough." This idea led the enthusiastic preacher into a rhapsody which delighted Markham. The curate broke forth into a glowing panegyric upon rural life, with its pastoral and agricultural occupations; their calm pleasures, their salubrious nature, their transcendent usefulness, their true dignity; how the plough exceeded the sword in glory,—how no foughten field, not the memorable fight of the Boyne itself (which in Mr. Woodward's estimation exceeded all the battles of history in glory), is half so illustrious as the field that industry finds a waste and leaves a garden; how the cultivator of the earth is the victor for man to honour; how the Pagans understood this when they adored the givers of the corn, the olive, and the vine; and how he panted for the day when some greater conqueror than had ever yet appeared—greater than Strafford, or Cromwell, or glorious and immortal William himself—would visit their shores, not with the sword to ravage, but with wisdom to reclaim and cultivate; not to subdue the people, but to vanquish their follies and their crimes; not to win gory honours by the slaughter of men or the sack of towns, but to bind his brows with unbloody and unfading laurels, gathered with the sickle not the sword, with all "the pomp and circumstance of glorious Peace."

"You laid it hard on them," said the rector to Hercules, after service, as they all walked back together to the curate's house to lunch there. The fact was, that Mr. Spenser winced a little himself under his curate's invectives; and so, indeed, did Vivyan too, as he confessed to his friend in the course of the evening.

"I give them a blast like that once a year," said Mr. Woodward; "it does them no harm at all events."

"No harm!" cried Markham. "I should think it ought to do them all the good in the world."

"Ah, the Syren, sloth, is a sweeter singer than I am," said the curate. "That was not a bad hit about the Dutch, eh, Val?"

"It was capital," said the rector; "but it was all excellent, only perhaps a little too—what shall I say—too termagant."

"I have no patience," said Hercules, "with the lazy varlets, starving in rags, and wallowing in the mire, when, with a little common industry, they might be as well housed, clothed, and fed, as any peasantry in Christendom."

"You don't think them the finest peasantry in the world, Mr. Woodward?" said George Markham.

"The flatterers that tell them so are not their friends," replied the curate,—"it's not often the rogues hear so much plain truth as they heard from me to-day. Truth is a scarce commodity in this country, Mr. Markham."

"It ought to be abundant," said the rector, "for we use it exceedingly economical of it."

"You think there ought to be a great accumulation somewhere?" said the curate, laughing. "Well, I wonder where it is?"

"But, Mr. Woodward," said Vivyan, who had not yet spoken, "were you not a little too hard on the Piggledies, particularly as you let the Higgledies go scot-free?"

"I gave it to the Higgledies at Easter," replied Hercules, "and there is no part of Ireland where they deserve a rating better than in this very county. Formerly I used to have them both up together, landlords and tenants, but the result was, that each thought himself abused merely to humour the other; and besides it was only encouraging the notion, already far too prevalent, that the faults of the rich excuse those of the poor, and *vice versâ*."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

YOUNG LOVE.

"Beauties, have ye seen this toy,
Called Love, a little boy,
Almost naked, wanton, blind,
Cruel now, and then as kind?
If he be amongst ye, say,
He is Venus' runaway."

HUE AND CRY AFTER CUPID.

THE fonder Vivyan grew of the society of Mr. Spenser and the ladies of his family, the more gently and good-naturedly did he bear with the comparative clownishness of Sydney, the more incapable he was of repelling his advances with the coolness and hauteur of his less complaisant and less facile cousin. Greatly to Markham's chagrin, it was soon settled that young Spenser was to be sent to Cambridge at the end of autumn; and Vivyan, in fact, undertook to introduce him to his own college, his own tutor, and his own circle of acquaintance. There was another party as well as Markham, who disapproved as strongly as possible of the arrangement; we need hardly say it was the curate, who never for a moment swerved from his opinion that Dublin University was the best academy in the world, and his friend, Tom Beamish, the best scholar in that academy, and therefore the best scholar in the world, by a plausible, if not very sound or original process of reasoning. Carry, however, kept her husband quiet; she "hoped it was all for the best," and in truth she was secretly pleased that the point was carried against Hercules, for (independently of her English notions) she wished her nephew to be removed as far as possible from his Irish associates, and she thought it extremely fortunate that at so critical a moment he should have formed a friendship with a young man of Frank Vivyan's stamp.

Simple George Markham! While he was tormenting himself about his cousin's entanglement with Sydney, he was utterly blind to a much more serious complicity with another member of the rector's family.

Ah, it was a dangerous atmosphere for fiery and waxen youth to breathe, that which two such women as Mrs. Woodward and her niece made round about them; an atmosphere of light and love, warmer and brighter than the very air of those summer days. When Vivyan sailed in the Circe—nay, when he landed on the emerald isle—he was heart-free and heart-

whole; scarcely, indeed, knew he had a heart at all, except as a scientific fact, learned from a cabinet cyclopedia. Woman had entered his eye, but her image had never penetrated beyond the retina; he had only seen or read of beauty, and of passion knew no more than that it was something that inspires sonnets, and goes to the composition of a romance. It boots not to inquire how it happened that the revelation was now made to him—the old mystery that is revealed to every son of Adam, individually—that "man is not made to be alone." At what particular moment the rich golden shaft smote him, or whether it was in the boudoir, or the library, or the gardens, or on the glassy water, or on the pine-clad height to the left of the parsonage, a favourite resort in the sweet summer evenings, was known perhaps only to himself. It is idle to pretend acquaintance with facts of this nature, as many writers of domestic history are wont to do. He was young, ardent, imaginative, soft, susceptible, and it is enough to say of Elizabeth Spenser, that it would have been almost a reproach to Vivyan had he been proof against her charms; her companion, as he was, from morning to night in some amusing occupation or busy amusement; sitting with her, or sauntering, or sailing, conversing, or reading; no "strict age or sour severity," to check the flow of youthful spirits, or the play of fancy; the serenity of Mr. Spenser, on the contrary, and his admiration of Vivyan, sanctioning and promoting freedom, and Carry Woodward licensing with the broad seal of her comely presence and goodly countenance the growing familiarities, in which she did not perceive the sweet mischief that was latent.

It was not by her accomplishments that Elizabeth Spenser fascinated Frank Vivyan, for no girl of her rank had so few of what are commonly so called. She understood and loved music without being a performer; she neither drew, nor painted; in fact her accomplishments were of a higher kind; her mind was accomplished by the habit of elegant and solid reading; her character with tenderness, modesty, truth, and courage. There was everything feminine about her, and nothing frivolous. She was the only woman Vivyan had ever met who was not perpetually inquiring for new books. Her father had taught her to see in old books a variety, a freshness, a fullness, and vigour to be sought in vain in the annual teemings of the literature of the day. But Elizabeth did not use to talk of her reading. You might find out that she was familiar with Shakspeare, with Milton and Pope, with Massillon, or Jeremy Taylor, for she was as far from the affectation of concealment as from that of display. It was by the tone of her conversation, and the good taste and sound judgment of her remarks, that you discovered the superiority of her intellectual training. Then she had a keen appreciation of wit in conversation; the pleasures she loved were the calm, pure, healthy enjoyment of books, flowers, friendships, and beneficent occupations. Vivyan saw her not merely by her own light, but by the light reflected from the faces of those that loved her, and from the numerous objects of her care. Her spirit of usefulness was visible through a wide circle round her father's house; she supplied, in a great measure, his deficiency in point of vigour; there was no want of benevolence in Mr. Spenser's nature, and his daughter supplied the place of that active usefulness without which benevolence resembles the tree that gives no shade, or the flower that yields no fruit.

A relative of Vivyan's had once shown him a character of his mother, written by Mr. Everard long after his retirement to the continent. It had many features in common with that of Elizabeth Spenser, and (as he after-

wards owned) it was the perception of this resemblance that first led him to indulge in the dangerous pursuit of studying the mind of a captivating woman, with her person at the same time before his eyes, inevitably blending the admiration of form and feature with the moral or metaphysical pleasure of contemplating inward beauty.

It was a strange but a natural thought that occurred to him one evening, as he sat alone in a little bocage close to the house, the creation of Elizabeth's hands, and one of her favourite resorts, either to crop her carnations, or provide for a little colony of robins and blackbirds, which had settled there under her protection. It was a singular thought, but a natural one —"My mother, at her marriage, was probably just such a girl." How long did he sit dreaming there in that bocage? No matter.

The clock struck seven; he started up to perform the duties of the toilette, and on his hurried way to his chamber, he met Elizabeth descending to the drawing-room. She seemed to his view a miracle of loveliness; lovely she was indeed, but what beauty is it that imagination does not heighten; imagination, that paints the lily and perfumes the violet? Its magic beams falling full at that moment on Elizabeth made her a blaze of beauty; it deprived him of the power of expression, and he never saw her afterwards but in that enchanted light of love.

For it is not by the light of the sun that young love sees its idols, but by the faery light of its own dreams. Love's vision is not subject to the laws of optics; it has optics of its own, to which every line is a line of beauty, and in which every ray is *couleur de rose*.

But of all passions love is the most unsociable. Your lover is the worst company in the world. Vivyan was unconvivial that day as a spectre at a banquet. Mr. Spenser's wine and Mr. Spenser's wit sparkled in vain for him. Even Mrs. Woodward's cordial affability, which seldom failed to warm and animate all within the sphere of her fascinations, was entirely thrown away. His abstraction, however, was ascribed to a cause different from the true one, for it was known that he had received a letter acquainting him with the serious illness of his friend and benefactor in Spain, and that seemed sufficient reason for the depression of spirits under which he manifestly laboured.

Indeed, nobody but Carry herself seemed up to the conversational mark at dinner. The curate and Markham were manifestly done up after what they called a *saunter* of fifteen or twenty miles, and had little more force left than they wanted for the exercise of the knife and fork. As to Sydney, he had not been seen since breakfast.

With coffee, however, a light breeze of conversation sprang up; but it threatened to fall again in a few minutes, so that Mrs. Woodward, alarmed at the prospect of being becalmed for the rest of the evening, dropped a hint to the effect that if Mr. Spenser would amuse them either with his "Directions to Governesses," or his "Advice to Curates," the company would take it as a great favour.

"Do, Val, and keep Mr. Markham and me awake," said the curate, rousing himself, and conquering a disposition to yawn with a muscular effort not much more polite.

"I shall more probably put you asleep," said the rector.

"No, no, no," said Markham, not very distinctly knowing what he was negativing, but conscious that he ought to negative something.

"Which will you have, Carry?" asked the rector, rising.

"The Governesses, Val," answered Hercules for her, "for I'm not equal

to controversy to-night, and the other paper would provoke one, as sure a gun."

"Be it so," said the rector, and, producing a small manuscript, handed it to Carry, who, with a good discretion, read it to the circle.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

ADVICE TO GOVERNESSES.

"But pardon me; I am too sudden bold:
To teach a teacher ill beseemeth me."
LOVE'S LABOUR LOST.

"WHILE the most celebrated wits have not thought it beneath them to advise all other classes of domestics, it has been your misfortune, ladies, and not the least of the wrongs of which you are entitled to complain, that no pains have been taken by any competent authority, to instruct *you* in the principles of your profession and duty. Without going the length of affirming that your vocation is equal in importance and respectability to that of the cook, or the butler, I may assert, without flattering you too much, that it is not inferior to that of either the house-maid or the kitchen-maid, from which it follows that you have at least an equal right to a place in any complete system of *directions to servants*.

"Regarding you in the light in which you are considered by the greater part of the world, I do not know how I can better commence the advice, which in the most friendly spirit I desire to offer, than by earnestly warning you against the fatal error of thinking more highly of yourselves than you are thought of by your masters and mistresses. Connected with this is another mistake, no less serious, into which I have observed many of you prone to fall,—that of taking a deeper and livelier interest in your pupils than is felt by their parents themselves, whose value for their children may fairly be measured by the respect and consideration they pay those into whose hands they confide them at the tenderest and most critical season of life. Divest yourselves, at once and for ever, of all romance and sentiment upon the subject of education. Your sole business is, like other menials, to make the best of your place; and as the wages are commonly trifling (if, indeed, salary is 'an object' to you at all), you must only endeavour to eke them out as well as you can, with every little incidental emolument and advantage which your situation throws in your way. Always recollect that nobody can have a *right* to greater services than they choose to *pay for*, and that you are only bound in conscience to give your scholars an equivalent for the pittance you receive; and not even that little, if you are expected to combine the office of instruction with the collateral duties of the laundress or the mantua-maker. You stand (as learned writers agree) *in loco parentis*; you represent the mistress of the family you enter, and you have, consequently, as clear a right to neglect or mismanage your subjects as if you stood literally in the maternal relation towards them. Ponder this principle well, and it will save you from a great deal of anxiety and vexation. What can be more preposterous than to see a lady

exhausting her patience, over-working her brain, and sometimes even wearying her hand, for the benefit of a set of turbulent young people who are not related to her ever so remotely, while the woman who bore them sees them perhaps only once a day, scarcely ever thinks of them at all, and probably never corrected one of them in her life?

"Begin by keeping your pupils at an awful distance. The further you keep them from you, the less you expose your temper to be ruffled by their disobedience or their inattention, and a serene temper is, in your situation, a quality of the first importance. Besides, the communication of knowledge implies the previous acquisition of it, and how can a young lady improve her own mind as she ought to do, if she squanders the greater part of the day in the nursery or the school-room, in the worst possible company, that of ignorant, ill-behaved children. You will at least be always justified in bestowing as much time upon the cultivation of your own mind as the mother of your pupils devotes to fashionable frivolities and amusements.

"If you are forbidden to correct your pupils upon any occasion, or for any transgression whatsoever, strictly comply with the injunction. A mother is free to ruin her children, if she pleases, and it is extremely presumptuous in a hired governess to try to hinder her. It is another question, when you find it impossible to retain your situation in consequence of the turbulence of your subjects, which you are not permitted to repress. You will in such a case consult your own generous impulses only, and not resign your place and your salary without leaving a character for energy behind you, which may probably be of use to the lady who succeeds to your enviable post.

"Be very particular in the choice of books for your pupils. The best rule is to select them exactly as if you were selecting them for your own use. You will, of course, take care that they relate to those branches of knowledge with which you are *least* familiar, should you happen not to be one of those omniscient young women who teach *all* things teachable, and 'make themselves useful' into the bargain. Suppose the mother to remark that the works you have ordered from the family bookseller are too abstract or advanced for the school-room, nothing is easier than to tell her that she greatly underrates the abilities of her children; and, as this is always an agreeable remark to the maternal ear, you may order another batch of similar publications very soon after, upon the strength of it.

"It is very convenient for you, when the mother has a reasonable share of ignorance for a woman, and knows little or nothing of modern languages. You may then purchase the novels of George Sand, and pass them off as the works of a French Mrs. Ellis or Mrs. Trimmer. Besides, should you happen to be a daughter of a Welch parson, nothing would be easier than to make the language of the ancient Britons answer for German, and increase your reputation, if not your income, by the device."

[Just at this point, Carry suddenly dropped the paper she was reading on her lap, and glanced over her shoulder at the door, near which she happened to sit, as if she heard some noise in that direction, or expected somebody to enter. It was but a momentary interruption. She resumed as follows.]

"Another excellent and approved mode of improving yourself is by securing the assistance of eminent masters. Many a young governess has entered a family illiterate and unaccomplished, and left it a well-informed and highly polished woman. You cannot afford yourself to incur the

expense of the best professors of music and dancing, or Italian and German, but your employers *can;* impress the advantage of masters upon them strongly, and if you have any relatives or friends of your own in the line, you will have an opportunity of serving them at the same time that you serve yourself. Should you be in love with any handsome young pianist, or drawing-master, a charming arrangement will easily occur to you, by which you can at one and the same time improve your scholars, and secure happiness as well as improvement for yourself. If you are extremely frank and confiding, you will let your flirtation with the gay artist be known to the family; if you take my advice, you will keep it as quiet as you can.

"Do not encourage the mother to be always popping into your school-room, and prying into your proceedings. Some ladies have the meanness to be always watching their governesses, and controlling their hours and their movements. Keep your mistress at as great a distance as her children. If she has confidence in you, she should mind her own business, and leave you to manage yours; if she has not, she ought to declare it frankly, and then you would know how to act. Establish yourself either at the top of the house, or in some remote wing of it, so as to make it, at all events, a long journey for madam, or my lady, to visit your apartment, either to call you to account for chastising her favourite son, or perhaps to pry after your Angelo, or your Tamburini."

Here Mrs. Woodward again glanced over her shoulder, but without discontinuing her reading.

"Some mothers think their children can never get governessing and schooling enough. They desire to make prodigies of them, and for that object would sacrifice not only the health of the poor things themselves, but what is of much more consequence (at least to you), the health of their preceptress. Combat this system resolutely. Be prepared with the fable of the bow kept always bent, and ready with cases of fine boys, who, to your knowledge, became absolute idiots in consequence of too close attention to their books. You ruined a charming little fellow yourself (did you not) by over-teaching him, and what would you not give now that you had acted upon the opposite system. How you reproach yourself with all the severities you employed to please a mother and to produce a dunce! Not for worlds would you commit again the same fatal folly."

Now Mrs. Woodward not only dropped the manuscript again, but bounced up, and sharply opening the door, received Miss M'Cracken in her arms. In fact, that young lady would probably have tumbled into the room, head foremost, had she not been supported by Carry's voluminous person.

"Miss M'Cracken!" exclaimed the matron, in her most formidable manner, drawing herself up to her full height, and sternly regarding the detected eaves-dropper.

Lucy, however, encountered her looks undauntedly, and with the utmost composure simperingly addressed the rector, and said that Mrs. Spenser desired to see him. He obeyed, of course, and the governess withdrew along with him.

"You don't think she was listening at the door, aunt?" said one of the girls.

"I am positive of it," said Carry, "I have a quick ear, my dear."

"You may be mistaken, after all," said the charitable curate, drily, "but go on with your reading."

"At all events," said his wife, preparing to obey, "she has given Valen-

ine a hint to improve his essay." She then continued without further interruption to the end.

"If this sound reasoning should fail to answer its purpose, there are arious methods to which you may resort, to relieve both yourself and our scholars from the irksomeness of too close application. Their health, as well as their instruction, is in your province. See that they take abundant out-door exercise. Accompany them when you please, but a head-ache, cold, or a sprained ankle, will always enable you to remain quietly at our fire-side, and the children's maid is, or ought to be, a perfectly safe person to trust them to. You, at least, may always have as much confidence in her as you think proper; and should any accident ever befall a child in her custody, it will always be easy to demonstrate that the same would have happened had the mother herself been on the spot at the moment. When you cannot escape walking with your pupils, carry out their mother's wishes effectually, and give them enough of it. Should a trifling illness result from over-walking them, it is no fault of yours, and you will gain a few days' repose for your feet, and also save your shoes, which is no trifling consideration. Never be without Buchan at your elbow, have a medicine-chest of your own, and be on a good understanding with the family apothecary. Many an hour of relaxation is to be procured by proper attention to the little illnesses of young people. It is much wiser to anticipate a disorder than to wait for it to make its appearance formally. Such of you as teach 'the rudiments of Latin' will understand the meaning of '*principiis obsta*.'

"As I have alluded to Latin, let me drop a hint upon the subject while I think of it. Do not suffer the elder brothers of your pupils to entrap you into classical discussions. You only profess the rudiments, and though, of course, you know much more, you ought not to parade it in society, but rather keep it in the back-ground, and reserve it all for your scholars in private. Apply the same rule to other things as well as Latin. Many of our sex preserve a reputation for learning by shunning every opportunity of displaying it; how much more becoming then is the same modesty in people of *yours*.

"With French it is otherwise. You cannot be too laviah and ostentatious of whatever French you know, be it much or little. Lard every thing you write and interlard every thing you say with it; nothing makes such an impression on people who don't understand the language, and the less they comprehend what you mean, the higher opinion they will have of you. At breakfast ask for the *pang* and the *boor*. At dinner say, you will take some *dingdong*, and afterwards have some of the *buff bully*. You have no conception what an effect these little feminine displays (for French is essentially feminine), produce in Bloomsbury and about Hackney. I have known wine taken with a governess in an irresistible burst of admiration, occasioned by a quotation of two words from the '*Echo de Paris*.' It will always, however, be well to be on your guard against disagreeable surprises. Beware of the exiled Poles, and the young wine-merchants from Bourdeaux. When you hear that M. Latour, or M. St. Etienne, has been asked to dinner, you can have one of those convenient aches and indispositions, of which a governess ought always to have a large stock on hand. If you have exhausted those excuses in other ways, do anything sooner than let the extent of your French acquisitions be discovered. You may say that *you don't understand the patois of Gascony!*

"So universal is the notion that the British governess possesses every

qualification under the sun, and so common is it to pledge them to be 'generally useful,' that in many houses you would be required to act as *garde-malade* to the children in the measles, nor do I well know how you are to escape the duty, except through the friendly interposition of the apothecary, who (at your suggestion) may insist upon calling in a professional nurse-tender. You would then have a few weeks at your disposal to visit your father at his curacy in Ireland, or your uncle Williams, at his vicarage in Wales. The danger of a deduction from your salary need not much alarm you, for few people understand fractions well enough to calculate what it ought to be.

"Do not expect civility and good-nature, and you will never be disappointed at not meeting with it. Truly wise and good people will always treat you with urbanity and kindness, but to shape your conduct with reference to the wise and good would argue a degree of ignorance of human nature inconceivable in a woman who is bound to be ignorant of nothing. Never remain an instant in any place after you find another more advantageous and at your disposal. Be just as considerate and grateful to your employers as they are to you—no more. If you confine yourself, as many ladies do, to the education of young gentlemen, take care that they are not much above your shoulder, or over the age of twelve, unless you happen to be a Thalestris, or a lineal descendant from Boadicea. In that case I do not see why you should not prepare them for college, as well as for Eton and Harrow. If you belong to the class of finishing governesses, as you are paid much better than the rest of your profession, be as slow in finishing your young ladies as you can; you may be certain they will be finished soon enough, if you give them the last exquisite touch just when you have amassed a hundred pounds, and are resolved to keep your attachment to Angelo no longer a secret.

"If you could command your personal appearance, I would advise you to be good-looking rather than handsome. If you are beautiful, the mother will dislike you; if you are plain, you will be equally unfortunate on the other side of the house. The most comfortable post for you is the family of a widower. There you may be as absolute with your subjects as you please, and it is your own fault if you do not speedily turn the maiden aunt out of doors, and raise yourself from the low condition of a governess into the haughty station of a step-mother.

"But the natural close of a governess's career is the opening of that of a school-mistress. You are a fish in a frying-pan, and the only transition for you is into the fire. Tyrannise now over the young as you have been tyrannised over by the old. As education, in a narrow sphere, has been made painful and degrading to yourself, so let it be to others in the wider circle where you are now supreme. Be a Czarina to boys at Brompton, or an Ogress to girls at Blackheath. The great world has been harsh to you, revenge its harshness upon the little one. Return neglect with neglect, and cruelty with cruelty, or continue (if you are very simple, and very good) to be an amiable, conscientious, and Christian woman, filling the sacred post that mothers abdicate, earning ill-usage hardly, and receiving no wages worth mentioning but those of scorn and ingratitude."

The curate and Markham had been sound asleep for some time before Mrs. Woodward had done reading.

"Very flattering to Valentine," she said, rising to shake Hercules, and affecting to be hurt at this practical criticism on her brother's production.

As she crossed the hall a few minutes afterwards on her way to her

chamber, she encountered her nephew, and would fain have inquired where he had dined and spent the day; but he looked more than usually morose and gloomy, and scarcely vouchsafed her a civil return to the affectionate good-night she wished him.

CHAPTER XL.

A DISCOVERY.

"I understand you very well (quoth Pantagruel): But preach it up; prattle on it, and defend it as much as you will, even from hence to the next Whitsuntide, if you please so to do; yet in the end will you be astonished to find how you shall have gained no ground at all upon me, nor persuaded me by your fair speeches and smooth talk, to enter ever so little into *the thraldom of debt*. And I am fully confirmed in the opinion, that the Persians erred not when they said that *the second vice was to lie, the first being that of owing money*." RABELAIS.

THE brow of Sydney Spenser was growing daily darker and darker, and an expression of care was visible in his features, not only foreign to his age, but to his former character. His disappearances were growing at the same time more frequent and abrupt; he made appointments and broke them on slight pretences; he walked or rode out with the rest of the party, and suddenly quitted them, sometimes giving an account of his conduct, but often vouchsafing no explanation.

Mrs. Woodward, and his sister Elizabeth, had been far enough indeed from conjecturing the true cause of his depression of spirits, when first they remarked it. Now they did not observe him as closely as before; the mind of the best of sisters cannot be always occupied with solicitude for a brother, and Carry surely had enough to engage her thoughts and affections, active and warm as they were, without anxieties for a graceless nephew.

But Sydney was now, indeed, an object of compassion, and he would not have wanted pity and sympathy, had his distresses been but known; had he only possessed the courage, or the prudence to reveal them to the relatives who were so tenderly interested in his welfare.

The days of his unbounded confidence in false friends were nearly over. Though far from being convinced of the profligacy of Dawson, he had begun to be painfully sensible of the influence which, even in his absence, he exerted over him. Those small debts, from which his false friend had obligingly promised to relieve him (having first encouraged him to contract them), remained still undischarged, or at least the greater part of them; they considerably exceeded Sydney's rough estimate, and though Dawson had made some small advances, they only sufficed to keep the creditors quiet for a few weeks. The residue still hung over him—a millstone round his neck by day, an incubus on his breast by night. Let young men beware of contracting small debts, for small debts may be great calamities. There are few sadder, and at the same time more unnatural, spectacles in the world, than a young man under twenty with the cares of the Fleet prison written on his forehead, with the anxieties of debt clouding his eye and hollowing his cheek. Had Sydney candidly disclosed his embarrassments to his father, there was nothing in them so serious that he could not have been extricated from them with facility. But Mr. Spenser had never

been in his son's confidence. He was too negligent to seek it, and Sydney left to himself, and depending for the means of enjoyment upon th acquaintanceships of his own making, had never felt the want of his father' friendship, or even conceived the idea that such a relationship could exis between them. Then, to have had recourse to his father would hav involved the necessity of numerous confessions, which false pride deterre him from making; he had contracted those small debts disingenuously and he now concealed them, with the folly which uniformly accompanie indirectness, and aggravates its evil consequences.

Moreover, he could not but feel that the recent loss of a considerabl sum of money made it a particularly unfavourable moment for adding t the rector's burdens. No, it was no longer the pursuit of coarse an boisterous pleasures elsewhere that led Sydney to absent himself from th society of the parsonage, or the festive expeditions from it. How littl dreamed the virtuous and affectionate Elizabeth that the copses on th heights over the house, and the heathery nooks on the edge of the water, where she and her brother had a thousand times played hide and seek in their childhood, were often used now for a like game in real life, the undiverting and degrading one of debtor and creditor, which, though it supplies the stage with so much farce, and though the riotous wit of a Rabelais may torture mirth out of it, will never to the end of the chapter be fun and frolic to the actual players at it. Respect for Mr. Spenser alone kept his son's creditors from coming up boldly under his library windows and asking a settlement of their little accounts. Some of them were now beginning to menace Sydney with that extreme course, but he had hitherto, by excuses, promises, even threats, and a variety of tricks and stratagems, kept them from the house, though the more impatient of the number sometimes penetrated the glebe, and drove him to skulk, not always with success, about the grounds, or in the farm offices.

Cheerfully, without a murmur or a moment's hesitation, would Elizabeth have given all she possessed in the world, to the very rings on her fingers, to have extricated her brother from such disgraceful difficulties. Cheerfully would Carry have sold her diamonds, if she had had diamonds to sell, for the same purpose; but the truth was utterly unknown to them, and indeed to every member of the household but Miss M'Cracken, to whom nothing was unknown that was said or done in the parsonage, or round about it, particularly by Sydney, over all whose doings she had long exercised a malignant and unsuspected surveillance.

But, as we have already seen, he had another cause of uneasiness. He had little doubt, from the description his uncle had given, and still less from the portrait he had drawn of the person he had seen at the Black Castle, that he was one of the two suspicious characters, whom he himself had not only met, but sat at table with at Dawson's ill-omened house. To be sure, Dawson had stated the man's profession, and explained what brought him to the country; but then, on the other hand, it seemed impossible not to connect him, in some way or another, with the robbery. Fearful ideas flashed for a moment across his mind; he laughed at them, but still they returned. Was his confidence in Dawson diminished?—he *said* to himself that it was not, yet he *acted* as if it was, for he could not bring himself to disclose to his uncle his suspicions respecting Messieurs Lamb and Thomson, although it might have furnished a clue to the detection of the thieves, and could not possibly compromise Dawson, assuming the statements to be true which he had made to Sydney.

Thus, not only haunted by the faces of creditors (aspects which would be repulsive, were we in debt to an Adonis, or in the books of Apollo himself), but dogged as it were by the still more terrifying apparition of the soi-disant Major Lamb, the misguided Sydney was visibly and greatly altered. The ruddy health and the noisy spirits were gone; he no longer lounged about the house, or the grounds, whistling, like Cymon, "for want of thought," or singing the "Boys of Kilkenny," or the fortunes of "Brian O'Linn," at the top of his good sonorous tenor; he was grown wonderfully quiet and gentlemanlike, civilised by debt, and subdued and polished by mental anxiety.

The curate one day proposed at breakfast a walk to the Black Castle. Markham agreed cheerfully, but Sydney declined to accompany them, pretending a slight indisposition, but really apprehensive of encountering his formidable Castle Dawson acquaintance.

Hercules and Markham then armed themselves, more, however, to shoot hares than robbers, and proceeded on their expedition without him. The rector and Vivyan sauntered about together, quoting Milton and the Georgics, and conversing about Cambridge. Sydney passed the morning differently. One of the most troublesome of his creditors was Amby Hogg, the sexton of the parish. Amby had walked over from Redcross that morning to press once more his little demand, being probably pressed himself to procure food and clothes for his dear though dirty children. One of Sydney's scouts (of whom he retained several in his service) informed him of this arrival, and he retired to a favourite fastness of his in the haggard.

The bull-dog already mentioned was eminently useful on such occasions. It was a savage animal, called Brutus, that barked wickedly, and would have flown at a lion. Amby knew he was running a risk, but he suspected that Sydney was in the yard, and creditors are proverbially daring. Directly the poor shop-keeper raised the latch and put his nose into the haggard, Brutus sprang at him with a terrific growl. If he had not stepped back and banged the door to with the utmost celerity, his leg or his throat would have been in the bull-dog's fangs. One of the farm-servants ran up, and Sydney called to him to lock the door. The boy executed the order promptly, being used to adopt such defensive measures; and then there was the following short parley between him and the creditor outside.

"What does your masther mane by keeping a dog to ate the people?" growled the terrified sexton.

"My masther's dog ates nobody that oughtn't to be ated," replied the gossoon through the key-hole.

Then they reviled one another like fishwives in Redcross, and the stable-boy, prompted by Sydney, who was close to him, but so placed as not to be discoverable through the key-hole, told lies enough to bring down lightning, if falsehood were a conductor of the electric fluid, which fortunately it is not, in a part of the world so "given to lying" as Ireland.

However, Sydney eluded once more his creditor's grasp, and after lurking some time longer in the straw, caressing his amiable and useful friend Brutus, he crept into the house to luncheon.

Some hours were then spent delightfully upon the water. Vivyan suggested it to Sydney, and Mrs. Woodward and Elizabeth were easily prevailed on to accompany them. Never was the surface of a summer sea smoother; the water was alternately gray, purple, gold, and azure, as it reflected the rocks, the heath, the gorse, or the blue concave.

It was through Mrs. Woodward's medium that Frank had become

acquainted with Elizabeth, that is to say with her mind, its cultivation, solidity, and loveliness. Carry possessed in an eminent degree the talent of developing the talents and characters of everybody round her who had talents and characters to be developed; and Elizabeth never revealed herself so freely as in her society, or expressed her thoughts and emotions with the same confidence. Hers was not the enthusiasm that shows itself in exaggeration and emphasis, or in looks, sighs, and gestures, but the enthusiasm whose very strength conceals it from observation; it was not the perfume of the flower, perceived and enjoyed by all the world, but the essence of its incense, yielded to few, perhaps entirely only to one. That was a glorious ripening day, not to the mountain crops alone, but in love's harvest. Vivyan fully experienced the rapturous feeling of the oft translated and oftener imitated fragment of Greek song—

> "Blest as the immortal gods is he
> The youth who fondly sits by thee,
> And sees and hears thee all the while
> Softly speak, and sweetly smile."

Never did he take so little part in conversation himself; the little he did say was either to Mrs. Woodward, or to Sydney, and chiefly on the subject of Cambridge; but this was to Elizabeth a most agreeable topic, so happy was she in the thought that her brother was on the point of being delivered, as it were, by the accomplished and amiable Vivyan, from the hateful influence of Mr. Dawson. However, silent or eloquent, Vivyan pleased her, and Mrs. Woodward perceived it that day for the first time, and inwardly resolved to make all the inquiries suggested by a motherly prudence respecting Vivyan's position and prospects, and to make them without delay.

The hour of dinner and of sunset was approaching when they ran their skiff ashore along-side of the small pier, under the flag which was now gaily streaming in a delicious evening breeze. Sydney remained behind a moment to secure the boat by its chain and padlock. The ladies and Vivyan walked up to the house, and found in the porch the curate and Markham, just returned from their excursion, and conversing with unusual eagerness with Mr. Spenser and his eldest daughter. The visit to the Black Castle had not been a fruitless one. The new comers shared the excitement directly they joined the group, and Sydney hearing the exclamations and the earnest speaking, hastened to the spot. As he came up he perceived that George Markham held something in his hand, and he heard him say—

"The robbery was committed by the owner of this pistol."

Sydney advanced another step.

The pistol was his own—the pistol he had lost during his visit to Castle Dawson. It was natural that the incident should astonish and disconcert him; but his confusion was remarked by nobody. Indeed, his position at the moment, and the shadows of the portico and its pillars, were sufficient to protect him from observation, even had attention been directed towards him, which of course it was not in any degree.

Candour at that moment would have saved Sydney and his family untold troubles. Had his father or his sisters ever seen the pistol in his possession, concealment would of course have been useless; but he knew they had not, and to have acknowledged it would have made it indispensable to relate a multitude of incidents, which might possibly and undeservedly

throw suspicion on Dawson. In such cases, too, the truth must be told at once, or it is too late. Sydney suffered the moment to pass, through his moral cowardice, and thus deprived himself of a testimony in his own favour, that would have rebutted all the circumstantial evidence which was only too soon accumulated against him.

Markham retained possession of the pistol, fully determined to trace its owner by every means in his power, and he heartily congratulated his fair cousin, as they went to dress for dinner, upon such a practical result of their voyage to the Irish shores. But different thoughts from pistols and robberies were occupying the mind of Frank Vivyan. He returned from that day's boating over head and ears in love.

Sydney Spenser would that evening have given a thousand pounds for that small weapon, which had not cost him five. He shuddered to think that he had its fellow in his bed-room, and rising in the dead waste of night, he stole out of the house, unmoored the boat again, pushed out a hundred yards from shore, and flung it into the loch.

CHAPTER XLI.

CLOUD AND SUNSHINE.

"Love! yield thy quiver and thine arrows up
To this triumphant stranger. Before him, Fortune!
Pour out thy mint of treasures; crown him sovereign
Of all his thoughts can glory to command."

THE SUN'S DARLING.

THE next day Mrs. Woodward begged a private interview with Vivyan's friend and cousin. There was a directness about George Markham that inspired you with confidence almost on the first acquaintance: you saw that he was a man of worth and honour, of moral as well as physical courage, on whose word you might rely with profound assurance, and who would infallibly take the right-minded view of any practical question you proposed to him. Mrs. Woodward resolved to open her mind to him freely upon a subject to her niece of paramount importance, and to young Vivyan of no small consequence also. Markham fully justified the reliance placed on him: he stated, with the utmost candour, his cousin's circumstances and prospects; completely satisfied Carry as to his family and connexions, but entirely concurred in the opinion, that nothing could be more unfortunate than that Miss Spenser's affections should be engaged by a young man with no fortune but his talents, his attractions, and his hopes.

"Fortune on neither side, Mr. Markham," said Carry; "it may seem a strange objection," she added, smiling, "for a curate's wife to make, but poverty and happiness combined is the lot of few indeed in this world; it has been mine, but I would not willingly see the risk run again by any girl I love, or, indeed, by any young man in whom I take the interest nobody can help taking in your charming friend."

"It is very well to despise money, Mrs. Woodward, when we *have* it to despise," said Markham, with his blunt good sense, and inwardly resolving to hurry Vivyan away from this enchanted ground with relentless celerity.

The resolution was taken too late. While Markham and Mrs. Woodward were conversing calmly on the necessity of loving with discretion, Vivyan was declaring his passion to Elizabeth in another place, without a thought of anything but the sentiments with which she inspired him.

Markham left Carry to go in quest of his cousin, vexed with himself for not having kept a sharper eye upon his conduct, but not dreaming that matters had gone as far as in fact they had. Vivyan resembled Telemachus more than his cousin did Mentor.

"But you have made no declaration, Frank, I hope."

"I have," said Vivyan.

"Then I trust the girl has not been as rash as you."

"Her heart is mine," Vivyan answered; "but her hand will depend upon the approbation of her friends."

"Ah, that is always the phrase," said Markham; "all imprudent marriages begin that way. With your little Irish property, Frank, you seem to have inherited the proverbial improvidence of the country. I fear you have not considered how remote is even the prospect of professional success for you who are still so young, and not yet of two years' standing at college!"

Vivyan, of course, had considered nothing but that Elizabeth was fair, and that, like Shenstone's shepherdess, "she was every way pleasing" to him. Consideration was left, as usual, to fathers, aunts, and friends. The usual conferences and debates took place. They ended in Elizabeth and Vivyan being both brought to acknowledge (she far more easily than he) the prudence of immediate separation. Under such circumstances it is the best thing that can be done, and the pity is that the prudence does not much diminish the pain of it to the parties principally concerned. Various are the results with which such separations take place: they are, in fact, appeals to time and fortune, either to confirm rash engagements, by preserving their spirit and removing the obstacles to them, or to quash the original proceedings altogether, by giving the eye leisure to review its decree, or the fancy to revise its judgment.

But Vivyan seemed to be Fortune's darling, and the appeal to time in the present instance was not kept long pending. The cloud was scarce gathered over the heads of the rash lovers, before a propitious gale dispersed it, and the sun shone forth with unexpected lustre. Markham had sent orders for the Circe to be in readiness to sail. While she was wearing round the coast from the port of Derry, where she had been sent to undergo the repairs necessary after the storm, Markham, all impatience for her arrival, Vivyan miserable, though his understanding was convinced that his speedy departure for England was most advisable, a letter addressed to the latter, but in a hand which he did not recognise, arrived from Grenada. Vivyan was comparatively a rich man.

The previous letters acquainting him with the rapidly declining health of his friend, Mr. Everard, prepared him in some measure for the account of his death, which he now received; but he had never reckoned upon being enriched by that event, and it was with no little astonishment he now learned that his romantic benefactor, whom he had never seen, had bequeathed to him a large portion of his property, so considerable a sum as probably to yield an income of nearly two thousand a year.

Vivyan mourned sincerely, if not poignantly, the loss of the friend, who living had been so kind, and who dying was thus munificent. A mind more indifferent to self never informed a human frame. He only valued

it now as it removed the barrier between himself and Elizabeth Spenser, and blotted out the word separation almost as soon as it was written. It is wretched to record a farewell in the first leaf of a love-story, but how seldom does a reprieve follow so close on the heel of a sentence!

There was, however, one little drawback; there always is. It was necessary that Vivyan should go to Spain to take some legal steps, in order to obtain the dominion over the property bequeathed to him. To Spain! He could scarcely have thought more of a voyage to China. A few weeks before, how the prospect of visiting one of the most picturesque and romantic of European kingdoms would have enchanted him! Now he infinitely preferred to linger on the shores of the little bay of Redcross; an humble parsonage had more charms for him than the Alhambra; and the barren hills of Tyrconnell, with scarce a ballad in their praise, pleased him more than the Sierra Morena, immortalised by the genius of Cervantes.

Vivyan was greatly discouraged by the thought of having to take this journey to the peninsula. Markham laughed at him, and indeed it did seem to be excessively unreasonable in Vivyan to be depressed by the prospect of an absence of two or three months, he who had only a few hours before been sentenced to a separation of perhaps as many years. But it did dispirit him exceedingly, and he tried in vain to reason himself out of his melancholy, and to conceal what he considered his weakness from Elizabeth's observation. But she perceived his dejection, and it infected her. The voyage to Spain was an indispensable preliminary to their union, yet both one and the other contemplated it with alarm, and would willingly have long delayed it. Neither spoke of a presentiment, yet both felt something like a boding that the first obstacle to their happiness had only been surmounted to make room for another which might not be overcome so easily.

Had a foreshadowing of misfortune been visible to her mind's eye alone, events would soon have proved it only too clear a peep into futurity. A serious calamity was even now impending over the rector's family, and it was Vivyan's lot to leave the parsonage in extreme confusion and distress, though utterly unconnected with his engagement to Elizabeth Spenser.

To give the history of this, it is necessary to see what Mr. Dawson has been doing since we saw him last, or rather what fortune has been doing for him.

BOOK VIII.

CHAPTER XLII.

DUBLIN CASTLE.

"My good Mr. Dean, there are few that come here,
But have something to hope or something to fear."
SWIFT'S WORKS.

We have not seen Mr. Dawson since his gallant service to our heroine, nor heard, indeed, any news of him, except that he advanced a certain sum of money to Sydney, and was pitchforked into parliament by a little knot of priests and attorneys, who jobbed at that time the representation of the borough of Rottenham.

Another man would have presumed upon his brilliant exploit, and his now distinguished position, and prosecuted his love-suit vigorously on the strength of both; but Dawson seemed above taking advantage of adventitious circumstances; he seemed to think nothing either of personal hazards, or personal advancement. It was little to him to save a lady's life at the risk of his own, and as to the House of Commons, that was only his proper sphere.

Such were the appearances, and they were certainly in his favour; but the truth was that for some time after his return for Rottenham he had too much business on his hands of a financial nature to leave him much time to think of his affairs at Redcross. Amongst other things, he had to make a clandestine sale in London of the books and pictures, and it was no easy matter to squeeze out of the Nathans and Mordecais money enough to cover the honestest of his electioneering expenses, although he had called the powers of earth and heaven to witness, at a public banquet, that his election had not cost him a single shilling.

There were several constituencies at that period (it is to be hoped there is more public virtue extant at present), which had a positive antipathy to respectable men. They exacted two qualifications, and only two, from their representatives; a certain sum of money, and a readiness to take any pledge required of them on the hustings. The necessary money Dawson managed to raise by the well-known fiscal operation called hook and crook (chiefly by selling the portraits of his fictitious ancestors); and as for the pledges, there was not the slightest difficulty on that head, Dawson's swallow being prodigious, only comparable to that of the giant in the French romance, whose ordinary diet was windmills. He pledged himself to dismember the British empire without a scruple, and would have entered into an equally solemn engagement to repeal the law of gravity and dissolve the universe, with just as little remorse of conscience. That great political bubble, the cry for the Irish Harem-Scarem, was then newly blown, and beginning to soar and glitter in the public eye; fascinating with its rainbow colours all who were ignorant of its flimsy materials and

utterly hollow nature. Some, no doubt, were honest in espousing the question, sincerely believing in its vitality, and flattering themselves that they had reasons to give for "the faith that was in them;" but to many it was only an hurrah, which they stupidly echoed, or a game which they profligately played. A frenzy against the union actuated some of the most popular constituencies, and a little phalanx of repealers was sent into the House of Commons, where (whether they retarded the prosperity of the country or not) they certainly did not advance their cause an iota. With this phalanx Dawson aspired to connect himself, and he was qualified to act with it in several important respects. He had studied eloquence in that great national school of oratory, whose fundamental principles are to divorce logic from argument, truth from statement, and decency from language; a system of rhetoric which considers violence strength, and rigmarole reasoning, and where abuse and personality constitute the graces and delicacies of elocution. Such was Dawson's intellectual education for the senate. As to his patriotism and public spirit, they were hereditary; he prized his country too highly to sell her for a trifle, and he thought it the indefeasible right of an Irish gentleman to have a parliament of his own, wherein to carry his jobs. The last generation had driven their parliamentary trade in College Green, and he saw no reason why the present should be forced to do their dirty work at Westminster;—so far was Dudley a thoroughly sincere repealer.

With his parliamentary career, however, we have little to do, indeed nothing, except as far as it was curiously mixed up with the affairs of the Spensers.

The influence of Dawson as a public man was felt at the parsonage, and felt agreeably, at least by one member of the family, almost immediately after his return to parliament. Dawson's behaviour in the affair of the police was so very handsome, that it is a pleasure to record it. In the first place he addressed an elaborate letter to the Chief Secretary, and represented to him that, though the peace of the country about Redcross was not disturbed, or in immediate danger, yet that circumstances had happened well calculated to alarm the family of a clergyman living in a wild and remote place in the mountains. This effect, he added, had unfortunately been produced in the present instance; the wife of the clergyman, "a most amiable and highly-accomplished lady" (so Mr. Dawson painted her), was an invalid, and a state of apprehension was not merely dangerous to her health, but to her life; in short, what he feared and predicted was that, unless the protection he asked was granted, the result would be that Mr. Spenser would be forced to leave the country, than which a greater calamity could not happen, inasmuch as, in losing him, they would lose not only a pious, learned, and exemplary clergyman, but a man whose services as a magistrate and a country-gentleman it was impossible to over-rate. Dawson, however, not merely wrote the letter, of which this was the substance, but he proceeded to the Castle and demanded an interview with the minister. There were circumstances connected with this first act of Mr. Dudley Dawson in his parliamentary character which incline us to describe it in some little detail.

He excited not a little attention as he swaggered one day about five o'clock into the waiting-room of the Castle, generally thronged about that hour with officials having appointments on business, deputations, suitors, claimants, expectants, political quacks hawking their sovereign remedies for all manner of public disorders and social evils, news-mongers, outrage-

mongers, vote-mongers, pamphleteers (dirty fellows, some of them in more ways than one), reporters, messengers, loungers, tattlers, idlers, and spectators. It was capital to overhear the different little groups into which the assemblage was divided whispering together, and mutually despising and abusing one another as hirelings, place-hunters, and Castle-hacks. Mr. Trundle was there, with his address to the Crown, and enormous chart of Loch Swilly, determined to see the Chief Secretary, who, upon his part, was equally determined not to see Mr. Trundle. Mr. Fosberry was there also, as great a bore in his way as Trundle, with his pockets full of samples of all kinds of guano, liquid and solid. He perfumed the ante-room in not the most agreeable way.

Mr. Trundle was acquainted with Dawson, and running up to him, congratulated him on his entrance into parliament, begged his signature to the address (forgetting that Dawson had signed it before), and desired at the same time to know whether the world had ever produced such another booby as Mr. Fosberry? At the very same moment Mr. Fosberry was regaling with one of his phials of guano the nostrils of a group of barristers of six years' standing (in chace probably of a vacant chairmanship), and expressing himself most contemptuously of Mr. Trundle and Loch Swilly. A well-known, clever, and popular attorney, Tom Conolly by name, was there amongst the rest, having some little business of his own to transact, and beguiling the time before his interview with poignant jests and humorous anecdotes, keeping a large circle in fits of laughter. Conolly was the shrewdest, cleverest, pleasantest, jolliest limb of the law that ever the sweet south, whence he came (and which alone could have produced him), contributed to the hall of the Four-Courts. He had fun enough to make a dozen funny fellows, and he knew more law than all the place-hunting barristers put together. His electioneering talents were matchless; craft, daring, good-humour, with a strong voluble court-house elocution; a Machiavelli in the committee-room, a Wilkes on the hustings. His broad round face was as full of sensible drollery as the part of one of Shakspeare's clowns. It was intensely Irish; its music, if faces are musical, played "Patrick's day," or "the Boys of Kilkenny," audibly. He looked comedy and he spoke farce, the comedy Goldsmith's, the farce O'Keefe's. His lips quivered with mirth, and he had an eye for the hole in every man's coat, or could pick one at his pleasure.

And comedy there was strewn thickly about him; nobodies affecting to be somebodies; people whom nobody knew pretending to know everybody; fellows taking airs of independence, who were ready the next moment to clean the secretary's shoes, if ordered to do so; men pretending to the most conscientious and exalted patriotism, yet having no other business there, but to solicit remuneration for their votes at an election. Some came to ask anything; some to ask everything; some to ask nothing, but only to make it known that something would be extremely acceptable. One declared that he cared not a fig for reward himself, but his friends would never let him rest until he preferred his claims; another thought it his duty to offer his services where he felt he might be of use to the public; a third abhorred the idea of office, but he had a sincere regard for the Whigs, and would accept any little post with a thousand a year, just to oblige them.

Then to hear some men talk of what they had done, and what they were doing, you would have concluded that they bore the whole weight of affairs on their own shoulders, and that viceroys and secretaries did nothing but give

inners. There was one man there who had been the prime mover in very event of importance which had taken place for a quarter of a century. He had actually done nine things out of ten, and what he had not actually lone he had suggested, or advised. No matter who thundered, every clap ras his; he had documents in his pocket to prove it. Then the degree of ntimacy that subsisted between some of the shabbiest people present and he heads of the government was astonishing. One of the hack writers was vidently the bosom-friend of the Lord Lieutenant, for he never called him nything but Anglesea, just as if he had been a marquis himself, instead of eing little above the rank of a printer's devil. There was incessant ring-ng of bells, the Chief Secretary's bell, the Under-Secretary's bell, and other ells, which kept such a jangling as was never before heard, except in a Flemish town, or in Mr. Spenser's house, when his wife was hysterical. Tom Conolly pretended that he knew by the bells what the result of each interview was. If a bell rang sharply and waspishly, the last person introduced was no favourite; the Secretary was provoked by his application, and impatient to get rid of him. If it rang steadily, and not immediately after the bowing out, an impression had been produced, and the claim was worth consideration. All this time the messengers and junior clerks were bustling to and fro, some with red boxes, some with black, some with bundles of papers, some taking cards and letters from those in waiting, and promising to hand them in at the very first opportunity. Dawson arrested one of the messengers, and said, in an authoritative tone, that he wanted to see Lord ——.

"Impossible, sir, to-day," said the ready fellow.

Dawson blazed up, and presenting his card, ordered the messenger to hand it instantly to the Chief Secretary; adding, so that the whole anteroom heard him—"I'm a member of parliament."

Everybody looked at the self-advertised legislator, and Conolly, who was acquainted with every thing and everybody, soon made it known who Dawson was, telling stories of his father and grandfather, and the Dawson nose, which forced his audience to hold their sides.

Dawson's card was handed in; the messenger reappeared, but, to the astonishment of everybody, the person summoned to have his audience was Mr. Fosberry. Triumphant at being so promptly admitted, he snatched one of his phials of guano from the hand of one of the barristers, and in doing so spilled half the contents upon the floor of the apartment, the smell of which was now vile enough to stifle a sanitary commissioner.

Every one held his nose but Mr. Trundle, who thought of nothing but the iniquity of the great man in receiving Fosberry before himself.

"This is enough," he muttered audibly, "to make a man a repealer. Here am I, having most important business,—no less than the improvement of Ireland,—kept waiting for two hours, and that booby, Fosberry, gets an audience before me."

"Lord ——— doesn't know who you are, Trundle, or he wouldn't keep you waiting a moment," said Tom Conolly, winking at his friends.

"I must say," said an elderly gentleman, with a sour face and a querulous voice, in another group, "there is great inconvenience in this system of sending us over young English lords, who know no more about people in this country than they do of the Cherokee Indians; only think of Lord ——— having been more than a year in Ireland, and yet it was only the other day he was aware of the fact that I have a son in the Church."

"His lordship ought to be impeached," said Conolly, *sotto voce*.

Now a bell rang petulantly.

"That's Stanley's," said the dirty pamphleteer, to show his intimacy with the noble lord who then held the agreeable office of Chief Secretary of Ireland.

"A short interview that," said one of the barristers.

"Short but not *sweet*," said the waggish solicitor.

At the same moment the messenger came up and said,

"Now, Mr. Dawson, this way."

Dawson swaggered out of the ante-room, as he had swaggered into it; with difficulty avoided collision with Mr. Fosberry, who appeared to have been almost kicked out; and in a moment was ushered into the presence of Lord ——. Scarcely rising from his chair, the Secretary made a supercilious inclination of his head, as he motioned Dudley to a seat which was placed on the opposite side of the table, and between it and the door.

The Secretary had seen some bad specimens of popular representatives, but he thought the gentleman now before him was the sorriest he had yet seen. Dawson wriggled on his chair as usual, endeavouring to assume a parliamentary look and tone, for it is one of the characteristics of such men to think there is a particular way of looking and speaking for every rank and situation of life. They are always acting, and never act well.

Dawson's business surprised the Secretary not a little. He expected to be solicited for a place in the Excise for an independent elector, or a colonial appointment for a brother, or a cousin, and he was agreeably disappointed when the application proved to be one on behalf of a clergyman, for his lordship had taken the clergy under his special protection, and indeed was accused of showing an undue partiality to the Church.

"The case you have stated, Mr. Dawson," he said, "is a strong one certainly; and if such is the state of the clergymen of the Established Church and their families in those parts of the country which are comparatively tranquil, what must be their condition in the actually disturbed districts? I trust you and your friends will seriously reflect upon it."

Here a messenger entered, and said that the Lord-Lieutenant desired to see Lord —— for a moment. His lordship rose, excused himself to Dawson, and saying he would return in a few minutes, left the room.

Dawson was not idle during the Secretary's absence. He looked over several of his lordship's papers, with the feeling that an honest government can have no wish to conceal any part of its conduct; then he examined the traces left upon some blotting-paper with that sort of appetite for truth which despises or neglects no source of information; and he was beginning to amuse himself with the scraps of a torn letter, just trying if he could arrange them in their original order and position (like a Chinese puzzle), when the minister re-appeared. Dawson's gentlemanlike occupation would have been discovered, if he had dropped the fragments, so he crumpled them up and put them in his pocket.

"Mr. Dawson," said the Secretary, without sitting down, "I was sorry to be under the necessity of refusing Mr. Spenser's application for a military force—indeed, he wanted some pieces of cannon, which was quite out of the question—but, to the extent of a small detachment of police, I have no objection to comply with his wishes and yours. As long as I hold office, the clergy shall be protected, and whenever you have any favour to ask on their behalf I shall be always happy to see you either here or in London."

As he made this speech, he bowed the member out of the room as adroitly as if he had studied the rules Mr. Taylor gives in his "Statesman" for putting an abrupt end to official conferences.

When Dawson passed through the waiting-room again, it was less crowded than before. The droll solicitor had departed, and so had the least hopeful of the briefless barristers; but the sour old man with the son in the Church was standing his ground still, and so was poor Mr. Trundle, who might as well have been seeking a personal interview with the Ottoman Porte.

Leaving the Castle, Dawson proceeded instantly to the office of a newspaper, with the editor of which he was intimate, and procured the insertion of a short paragraph to the effect that "Dudley Dawson, Esq., M.P. for Rottenham, transacted business to-day with the Chief Secretary." He then paraded the principal streets for half an hour, with a cigar in his mouth, in company with two more legislators of the same stamp; after which he dined with Bob Sharkey, who called him his "honourable friend" at least a hundred times in the course of the evening.

CHAPTER XLIII.

CUPID AMONGST THE CONSTABLES.

"Even as one heat another heat expels,
Or as one nail by strength drives out another,
So the remembrance of my former love
Is by a newer object quite forgotten."
THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA.

THE police party which, in consequence of Mr. Dawson's exertions at headquarters, were sent to the rectory to garrison it against dangers which were purely imaginary, consisted (as we have seen) of a chief constable, and three sub-constables, all respectable men, and one of them a particularly good-looking young fellow, whose language, as well as whose features, intimated that his birth and education were above his position in life. The name of this young man was Edward Peacock; he was tall, his figure was good, he wore a private's dress in an officer-like manner, and in short the coarse cloth in his coat did not altogether conceal the gentleman. The fact was that he was a younger son of a younger brother of a good family in the south of Ireland. His father, without land, capital, or profession, had committed matrimony without an extenuating circumstance; his wife was prolific, his income small; the rest may be imagined; he was only too happy to procure for his eldest son a subordinate appointment at the Castle, and his second was the handsome young sub-constable now doing holiday duty at Mr. Spenser's. This Edward Peacock had one fault—at least in a policeman it was one—he had a very susceptible heart, and was very apt to take tender impressions wherever he happened to be stationed. In truth, he would have been long ago dismissed from the force, only that he was exceedingly brave and active when not under the sway of Venus. Already he had been removed three times from quarters where his amorous temperament had involved either himself or some equally

tender-hearted damsel in embarrassments. His last scrape had been a serious one (the object of his transitory admiration having been the daughter of a gentleman of good fortune), and it had occasioned his abrupt transfer from the county of Longford to his present station, where directions had been given to his superior officer to keep a sharp eye upon him, and instantly report his first relapse into "*la belle passion.*" Peacock himself had been made sensible of the indiscretion of his conduct, and it was clear that he would never offend again—until the next time.

One of Mrs. Spenser's cravings—almost the only one she had that was innocent—was her craving for flowers. It was part of Miss M'Cracken's regular daily duty to ravage the gardens and conservatories, to gratify this passion; and she was a Tamerlane in her devastations, thinking of nothing else but how to ingratiate herself with her mistress by the enormous size of her bouquets. It happened on a certain morning, that Edward Peacock was on guard at the door of the greenhouse—guarding the geraniums and balsams, I presume, for there was nothing else to be sentinelled—when Miss M'Cracken arrived as usual with her flower-basket on her left arm, her scissors and the key of the greenhouse in her right hand, meditating havoc to every plant that was in bloom or blossom. Now Miss M'Cracken, though so crafty and servile, made decidedly a pretty flower-girl; she looked particularly smart and grisettish of a morning; and when she had no great distance to go, only about the grounds or the garden, her outdoor dress in general was a very grisettish little French cap, with gay ribbons, and a short scarlet cloak, which, over a white frock, looked very smart and distinguished. Very little attention her governesship paid the policeman as she glided demurely along, and he, upon his part, tried to be equally inattentive to her, but scarlet is a very attractive colour; it seizes the eye whether we will or not, and so it happened quite unavoidably that the eye of the young sub-constable did rest for a moment upon the pretty and piquant Lucy. A plague upon keys! They certainly hold a high place amongst the minor ills of human life. Twenty, ay a hundred times over, had Miss M'Cracken opened that glass door without the slightest difficulty; yet now the key stuck in the lock and refused to turn one way or the other. Miss M'Cracken was never very patient, and she soon grew provoked with the key, just as she would have done with one of her pupils, but still the key would not open the lock. She set down her basket and tried it with both her hands, uttering little peevish exclamations, scolding the key for stupidity and obstinacy; not loud enough, however, to be very distinctly heard by Peacock. Then she looked into the lock (and she had an eye sharp enough to pick one), lest there might be something obstructive in it—a leaf, or a snail, perhaps; but she could see nothing, and she tried the key again, but to no purpose, though she used all her strength and uttered more of her little angry sub-audible objurgations. It was full time for the policeman, therefore, to step forward to help her; it was no part of his positive duty, but it was civil, and policemen are expected to be civil to everybody.

"Allow *me* to try, ma'am," he said, advancing deferentially, and bowing to Red-Riding-Hood.

"I suppose it is not the right key," she said, scarcely looking at the person who accosted her, but presenting the key to him at the same time.

The sub-constable took it respectfully, not without an eye to the governess's rosy fingers, which peered out of her half-handed gloves. He put the key into the lock—

"Open sesame," said he, and at the first trial the glass-door flew open.

Miss M'Cracken was surprised to meet a policeman who had read the Arabian Nights, and she could not help smiling as she slightly curtsied and thanked him. It would have been civil to have asked him to step in and look at the plants, but she was in too great a hurry to fill her basket, and commenced her ravages, nipping, snipping, clipping, and whipping into her basket, everything odoriferous or gay that was not beyond or above her reach. Peacock was fond of flowers, and knew more about them than was necessary for his profession, so he could not resist the temptation of entering this palace of Flora, though not invited by the governess. However, he entered modestly, and was very careful not to follow the scarlet mantle. The scarlet mantle, however, came round to him in the course of its ravages, and surprised him gazing admiringly on a group of balsams. He retired a little, making awkward excuses, and Miss M'Cracken began to fell the delicate green stalks; but there was one which she could not come at even standing on tip-toe, and she was glad to avail herself of the aid of the tall sub-constable, who, having the scissors in his hand, not only cut her down the particular plant she longed for, but a great many other beauties also, which were far beyond the range of her arm. In fact, she never carried off such a booty before, and she could not but look thankful and ask her assistant whether he liked flowers.

"I *love* them," he answered, heightening the expression used by Miss M'Cracken. She could not but remark the improvement, nor help observing, as she took the scissors from his hand, that it was nearly as white as her own.

"You were never in a greenhouse before, I dare say," she continued, condescendingly.

He smiled and said, "Pardon me, we had a larger one than this at my father's."

Miss M'Cracken concluded that the civilised and communicative policeman was the son of a seedsman, or florist, and there was no more conversation between them, for the children came running into the garden, calling their governess with their shrill voices, and Peacock saw a man approaching at some distance who, he suspected, was the chief constable watching his movements, so that he was glad to make his retreat in time.

It so happened, however, that several mornings successively, the green coat and the red mantle met either in the garden, or the conservatory. Peacock, perhaps, thought it his duty to prevent a civil war breaking out afresh amongst the roses, or to keep the factious lilies in order; and Miss M'Cracken was not sorry to have a tall young man to help her to crop those flowers which had hitherto been safe from her depredations. But the upshot was that they knew each other better and better every day; before the end of a week the susceptible Peacock was once more over head and ears in love, and Lucy, on her part, made up her mind to receive his addresses, having at length found an admirer who was not only a handsome man, but a gentleman, with a name she fancied, and the other qualities which she considered indispensable in a husband. As to the swain's present position, it only served to throw an air of romance over his fortunes, and besides, there were precedents enough of young men, of even higher birth, compelled, by adverse circumstances, to begin their career in the lowest ranks of both civil and military service.

Meanwhile the chief constable had not been inattentive to what was going on. As Peacock had little to do but to fall in love, so his chief had

little to do but to watch his proceedings, which he did so warily, that Peacock flattered himself that for once in his life he had managed to keep his love affairs secret. One morning, after a longer colloquy than usual with his fair, he was suddenly confronted by his superior, in a retired part of the garden, whither he had repaired, either to compose a sonnet, or to indulge in a reverie. They had a short, sharp, decisive conversation.

"You seem partial to the garden," said the chief constable.

"The moss-roses are so beautiful," said Peacock, colouring like one of them.

"Humph," said the chief, "I know the sort of rose you come here every morning to look at."

"Hear me," said the young man, abashed and imploringly.

"Hear *me*, sir," said the other; "this is your third offence, and it is not only a breach of duty, but a violation of your word of honour. I shall not only report it to head-quarters, but I shall take it upon myself to act in a summary way, so far as to send you up this night to Dublin."

"Hear me, sir," said poor Peacock, earnestly.

"I will not, sir," rejoined the chief with warmth, "you shall go up to town by this night's mail, so be ready to start from Redcross in half-an-hour from the present moment." So saying, the officer turned on his heel, and the desperate Peacock went in quest of Miss M'Cracken, resolved to disobey his orders and brave all the consequences. But he had a prudent young woman to deal with, who, though she was astonished and distressed at a blow so unexpected, was far from being thrown off her centre by it. She would not hear of her lover not only flinging away his bread for the present, but ruining all his chances of promotion, and she not only advised but enjoined him to obey his commanding officer.

"I shall be dismissed," he said, ruefully.

"Better be dismissed for love, Edward, than for insubordination," said the shrewd Lucy.

"You are right, dear Lucy," said Peacock.—"Oh, if I had only a little parliamentary influence,"—he added, "all would be right soon."

A thought seemed to flash across her mind, but she said nothing, and parted with her lover on the spot, much firmer than he was, and crying very sparingly, if at all, for there never was a girl so little tearful as Lucy M'Cracken, though she was the cause of tears to others occasionally, but that, to be sure, was in the way of her profession.

Going straight up to her own little room, she sat down, and wrote a letter to the only member of parliament she knew, namely, the member for Rottenham; told him the old tale, how she had lost her heart to a friendless gentleman in disguise, and earnestly besought his interposition in the gentleman's behalf, renewing at the same time her protestations of steadfast devotion to his interests at the parsonage, and assuring him that she was resolved to remain in her present situation for another year, notwithstanding her engagement to Peacock.

Dawson was only too happy to have so fair an opportunity of confirming his hold upon Lucy. He not only exerted his own influence for Edward Peacock, but induced another member of parliament, a friend and crony of his, to work for him too. Day after day they besieged the Castle, until their faces were as familiar as that of the state porter. The job was not an enormous one, but a job it was, and of course it was prosecuted with zeal and assiduity. Had Peacock done some signal public service, and not had two members of parliament to back him, the Secretary would probably

have never heard his name; as it was, he not merely escaped the unpleasant consequences which would have followed in the case of another man, but he was actually promoted for his misbehaviour in the P[illegible] a place in the Excise. As this appointment, though worth a hundred a-year, and one that a gentleman might becomingly hold, involved residence in Dublin, the amorous simpleton grumbled exceedingly at the arrangement which removed him to it, and wrote a romantic epistle to his Lucy, full of quotations from Moore and Petrarch, about the insupportable horrors of absence, and offering, of course, to fling office and salary to the winds, and live with her in a cottage, a grotto, or a tent. Not a girl in Christendom had less of such nonsense about her than the young woman to whom all this sentimental stuff was addressed. Lucy had no notion of living in tents or grottos, nor indeed had her lover any very serious thoughts of it either. In fact, he had already made similar Arcadian propositions to several fair maidens, one or two of whom were silly enough to have embraced them, had things been suffered to go to such a length. Miss M'Cracken thought him very simple, and would have told him so, had she thought it prudent. She was overjoyed at the success of Mr. Dawson's kind offices, congratulated her lover in the tenderest manner on his good fortune, convincing him that he was a lucky fellow, while at the same time she studiously kept the flame burning, which made him feel that his lot could never be completely blessed until she was at his side to share his prosperity and continue to promote it. In fact, though Lucy was not much alive to the horrors of absence, she was fully conscious of its dangers. She had got some little inklings of her Edward's past career in love, and she soon became fully as anxious to join him in Dublin as he was to join her in the country. The difference was, that she was a girl of business, and he was a youth of sentiment. The policy of following her lover as soon as possible no sooner impressed itself upon her, than she cast about in her ingenious mind for the practical means of accomplishing it. To resign her situation would have been the simplest course of all, but that would have been imprudent in two ways, involving both the loss of another year's salary, which she was bent on securing, and the abandonment of a position in which she might fairly hope to turn Dawson's interest to still better advantage. In this difficulty it occurred to her to make more effectual use of her mistress's nerves than she had yet done, and by a bold stroke accomplish the long-desired object of the migration of the family.

CHAPTER XLIV.

DAWSON'S SECRET JOURNEY TO REDCROSS.

"There is no secrecy comparable to celerity, like the motion of a bullet in the air, which flieth so swift as it outruns the eye." BACON.

WHEN Dawson had established his claims on the friendship of Miss M'Cracken, in the politic manner related in the foregoing chapter, he began to turn in his mind in what way he could make her gratitude serviceable to his own objects. Indeed, he did not rely on her gratitude altogether, and took care therefore to represent what he had already done for Peacock as but a trifle

compared with what he might hereafter be able to do for him. For it is the well-known way of the world to be more influenced by favours expected than favours received; at least, it was the way of Miss M'Cracken.

Upon the whole, Dawson thought it would be wise to have a personal interview with Lucy as soon as possible; matters of delicacy are sometimes managed so much better, and with so much less hazard, by conversation than in writing. Another matter, too, required immediate looking after in the country. The busts were missing amongst the property transported to London, and he was not so anxious on account of their intrinsic value, as of the risk of detection to which they might expose him, were they to fall into the hands of suspicious or inquisitive people. Actuated by these two motives, he made a rapid and secret journey to Redcross; arrived at the village, while all the Hoggs and M'Swynes were immersed in slumber; and by the light of the stars and the waning moon, being well acquainted with the country, walked alone across the shadowy hills in the direction of the rectory.

Had he been an innocent man, how the freshness, the intense quiet, the balm and the cool of that romantic walk at that spiritual hour would have charmed him! Nature does not reveal herself to men like Dawson. The first heraldic streaks of day were just visible in the orient as he gained the summit of the ridge, commanding the earliest glimpse of the loch, and the country on its further side.

"Jocund day
Stood tip-toe on the misty mountain-top."

An upper sea of fleecy vapour hung over the waters of the fiorde; and the hills above the still and sequestered parsonage had the aspect of an island emerging from this silvery ocean, the mansion itself being as yet only dimly visible. As he descended towards the loch, the haze grew thinner and thinner; and the eastern tints brighter, until at length, suddenly as a bright arrow darts from the string, an horizontal ray of the most glorious crimson smote the summits of the clump of pines on the rocky headland to the right, and proclaimed the day.

Gorgeous miracle it is! In the union of repose with splendour, what sign and wonder in all the range of nature can compare with the sun's rising? How sweet, yet how stupendous; its beauty how majestic, its magnificence how calm! The commonest, yet royalest and solemnest of all spectacles, a prodigy wrought in the heavens every morning, oldest and newest of celestial glories; the Advent and Apocalypse of Light. The powers of darkness are defeated, the spirits of life and health resume their empire, a general song—the carol of birds, the strains of poets, the hymn of early pilgrims—greets the renewed dispensation. Earth hails it with thousand voices, and ocean welcomes it with unnumbered smiles. Cheering, vivifying, purifying, strengthening hour; dear alike to genius and devotion, precious to virtue and to beauty.

But what cared the profligate young man, who had now all those purple mountains to himself, and seemed the only waking witness of the enchanting change that was in progress—what cared he for the loveliness that was beneath and above and round about him? As he stood, ankle deep in the rich heather, which decked his unworthy feet with pearls, a flood of rosy light bathed him, but there was no light in his breast, save the lurid glare of passion and low designs. To him, beauty was but an object of appetite, a difficulty to be evaded, or an obstacle to be overthrown.

Now he could distinctly see the picturesque abode of the Spensers, the residence of the fair, wise girl, on whom, with folly equal to his presumption, he had fixed such affections as he had. The exhalation still lingered, but it was now transparent, and gave an airy beauty to the substantial objects discerned through it. The mountain behind looked fanciful, and the irregular house, with its raiment of roses, and its pale gray wings, one of which was the library, looked speculative and dreamy, like its master's mind. A parsonage in the air it seemed, such as Mab constructs with her no materials in the visions of young divines.

The descent of the mountain-side was rapid; the boat was in its wonted receptacle; Dawson was in his lusty prime, and Mr. Woodward could scarcely have pushed across the water with greater expedition. He did not land, however, at the usual point, but higher up, in a little cove, surrounded with a wilderness of heath and wild shrubs, immediately under the pine-clad promontory, and only accessible from the land by one approach, and that so steep and so tangled that it was rarely visited by any one, and known, indeed, only to very few; but Dawson had a sort of instinctive knowledge of crypts and caverns, and all manner of solitary places. The clock of the parsonage struck four as he stepped out of the boat upon the narrow strand. He sat down on a lichened stone, and taking out his watch held it in his hand, evidently expecting the arrival of some person, or some event. A quarter of an hour elapsed and he grew impatient and began to look round about him, but he had a small horizon for circumspection, being enclosed on all sides by a wall either of rock or of wild vegetation. Presently there was a slight rustling in the heather and bushes not far from him. He looked to the right and left, but observed no motion; it might have been only a linnet or a hare; still, however, the rustling continued, and grew more audible. "She is coming," he said to himself; and at the same instant he was struck on his hat with a few small cones of the pines, and, raising his head, saw a girl, wrapped in a shawl of gray plaid, cautiously descending by the precipitous path already mentioned. She had plucked the cones, on discovering Dawson, and thrown them down upon him to advertise him of her coming.

Lucy M'Cracken was strong, agile, and daring, equal to anything that any girl of her age and size, perhaps indeed that any young woman was equal to. Dawson thought her very pretty that morning, and she certainly did look attractive enough, particularly as the consciousness that she was not where she ought to be at that hour, and in such company, made her a little fearful, and her fears gave her a touch of maidenly bashfulness, which was just the charm she lacked most. She had exchanged her red mantle for the gray shawl, probably because she was less anxious to look an Aurora in Dawson's eyes, than to pass through the rocks and woods as unnoticed as possible.

Time was precious; both seemed equally aware of it, and but few moments were wasted in civilities and compliments. Dawson's object was to gain over Lucy to his interests; Lucy's was simply to gratify and flatter Dawson. He was inordinately vain, and she was shrewd, dexterous, and insinuating. She could not, or would not, see any serious obstacle to the accomplishment of his designs upon Elizabeth Spenser. He spoke of the prejudices that existed against him.

"They are nothing but prejudices, sir, and of course they will wear out in time," said Miss M'Cracken.

"You think, then, my prospects are fair?" said Dawson.

Lucy smiled ironically.

"Fair," she said; "as if any gentleman ever stood in a better position than you do, to win any lady in the land. I grant Miss Elizabeth is handsome—if she was not, Mr. Dawson, you would not be the man to admire her—but I think even you will not say she is positively a beauty; so that why a gentleman like you should not succeed with her, or with a much greater match, is more than I can understand; to say nothing of the fact that you are her brother's bosom friend, and that only a week ago you saved her life so gallantly, at the imminent hazard of your own."

"Well, really," said Dawson, tickled by this speech; but Lucy had not finished.

"I am sure I don't know what fair prospects are, if yours are not fair," she continued earnestly; "you have the three grand recommendations of family, fortune, rank—and—and—I could mention another thing that can't but be much in your favour, Mr. Dawson, if I dared." She looked at him in a very peculiar way, and then she looked down, and played with the strings of her little black apron.

"Say all that you think—every thing that comes into your mind, my dear Lucy," said Dawson, seizing her hand.

"It was only this, sir," she answered, with admirably counterfeited modesty and reluctance, "I *do* think you such a very handsome man."

Dawson was exactly of the same opinion himself, so that he was not electrified, though greatly pleased, by the last link of Miss M'Cracken's argument. The personal hit told so well, that she tried another without a moment's interval.

"The first time I ever saw you, sir, was riding with Mr. Sydney; did any one ever tell you, sir, that you look particularly well on horseback?"

We have seen that Dawson plumed himself on his horsemanship, and indeed he rode extremely well; only that his seat was a little theatrical, in keeping with the general ostentation of his character.

It was now time for him to take his part in the conference.

"I must see her," he said, "I have never seen her since that night upon the island."

"So much the better, perhaps," said Lucy, "your sudden disappearance had a good effect, and besides, you were much better employed getting into parliament; but now that you have got such a fine feather in your cap, I do not see why you should keep in the back ground a moment longer,—though I would not advise you, sir, to do any thing too hastily."

"Mrs. Spenser is my enemy, Lucy, and the consequence is, that I am not invited here; Sydney has told me so repeatedly."

"Can you do nothing to make her your friend, Mr. Dawson? You have no notion how fond she is of getting presents—a parrot, a French watch, or any trifle of the kind would make a wonderful change—some ladies are so shocking mercenary—even such a pretty ring as that on your little finger."

"This ring is for you, Lucy," said Dawson, taking her hand again.

"Oh, Mr. Dawson!"—but she did not decline the ring, which was a small emerald, handsomely set, which he had purchased in Dublin, expressly for the corrupt purpose to which he now applied it.

"I am in hopes," he went on to say, while Lucy was admiring and even kissing the brilliant transferred to her hand, "I *am in hopes* that my exertions in the police affair will be of some little use to me."

"I [illegible] that the exertions he alluded to had already been of

the greatest service to him in the quarter alluded to, and "I am sure," she added, with all the outward signs of grateful emotion, "I ought to be thankful to you, too, Mr. Dawson, as only for you I should never have seen or known my dear Edward."

"It was not an easy job to manage, I assure you," said Dawson.

He then told her of his letter to the Chief Secretary, and lamented that he had not kept a copy, as it would not fail to impress Mrs. Spenser most favourably towards him, she was spoken of there in terms of such glowing compliment.

Lucy instantly recollected that her lover's brother held a subordinate place at the Castle, and that she had no doubt but that she could manage, through him, to procure a copy of the letter, or, indeed, even the letter itself, if it were required.

"A copy would do," said Dawson; "you could let Mrs. Spenser see it, as if it came to your hand by mere accident."

This little matter was easily settled; but he subsequently hit upon a better mode of turning the letter in question to good account.

Dawson was most grateful to his fair friend for her zeal and ingenuity in his service.

"Rely upon it, Lucy," he said, "I will do all in my power for your Edward; I never met a young man who so captivated me on a short acquaintance; I am greatly mistaken if he is not destined to make a splendid figure in the world."

The eyes of the worldly-minded Lucy glittered. Her love was one of those adulterated varieties of the passion in which other passions, particularly avarice and ambition, are very largely mixed.

She was on the point of bringing her honourable friend to promise something specific for the advancement of Peacock, when a loud barking at no great distance threw both parties into the greatest consternation.

"Oh, dear!" exclaimed Lucy, pale as ashes, "that's Pedro's bark."

"Who is Pedro!" whispered Dawson, scarcely less agitated.

"Mr. Markham's dog; oh, what will become of me?" She paid no attention to the effect which the name of Markham had upon her companion, to whom it conveyed the fact that the young Englishmen, whom he had seen on the island, had been ever since the guests of Mr. Spenser. He moved a step aside to conceal the passion which suddenly seized him, and made him for the instant thoughtless of danger. When he turned again, the nimble Lucy was springing up the steep bank, to hide herself in the darkest thicket she could find. He naturally thought that she feared to be detected in his society under circumstances so suspicious; but the false girl had another and still stronger motive (which will be disclosed in time), for shunning all observation at that hour, and she succeeded in regaining the house and her own bed-room without any eye but that of Heaven upon her doings.

It was altogether a busy and exciting morning with her; a whim took her to school the children before breakfast, and in the course of the proceedings she detected, or fancied she detected, little Arthur Spenser in an offence which to her pure eyes was unpardonable—an aberration from the paths of truth. She corrected the child severely, and immediately after sat down to her desk, and with the rod actually before her with which she had punished deceit, wrote a letter to her lover in town, directing him to procure a surreptitious copy of Dawson's letter to the Chief Secretary. This done, she carefully arranged her hair and her dress, and went down

to breakfast, for she now breakfasted with the family, though she still dined with the children at two o'clock. Several times during the meal she thought of poor Mr. Dawson, in the little alcove under the hill, probably still besieged by Pedro. She would have carried the honourable gentleman his breakfast, if she could have done it clandestinely, but that was impossible; so she ate her own heartily, for both her mind and her body had been exercised that morning.

CHAPTER XLV.

THE THREATENING NOTICE.

"It is the nature of extreme self-lovers, that they will set a house on fire, an it were but to roast their eggs." BACON'S ESSAYS.

On the heathery verge of the picturesque point overhanging the senator's hiding-place the rector had long ago placed a semicircular bench of rough-hewn timber, affording seats for about half-a-dozen persons, and as the view from it was fine, and the ascent, by a winding path, not quite as hazardous as that of Mont Blanc or Chimborazo, it was a common thing to loiter an hour there, chatting or reading, musing or speculating. Some elegant sermons had there been imagined and partly written; much solid sense had been talked there, and much airy nothing too; there the rector and Father Magrath had often bewailed the discords which raged between two branches of the same great Christian family; there the rector and curate had often wrangled about Demosthenes and Plunket; and there had Carry and Elizabeth held many a little council of charity for the benefit and improvement of the poor of the neighbourhood, and raised many an orison for the peace and happiness of everybody round about them.

On the day in question they resorted with their books and work to this favourite haunt soon after breakfast. It was still a sombre but sweet morning; the lingering haziness of the atmosphere mitigated the solstitial heat, and beautifully softened every object by land and water. The surface of the latter was motion at rest; the wing of a sea-bird agitated it visibly. The silence was profound, save where a grasshopper or two chirped in the fern, a gull screamed as he lazily flitted over the loch, or the faintest distinguishable murmur reached the ear from the ripple of the water upon the beach beneath. Indeed, Carry had to raise her cap, and a cloud of her bright brown hair also, before she was able to catch this almost noiseless sound. Elizabeth neglected her book, but her aunt's needle was industrious, and the musical tongues were busy also. Carry's voice was remarkably decided, clear, distinct, and fluent; Elizabeth's was a liquid, loving, warbling one. They were discoursing of many things and many persons, when Mr. Spenser joined them, in extreme agitation. He held a piece of soiled paper in his hand, with some writing scrawled upon it.

"Carry, my dear," he said, sitting down beside her; but he could say no more, he was so moved and out of breath, and he placed the paper in her hands, with a gesture that showed how much he was affected by it.

It was a threatening notice, which he had found himself only a few minutes

before, posted on the old fig tree close to the door of the garden. The document ran as follows :—

"TITHES—TITHES—TITHES!

"I hereby caution the Rev. Mr. Spenser to have no more to say or to do with the tithes of the parish of Redcross, and to refund what he has received for the six months last past. Any person who pays tithes to him, or to any other parson whatsoever, will meet a villain's fate, which is sharp and sudden death; so let them mark and digest the consequence. If Mr. Spenser (or any others) violates my rules and regulations, I will pay him an early visit, and all the police and troops in the county will not save him. Here is the coffin prepared for extortioners and robbers of the poor.

"Given under my hand,

"Captain KILL-PROCTOR or KILL-PARSON
(as the case may be)."

Carry could not help smiling while she read this proclamation of the blood-thirsty unknown, to which a representation of a coffin was annexed, in the established form of such instruments.

"For myself," said Mr. Spenser, recovering his speech, "I do not attach as much weight as some people do to notices like this, which are so easily forged, and are often, I believe, nothing but malicious hoaxes; at the same time, it is most unfortunate that such tricks should be played just now."

"If you take my advice, Valentine," said Carry, regarding the paper contemptuously, "you will tear it in pieces this moment, throw it into the loch, and not say a word about it to a human being."

"Do, papa," cried Elizabeth, "it has all the look of a foolish forgery; destroy it, and do not give the author the satisfaction of knowing that he has even succeeded in alarming you. Of all things, do not let mamma hear of it."

"Ah!" said the rector, "the mischief I fear is done—she has heard of it already."

"Oh, Valentine!" exclaimed Carry, about to reproach him with having communicated such a thing to his wife, of all people in the world, but he had his defence ready; it appeared that Rebecca was just coming out of the garden at the moment, and had been present when he and George Markham discovered and took down the notice.

"It can't be helped, then," said Mrs. Woodward; "we must only do the best we can under the circumstances, and try to trace the writer, who I dare say has as little notion of shooting either a proctor or a parson as I have myself."

Mr. Spenser wished Carry to accompany him back to the house. She did so, and left Elizabeth with no other society but her book and her maidenly meditations. She had not enjoyed these excellent companions many minutes when she heard a step close to her, and concluded it was either her father or her aunt returned;—imagine her astonishment and dismay when she beheld Dawson!

He was equally unprepared to meet Elizabeth, and far more embarrassed than she was, as he had no good excuse to give for so abrupt an appearance in her presence. He had merely clambered up the height to gain a path by which he knew he could in all probability effect his retreat in safety. It was necessary to speak, but not so easy to say anything apropos under the circumstances. His dress was disordered by travel, and his extreme

confusion of manner, impressed her with the notion that he was intoxicated. He began by stammering out something to the effect that he was delighted to find she had not seriously suffered by the late accident, and made a number of inconsistent and needless apologies for being so late in waiting upon her after it.

"Oh, no, Mr. Dawson," said Elizabeth, tremulously, "you have no apologies to make; it is I that have cause to regret not having had an earlier opportunity of thanking you, as indeed I do, most sincerely."

"Don't thank me, Miss Spencer," he replied; "what I did is not worth your thinking of; all I hope is, that you don't consider me utterly unworthy of the honour I had on that occasion."

"Indeed, sir," replied Elizabeth, still more nervously, "I hope I feel everything that I ought towards a gentleman who so nobly hazarded his life for mine."

"Who would willingly have sacrificed it," interrupted Dawson, vehemently, and sitting down close to her.

"I am, indeed, very grateful," she said, her voice husky with agitation, and with difficulty preventing herself from withdrawing to a distance from him.

"Don't say grateful, charming Miss Spenser," said Dawson, in a low deep voice, passionate, more than tender.

Elizabeth affected not to hear, and tremblingly inquired, whether he had seen her father or her brother.

"No," he replied, "I have only this moment arrived in the country; I am on my way to Castle Dawson;—I came here to see you, and nobody but you."

"Me, sir!" said Elizabeth, recovering a little self-possession, as the occasion for it increased.

"You," said Dawson, gazing at her,—"to tell you that I admire you—that I adore you."

"Oh, Mr. Dawson!" said Elizabeth, starting up amazed and indignant—"I cannot listen to this—excuse me, I must return to the house."

"Not until I tell you how I love you!" cried Dawson, attempting to seize her hand, which she nimbly withdrew, her face glowing with resentment, while her frame quivered with alarm.

"Not until I tell you that I love you, that I have long loved you, that I will never cease to love and adore you," he pursued, violently, now succeeding in holding her, which he did, however, but for an instant, for she was robust as well as fair, and she liberated herself with a single strong effort, and fled down the hill, not even keeping the path, but rushing like a fawn through the copse and heather. She never ceased to run until she gained the skirts of the lawn, where she met Carry Woodward, and almost fainted in her arms. Carry and Elizabeth agreed, after a long consultation, to communicate what had taken place to the rector himself only; they feared to let Sydney know that his dangerous friend was again in the country; but it was indispensable that Mr. Spenser should write to Dawson without delay, to complain of his unwarrantable intrusion (particularly in so clandestine a manner), on the privacy of his glebe and his family, and acquaint him, unambiguously, with the utter hopelessness of his design to gain the affections of his daughter.

The rector was, indeed, as much incensed at Dawson's conduct, when it was related to him by his sister, as it was in his placid nature to be incensed at anything; but the letter he wrote at Carry's suggestion (unfortunately

not her dictation) was far below the mark, both in vigour and precision. It was not much to be wondered at. The device of the threatening notice had succeeded only too completely. Mrs. Spenser had already extorted a promise from him that he would remove to Dublin with the least possible delay. There was an end of his pastoral life, an end of his rural happiness; all the many ties of duty, affection, taste, benevolence, love of ease, love of retirement, love of nature, which bound him to his picturesque parish, and simple, loyal, attached parishioners, were to be torn asunder, and the gentle-natured man poignantly felt it.

Several hours elapsed before he could muster up the courage to confess to his sister and daughters the decision to which he had come. The grief of Elizabeth was extreme. That of Aunt Carry was mingled with just indignation at her brother's deplorable weakness, and her sister-in-law's enormous selfishness. But no one in the family seemed to feel so much on the occasion as Lucy M'Cracken, for whom it is hoped the reader will feel the due degree of pity, if he does not harbour suspicion that she had a hand in the threatening notice. She was confident she never could live in Dublin; the happiest days of her life had been spent in the Irish highlands. Mrs. Spenser began by trying to console her, and ended by scolding and telling her sharply, that if she wanted to continue in the country she must look out for another nursery to govern. Then Lucy commanded her feelings, and went resignedly to pack her trunk.

BOOK IX.

CHAPTER XLVI.

THE PARSONAGE DESERTED.

"The place is now forsaken;
The house is dark and silent; on the threshold
Professors soon shall botanise, and within
Arachne weave unharmed her subtle web."

NEW PLAY.

THE curate was at Redcross on some business of his sacred calling, when the vexatious incident took place which has just been recorded. On the previous evening he had taken his leave of Markham and Vivyan, who were only waiting for a favourable wind to weigh anchor. Markham returned his cordial squeeze with one of nearly equal power. But Vivyan's more delicate hand long retained the sense of the lusty clergyman's too strenuous adieu.

Carry was not sorry that her husband was absent, when the threatening notice, like the fall of a bomb-shell, threw the whole household into confusion. Had he been at the parsonage at the time, he would probably have made confusion worse confounded, he was so much in the habit, not only of speaking the truth upon all occasions, but laying it on in the most energetic and unsparing manner.

The Circe sailed. The parting of lovers has been described so often, both in prose and rhyme, that we may safely leave the reader to imagine the parting-scene between Elizabeth Spenser and Frank Vivyan. But mingled with the grief of separation were tender solicitudes for others and concern for objects beyond themselves. Vivyan had become strongly attached to Mr. Spenser, and felt acutely for the distress in which he saw that he was involved by seemingly uncontrollable circumstances. Elizabeth not only felt for her father, but for her brother still more deeply. He anxiety for Sydney, indeed, had been extreme, ever since the change in Vivyan's fortunes (by preventing his return to Cambridge) had deprived her brother of the anticipated advantages of such a friend to introduce him to the University, and protect him from corrupting associations within its dangerous precincts. In all the ardour of her love for Vivyan, this tender care for Sydney never ceased to occupy her mind; and gladly would she have seen the plan of sending him to England over-ruled, and the advice of her uncle followed. But it was too late. Sydney was now bent upon going to Cambridge, and with a degree of eagerness which astonished while it could not but please his family, to whom his principal reasons for wishing himself far removed were totally unknown. At the same time, it was not without regret he parted with Frank Vivyan, whose ascendency over him had been steadily increasing from the beginning of their acquaintance. Sydney embraced him affectionately before he sailed, and Elizabeth felt (as she witnessed their farewell) how completely it was in Vivyan

power to reform him completely, and how unfortunate it was that their intercourse was broken off thus prematurely. Carry Woodward had precisely the same feelings, and the last thing she said, as maternally she took leave of Frank, suffering him to kiss her mellow cheek, was that Elizabeth would feel his departure most, but that Sydney would be the greatest loser by it.

All that the amiable Vivyan could do for the brother of his betrothed he did with more than the zeal of friendship; he left a warm letter of introduction behind him to Mr. Peters, his own tutor, and a few other letters of judicious recommendation to such of his college acquaintances as he knew would make safe companions, and who he thought would, out of friendship for himself, tolerate Sydney's deficiencies in manners and refinement.

The Circe sailed. The rector was called away to his wife's chamber, while in the act of shaking hands with Markham; but Elizabeth, Mrs. Woodward, and Sydney, never left the little quay until the last inch of canvas disappeared, where the bend of the fiorde abruptly terminated the prospect seaward.

Elizabeth shed a few tears, and Carry wiped them away, as she led her back to the house, speaking as comfortably as she could; and it was a hard task to speak so, for she was heavy at heart herself, and felt as if a long course of life's sunshine was about to be succeeded by a period of gloom and difficulty.

Elizabeth went to her room. It was still daylight. Carry called Billy Pitt, and directed him to go to the stables and order the black mare to be saddled, as well as his cousin Elizabeth's pony; to have both put on board the boat, and to equip himself also without delay, as she intended to ride home that evening. Billy Pitt was enchanted at the novelty of being his mother's escort and champion upon an equestrian expedition; and it never once occurred to him, when they were both mounted, after crossing the water, how much he resembled Tom Thumb squiring the princess Glumdalca. At a marvellous pace, for both the mare and her burthen, the journey was accomplished before the end of twilight.

The curate was engaged in supplying his pigs with clean straw, when his wife and his son trotted up to the gate, and he was not slow to divine that something extraordinary must have happened at the rectory. When he learned what it was, no words can express either the agitation of his mind, or the commotion of his frame. Carry never saw him so moved before, not even when the Duke of Wellington struck to Mr. O'Connell. He was somewhat calmer when he and she were together once more in his untidy study, but it was the mighty swell of the sea on the day after a hurricane, and quite alarming enough to witness.

"A worthy shepherd," he cried, "to abandon his flock in this fashion, on the very first cry of wolf. But Val was always a coward; a cowardly father, a cowardly husband, and now he is going to show himself a cowardly shepherd, and run away from his sheep. Cowed by a slip of paper pinned to a fig-tree! I would as soon be cowed by that spider there on the ceiling. I should like to see Val with a grove of pikes at his throat, as I saw my own father in the '98 (I was not half as big as Billy at the time), since a scratch of a pen makes a woman of him. A man might as well be a woman at once as be the slave of a woman's fears and vagaries. Down, puss, down, down." The great black cat was preparing to spring on his knee, as if it desired to mollify him. "Carry, Carry, much as I scorn a

dastard in a red coat, I hold a dastard in a black one to be twice as contemptible."

"Ten times," responded his wife, bitterly, and pacing up and down the study as rapidly as she could with the encumbrance of her riding-dress. She was almost as excited as her husband, though thinking more of the domestic unhappiness involved in her brother's determination, than of its effects upon the parish.

"It all comes of uxoriousness," continued the curate, as if summing up his invective, and still repelling the advances of the corpulent black cat.

"It comes of having married a silly, selfish woman," said Mrs. Woodward; "and it comes of cherishing a viper in the bosom of his family."

Carry then related Mr. Dawson's strange apparition and behaviour at the parsonage that morning; she could not but suspect that there was some mysterious alliance between Miss M'Cracken and that gentleman, particularly as Elizabeth was decidedly of opinion, from the negligence of his dress, that his scene with her was not a premeditated one.

For the first time in his life Hercules made no apology for Dawson; his tenderness for his niece was extreme, and never did any man abhor more intensely than he did duplicity and dark practices of all kinds.

"I don't understand," he said, after some moments of grim silence, "how Dawson could possibly have passed through Redcross without my knowledge; I'll send Peter down to the inn to inquire whether he arrived by the night-coach."

Peter brought word that Mr. Dawson had not been seen in the country for several weeks, and that, to the best of the innkeeper's belief, the honourable member for Rottenham was then in Dublin. The curate was Mr. Dawson's friend no longer.

Now there commenced a ferment not commonly witnessed in a rural parish, and one of the singular features of it was the triple alliance of a Catholic priest, a Presbyterian minister, and a clergyman of the Established Church. Rare, in Ireland at least, was such a confederacy; but people of all persuasions were afflicted at the thought of losing Mr. Spenser, and Hercules had no difficulty whatsoever in rousing a spirit of determined opposition to his brother-in-law's cowardly resolve. He, who had all his life been railing at agitators, and denouncing aggregate meetings, was now a flaming agitator himself; and convened so vast an assemblage of the inhabitants of the parish that the meeting was held in the church-yard, no building in the town being large enough for the purpose. The chair (placed on the summit of a heap of tombs), was taken by Father Magrath; resolutions, prefaced by enthusiastic speeches, were unanimously passed expressive of the most devoted attachment to Mr. Spenser, and declaring the determination of men of all sects and parties to support and protect him; a subscription was entered into and a reward offered for the discovery of the writer of the notice, which was ascribed with one accord either to private malice or wanton mischief; and, finally, an address to the rector was voted, which Father Magrath and the Presbyterian divine undertook to prepare between them.

Mr. Spenser would have prevented all these proceedings, particularly the address, if it had been in his power; but the parochial feeling was too strong, and the expression of it placed the rector in a difficult position; so much so that Hercules was not without hope at one moment that his brother-in-law would return to his senses, take the true view of his duty and retract the rash vow he had made to his wife.

"I am miserable, Hercules," said the rector, looking very unhappy indeed, and walking up and down his library, with his clasped hands sometimes behind and sometimes before him. A draft of the address lay on the table, having being sent to him before presentation, to enable him to prepare his answer.

"To be weak is to be miserable," said the vigorous curate, quoting the speech of one of Milton's angels.

"I have *promised* her, Hercules," said Mr. Spenser, with melancholy emphasis on the word "promised."

"You are not the first man who has made a hasty promise," said Hercules; "but you know, Val, as well as I do, that in case of a foolish or a wrong engagement the moral obligation is to break and not to keep it."

"I'll go up to her," said the distracted rector, passing his hand over his pale and throbbing temples.

He went, and Hercules remained in the library, striding and straggling about, to the imminent danger of the busts, as usual. In about ten minutes the rector came down again, and entering the room with an excitement and vehemence such as he rarely exhibited, slapped the table with his hand, and exclaimed—

"It's her health, Hercules, it's her health—her health makes it indispensable.'"

Hercules saw that all was over, and rushed out of the library without uttering a word. Never did he walk at such a pace as he did back to Redcross that evening; never did he look so truculent and unlike a minister of the gospel of peace.

Within a fortnight from that date the parsonage was deserted. The rector's library was consigned to the spiders, and there was nobody left to feed Elizabeth's robins, or talk playful politics with the echo from the hills.

CHAPTER XLVII.

THE SPENSERS IN TOWN.

"Matto in testa, Savio in bocca."
ITALIAN PROVERB.

THE Spensers passed the autumn at a favourite watering-place in the neighbourhood of Dublin. The beginning of winter found them in the capital, tenants of a handsome house in one of the principal squares, looking at straight dull rows of brick houses, instead of picturesque mountain chains; the lazy Liffey and shrivelled Dodder in place of the foaming streams of Tyrconnell; miry streets for the clean, fresh elastic heather, and the smoked sparrows of the city, for the white-winged seabirds of the coast, or the broad-pinioned eagles of the hills.

Sydney had gone to Cambridge almost immediately after the removal of his family from Redcross. His father, with his characteristic negligence of every thing that did not immediately press, or pinch him, after one admirable letter, in which he laid down a course of study such as an Aristotle might have prescribed to an Alexander, soon dismissed him almost entirely from his thoughts. Elizabeth, however, wrote to him

frequently, and when her letters either remained unanswered, or were hurriedly and curtly replied to, she amiably ascribed it to the intensity of her brother's application to mathematics.

However, she had a correspondent in Spain, who was not chargeable with neglecting her letters, or answering them too briefly.

Vivyan was forced to protract his absence far beyond the period within which he had hoped to conclude his business. The affairs of his deceased friend were involved in no small degree of complication between the law and the lawyers of two nations, and Frank had occasion to remark that all he had heard of the romance of Spain was certainly borne out by his personal experience of the jurisprudence of that country. A voluminous correspondence passed between him and Elizabeth, and perhaps some of the letters were as prolix as the pleadings of any court of justice in the world.

The frivolous and selfish Mrs. Spenser was really reduced in strength when she arrived in town. The laudanum system was rapidly turning imaginary disorders into actual ones, and she suffered, besides, considerably by the fatigues of the journey. The novelty, however, of a town-house, and the excitement of new faces and acquaintances, produced a salutary re-action, and for some short time she was a marvellously amiable patient, her bed-room crowded with doctors, and her boudoir with fashionable gossips, alternately a college of physicians and a school for scandal. Some of the doctors, indeed, were first-rate gossips themselves, and probably did her as much good by their talk as by their tonics. They gave her old complaints new names, they favoured her with several new disorders, consulted her palate as much as her pulse, and operated occasionally on her risible muscles.

Too much of the rector's money, more than he could afford, went in doctor's fees; but he never complained, and often, indeed, declared that he found the leading members of the faculty anything but grasping. Some, when they learned that he was a beneficed clergymen, driven from the country by the league against tithes, had too much good feeling to conspire with Captain Rock to fleece him. Others found in Mr. Spenser a most agreeable accession to Dublin society; they enjoyed his acute and pleasant conversation, and declined to have their friendly visits counted and enumerated as medical calls. Those who were convivial were delighted to have a new man at their dinners, with such a fund as the rector possessed of the cleverest table-talk, for in that Mr. Spenser had few equals. He missed his library chiefly, and used to say that, like Prospero, he was "a sot without his books." Though his social success in Dublin was complete, there was not much society that he greatly relished; and he could not but observe that he was much more prized and courted as a clergyman of rank, than for his wit or his literary eminence. There was also a certain narrowness and timidity about the Dublin circles which struck him as distinguishing society there remarkably from society in London. He thought he never saw people so absurdly afraid of ridicule, and so apt to suspect literary men of dealing in small satire and anonymous personalities, meannesses from which such men are particularly free. As Mr. Spenser (when he did indulge his humour) never intended to wound individuals, he was hurt at having the design imputed to him; but, indeed, he was accused of lampooning people of whose very existence he was ignorant until their preposterous charges reached his ear. Of course he never condescended to notice either such accusations or such

accusers; he merely remarked in general, that it was discreet to be dull in provincial capitals.

In one of his letters to Carry Woodward he observed, speaking on this subject, that "small satire is like small cutlery, and those who use such weapons are more likely to wound themselves than seriously hurt others. Satire ought to be a sword and not a penknife."

Very soon after his arrival at the seat of government, he was appointed, through his wife's little ambitious intrigues, one of the Lord-Lieutenant's chaplains, an honour he was not solicitous of; it gave him some trouble and no emolument; he had to preach for the mimic court, and dine at trumpet-dinners, and unfortunately the dinners were not as concise as his sermons.

"I am not fond of a diffuse dinner any more than of a diffuse discourse; I like to dine *laconically*, as Marshal Turenne used to say," he remarked one day, talking in the street to his friend Sir Florus Bloomfield, an eminent surgeon and accomplished member not only of his profession, but of society.

"Dine with me in that fashion to-morrow at seven," said the courtly baronet, and cantered away to perform one of his brilliant operations. Sir Florus did everything brilliantly, lectured, operated, talked, dressed, and rode. Nay, he sometimes hunted, and even rode a steeple-chase, but that was perhaps to encourage and give éclat to amusements, of which the members of the surgical profession are the natural and proper patrons. At least Mr. Spenser used to say so.

The dinner at Sir Florus's proved far more Attic than Laconic. Several distinguished guests had been invited to meet the rector, who made on that day some valuable additions to his list of friends. Two men particularly pleased him. The first was a lawyer by profession, a demagogue by necessity, and a poet and orator by nature; the warmest of friends, the most attractive of companions; a mind all fancy and fire; a heart all frankness and good-nature; Catholic in genius as in creed. The fortunes of his country had determined his career. He started at a time when it was patriotic to be turbulent. But his was a turbulence embellished by wit and illumined by eloquence; born of just discontent, and extinguished by the achievement of its high objects. He generously coveted, and fairly won, the first privileges and honours of the constitution; forced his way into parliament to adorn, not to shake the empire; serving Ireland best by making Irish talents useful, and Irish worth conspicuous in his person.

The other was Sir Charles Freeman, a physician, profoundly versed in the science and learning of his humane profession, though he did not prosecute it as a source of income. His wit resembled Mr. Spenser's, at once playful and scholar-like, drawn from every sparkling fount in ancient or modern letters. Probably no man in his time had hived up so much elegant and curious knowledge, or had his infinite reading so much at command. With French literature he was as familiar as the best educated Frenchman, and in Greek learning he was altogether unrivalled. He was an equally acute and good-natured observer of manners; a brilliant essayist, and a politician whose liberality was not adhesion to party, but a deduction from his studies, and a confidence in moral truth. Yet his enlightenment and his wit were but a small part of his value; he was the humanest, simplest, and worthiest of men, though his virtues, no more than his talents, won for him in Ireland the consideration they deserved.

The jealousies and bigotries were too strong for him. He required another sphere, a higher and wider stage, and a more judicious and magnanimous society. It was his fortune, some years after the period when Mr. Spenser made his acquaintance, to live admired and loved, and to die honoured and lamented, by the statesmen, the wits, poets, and philosophers, of the metropolis of England and the world.

The company of such men, and a few others of kindred character and genius, was delightful to the rector, and had his wife allowed him to enjoy more of it, he might easily have been reconciled to life in Dublin. But Mrs. Spenser was not less perverse in town than country, and Elizabeth could not help thinking that she made it a point to be taken ill, when her husband was invited to some particularly agreeable dinner.

In the mornings he walked or rode about a good deal with his daughters, when the weather was not too atrocious. They visited all that was sight-worthy in the city, and it took no very long time to complete the survey. There were lions enough, in the curate's sense of the word, but very few in its more popular meaning. A court without nobility, an exchange without merchants, a theatre without the drama, and a zoological garden without a wild beast. So Mr. Spenser described the Irish capital in a letter to his curate, but his wife had been troublesome in the morning, and perhaps there was more gall in his ink than usual. When she was quiet and well-behaved, he took a different view of things, and sometimes gave a very agreeable picture of life in Dublin.

CHAPTER XLVIII.

PERSECUTIONS.

"Had I been seized by a hungry lion,
I would have been a breakfast to the beast,
Rather than have false Proteus rescue me;
O heaven be judge, how I love Valentine,
Whose life's as tender to me as my soul;
And full as much (for more there cannot be),
I do detest false, perjur'd Proteus:
Therefore be gone, solicit me no more."

THE TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA.

ELIZABETH hoped, as parliament was now sitting, that Mr. Dawson would forget a subject so insignificant as herself in the cares of statesmanship and the toils of legislation; but whether it was that the talents of the gentleman were not decidedly parliamentary, or that his feelings toward Miss Spenser overpowered his sense of public duty, or that there was room enough in his great capacity for the affairs of the heart as well as those of the nation, certain it was that he spent more of his time in Dublin than was consistent with the duties he had to discharge at Westminster.

The rector had written him a sharp letter immediately after the incident of the Signal Rock, but it was not sharp enough, and it wanted that tone of decision which Mrs. Woodward would have given it, and which might

have shown Dawson once for all the utter folly of his attentions to Miss Spenser. The consequence was, that an opening was left for a letter of explanation and apology, which Mr. Spenser had the weakness to reply to in such gentle and forgiving terms that Dawson's position was rather improved than injured by the result of the whole transaction. But his success with Mrs. Spenser was still more complete. He had written, the reader will recollect, a letter to the government, in which, with the utmost indelicacy, he had introduced Mrs. Spenser's name, extolling her in the most fulsome language as another Eleanora, or Mrs. Killigrew. Miss M'Cracken had undertaken to procure a copy of this state-paper through a brother of Peacock's, who had some appointment at the castle, but she over-rated her corrupt influence, and this drove Dawson to devise a still cleverer way of gaining his object. He prevailed on one of his parliamentary associates to move for copies of papers and correspondence connected with the anti-tithe agitation, shaping the motion so that his own letter must necessarily be produced amongst the other documents. It succeeded to admiration. The returns were made, printed in a blue book, published in the newspapers, and Mrs. Spenser's graces and virtues became part of the public records of the kingdom.

The rector himself, uxorious as he was, had no notion what a divine helpmate he had, until, to his amazement, he read her character in the newspapers, extracted from the blue book; and as to the lady herself, not even in the mirror of Miss M'Cracken's most abject and daring flattery, had she ever seen herself arrayed in such a panoply of charms. You may conceive how high Dawson stood in her opinion after this. Lucy assured her mistress that she had read Lord Chesterfield's letters, and thought Mr. Dawson's worth them all put together, "it was not only so very beautiful, but so very true."

Still nothing but the most enormous personal conceit could have urged him to persevere in addresses which Elizabeth had upon all occasions repelled with the utmost coldness. Dawson's vanity was more than mere satisfaction with himself; it amounted to admiration and rapture. When he had accomplished himself from top to toe in what he considered, or what tailors, hatters, and hair-dressers assured him was the acme of fashion—when he was mounted on a showy horse, or seated in a dashing cab—he thought himself the most redoubtable lady-killer; and when, to crown all, he recollected that he was a public character and a member of parliament, he believed that nothing in female form, however beautiful, wealthy, or exalted, could possibly resist him.

One day Elizabeth had spent the morning with her friends, the Ramsdens, who lived in a neighbouring street. A servant attended her home. Pacing up and down before the door was a groom in a handsome livery, mounted on a superb horse, and leading another nearly as fine. Not having paid much attention to such matters, she concluded that Sir Florus Bloomfield was visiting Mrs. Spenser, and, as his company was always agreeable, instead of going to her own room, she proceeded to her step-mother's. Just as she reached the door, Rebecca was coming out; a glimpse into the interior was thus afforded, and that glimpse revealed Mr. Dudley Dawson. Miss Spenser recoiled, as if she had inadvertently approached the mouth of a dragon's den, and flew on tip-toe to her own apartment. She had not been there many moments, when Miss M'Cracken came tapping, and said that Mrs. Spenser desired to see her. Elizabeth excused herself, saying (which was indeed the truth) that she was changing

her dress, and Lucy went away disappointed, to give a still greater disappointment to Mr. Dawson.

Mrs. Spenser had given Dawson the most cordial reception imaginable. In return for his adulation of herself, she loaded him with compliments, congratulations, expressions of gratitude, and civil speeches of all kinds. She would never forget his kindness; she lamented that her health had prevented her from seeing more of him in the country, she thought his waistcoat the handsomest of the season, asked him for franks, and hoped to see him frequently, as long as he remained in town.

While the excited invalid was making this long oration, Miss M'Cracken was sitting at a window with a devout book in her hand, looking meek as a nun, but now and then directing furtive glances at the senator, expressive of her triumph in the success of their schemes. What followed almost threw her into ecstacies. The rector entered as Dawson was taking leave. A sudden thought struck Mrs. Spenser.

"Would Mr. Dawson, if he happened not to be engaged—would he kindly return to dinner?"

Mr. Spenser had, of course, no alternative but to concur in the request, but Dawson was to dine that day with the Lord Lieutenant. "Happy condition of vice regal state," thought the rector.

"To-morrow?" Mr. Dawson was only too proud and too happy to consent.

Mr. Spenser pitied the viceroy for having to entertain such a man as Dudley, but he ought to have rather compassionated his daughter, who had not the formalities and ceremony of the Castle to protect her against a repulsive guest. The state that accompanies great employments is not necessary merely to make them imposing in the eyes of the vulgar; it is absolutely essential to defend those who fill them from the importunities, familiarities, and thousand indecorums of scores of persons, who, unless kept back by troops of aides-de-camps and ushers, would make the service of the public in high offices an intolerable burthen. As to Dawson, he was a man to be received with a file of battle-axe and the whole college of heralds, Ulster, Cork, and Athlone pursuivant.

The dreaded day came and went, with less pain to Elizabeth, however, than she could have anticipated, but unluckily with more satisfaction also to Dawson than he had hoped for. Elizabeth received him with cold civility, but being under the impression that he was aware of her engagement to Vivyan (with which, however, Miss M'Cracken had not acquainted him), her manner was less freezing than it would otherwise have been, and his vanity, of course, interpreted this negative symptom as a favourable one.

The next day Dawson paid a visit; it was expected and endured.

On the following evening Elizabeth went to the theatre with her relations, the Ramsdens. The greatest actor of the age was playing Macbeth. In the interval between the first and second act, she happened just to turn her head round for a moment to make a remark to one of the friends in whose party she was, when the door of the box opened, and Dawson appeared, blazing in gold chains, gilt buttons, and pink velvet. He bowed, and she could not but return the salute. There was a vacant place in the box; he closed the door and took possession of it in such a flourishing way as to attract general attention. The great drama went on, but Macbeth and Macready no longer engrossed Elizabeth's mind. She never could cease thinking of the offensive personage behind her.

"Hence, horrible shadow!"

The words seemed strangely applicable to her situation, but unfortunately Dawson was no "unreal mockery." Before the play was over, a gentleman in the row immediately behind her but not of her party, quitted the box. Dawson instantly seized the vacant post, and then she thought the green curtain would never fall. His criticisms, however, amused her friends, if they disgusted her. Every second word was either gorgeous, or splendid, or magnificent, or tremendous. "Thrilling," too, was a favourite phrase of his. Something was always thrilling Dawson, he was of such an extremely sensitive constitution. Scotland was not more relieved than Miss Spenser was, when the sword of Macduff concluded the tragedy. But she was not quite delivered from Dawson yet; he assisted her in shawling, and intrusively offered her his arm to conduct her to the carriage. She took the arm of one of her cousins, but Dawson followed her, making odious attempts to be agreeable, hoping she would not catch cold, and wondering how, after witnessing such stupendous acting, any one could remain to see a paltry after-piece. Directly, however, the Ramsdens' carriage drove off, our man of delicate taste and refinement returned to the house; sought out a knot of his friends, and after laughing vociferously at a low farce, passed the residue of the night in the pleasures of loo and lobsters.

Now, indeed, scarcely a day passed without Elizabeth experiencing more or less annoyance from the same gentleman. She underwent nearly the same persecution that another lady, more known to the world, was doomed to undergo some years afterwards from another Lothario of the emerald isle. If Elizabeth walked in the squares, with the Ramsdens, or any of her female friends, Dawson seldom failed to inflict himself upon them. If she went shopping, she was pounced on in the same manner. At concerts and other public places, there was no protection from him, and his visits to Mrs. Spenser were now events of almost daily occurrence. Dawson gave her all his franks, and was so obliging as to offer to receive all the letters of the family, which, if sent under cover to him, would thus come to them free of postage. Of this privilege, however, Elizabeth did not avail herself, but her step-mother made use of it liberally, and made the rector do so too.

Mr. Spenser, however, had the misfortune accidentally to involve himself at this time much deeper with Dawson than by the mere acceptance of a few franks. He had taken a first-class house, furnished in the handsomest manner, and this, with the increased expenses of a town residence, the outlay at his daughter's wedding, and the necessary advances to Sydney, was now beginning to press so heavily on his means, that he was under the necessity of negotiating a loan of five hundred pounds. With three hundred of this sum his bookseller, more generously than prudently, accommodated him, and he found it no easy matter (having but few friends in Dublin) to raise the remainder. At length he heard of an obscure solicitor, by whom matters of this kind were adroitly and confidentially managed, and to this gentleman he repaired for assistance. It turned out that this person was Dawson's attorney, and Dawson was actually in his office when a clerk entered and informed the man of the law that the Reverend Mr. Spenser desired to see him. Sharkey and Dawson whispered, and Dawson stepped into a very small closet behind the attorney's chair, where he was almost stifled with old coats, boots, and musty parchments, but could hear what went on in the office as well as if he had stood his ground like an honest man. When Dawson heard the rector state his

little embarrassments, how deeply it affected him in his hole must be left to the reader to imagine. Mr. Sharkey said what low money-jobbers always say upon such occasions; talked of the times, the scarcity of money (with which the market then chanced to be actually glutted), but concluded by promising to see what could be done, and requesting the rector to call again in a few days. The clergyman departed, and the senator emerged, the former deeply feeling the indignity to which his necessities reduced him, the latter actually vain of having wantonly played the part of a knave.

"Will you lend the money, Dud?" asked the attorney, who was Dawson's boon companion and bosom friend. He was a small man, with a red face and sharp features, but not as sharp as his practice. In the hall of the Four Courts he was considered a dandy, and when he was engaged in any particularly dirty business, he invariably wore canary gloves and a white waistcoat.

"You best know whether I can or not," replied Dawson; "but there's not a man living, Bob, to whom I'd rather lend a couple of hundred pounds, if I had it. You know who he is, don't you?"

"To be sure I do—the father of the girl you're after," said Sharkey.

"The same," said Dawson.

"I don't think you'll ever get her, Dud."

"By —— I will, as sure as I'm member for Rottenham. But I tell you what it is, Bob. I think it would do me no harm to be in her papa's books for the two hundred."

"Upon my sowl, Dud, it's the very thing would do the business for you. And didn't you save her life?"

"But about the money," said Dawson.

"Why, you haven't it, and that's all about it," said the attorney, and, lowering his voice, added with a facetious grin; "are there any more pictures by the ould masters at the castle, Dud?"

"By ——, Bob," whispered Dawson, elate at the thought of his management of the affair alluded to, "that was the cleverest job I ever did."

"But, tell me, Dud," the attorney lowered his voice again, and still more than before, "what's become of the Major and Thomson?"

"The major's gone abroad," said Dawson.

"For seven years?" said Sharkey.

"Not so bad," said the other, "but he got wild about the repeal of the union, and he thought he could serve the question in New York as well as in ould Ireland."

"And you didn't discourage him," said the attorney.

"No," answered the M.P., "but, touching the money—is there no way?"

Mr. Sharkey now looked very deliberative, and his eyes corresponded with Dawson's for several moments, with that sort of silent but most intelligible language which it is a mistake to think confined to the interviews of swains and shepherdesses. It can take place just as well on two stools in an attorney's dingy office, overhung with cobwebbed papers, as upon banks of violets, under canopies of roses and eglantine.

"It just occurs to me," said the attorney, breaking this eloquent silence first, "that there's a client of mine who is anxious to get a poor boy of his something or other in the public service—any thing that's going worth a hundred a-year, or even less, but you see the poor fellow has nobody to ask for him, though I think he'd come down with two or three hundred pounds, if the thing could be managed in an honourable way."

Dawson looked as roguish as he well could look, but did not answer for a moment or two.

"Confidential, Bob?" he said at length.

"Honour bright, Dud."

Dawson took his hat, reminded his legal adviser of an appointment for the night, and went his way. He was seen a good deal for a few days about the Castle, swaggering in the ante-room, or wriggling in the corridors. What success he had is unknown, or what place he got for the son of Sharkey's client; but the attorney managed in the course of the week to accommodate the rector with the sum he required, securing a pretty per centage for himself, and concealing the name of the real lender; Dawson being too delicate to appear in the transaction, though he put the rector's acceptances in his pocket.

Dawson would have been a happy man had all the sex been as devoted to him as Miss M'Cracken, but tenderly as she watched over his interests, she was more on the *qui vive* about her own, and as just about this time she thought it prudent to bring matters with Peacock (the amorous excise-man) to a matrimonial crisis, she judged it also to be only discreet to get him another shove forward in life.

Mr. Spenser continued to take a Donegal newspaper, called the *Tyrconnell Mercury*, and it happened one morning that Lucy, glancing over the columns of this rural journal, saw recorded amongst other news the promotion of the post-master of Redcross to the like office in the city of Cork. The announcement at first made no impression on her mind, but in the course of the day the thought flashed across it, that the office of post-master would suit her lover, and that through Dawson's exertions it might not be an unattainable object. At first she found the M.P. a little impracticable. He had been using his influence freely of late, and had a hundred more applicants for places on his list than he had the least chance of providing for, though not a few of them were ready to accept any office, however mean, at any salary, however moderate, in any part of the world, no matter how distant or pestilential.

Dawson, one Sunday afternoon, did a very unusual thing—a thing he had never done before on the same day, and at the same hour—he went to church. In the morning he had received the following short note from Miss M'Cracken:—

"Dear Mr. Dawson,
"Miss S—— will be at the —— chapel, this evening.
"Your obliged and devoted,
"L. M'C."

Dawson attended punctually, but though Elizabeth was there, as the female spy had correctly informed him, he might as well have been losing his time under the walls of the most jealous harem in the East, trying to get a glimpse at the Fatimas and Zobeides. Miss Spenser was with her father and the Ramsdens, in a private pew, well pavilioned about with curtains, and inaccessible to strangers, even with the silver key, which Dawson would gladly have applied to the lock. Never was a mind less in unison with the spirit of prayer and thanksgiving than his was, as he lodged about the aisles and galleries, in the dim religious lamp-light, seeking a position, whence seen or unseen, he might command at least a view of the pure girl, with whom he fancied himself in love, in his absolute ignorance of what love is.

After he had stood some time, like Satan amongst "the sons of God," his frivolous design completely baffled by the crimson hangings of the pew where Elizabeth was ensconced, he bethought himself that he was wasting his evening with unprofitable hypocrisy, and was stealing out of the church to resort to the tavern, just as a sacred song was given out to be sung by the congregation. The voices were almost all female, and one drew general attention, not merely by its real sweetness, but by the impassioned energy with which it lifted the note of praise far higher than any other voice that was raised upon the occasion. In the midst of the hymn that divine voice ceased abruptly, and the people looked about them, wondering what could have struck it dumb. But the surprise did not extend to Dawson, who recognised the tones of an instrument of his own, and perfectly well understood that Miss M'Cracken was about to sacrifice the sermon for a chat with him in the vestibule. It was exactly so. She came out immediately after him, wriggling through the crowd on tip-toe, everybody thinking that the girl with the enchanting voice was overpowered by the heat, and in want of fresh air. The sermon, that night, was delivered by one of the most celebrated preachers of the time, and even the pew-openers and beadles pressed into the aisles to hear him, leaving the vestibule deserted, so that our worthy pair had it all to themselves. They sat down together on a wooden form that was there, and were not much disturbed, on the whole, by the distant thunders of the pulpit.

Their remarks on the service were not edifying, and shall, therefore, be omitted. Lucy was sorely grieved at Dawson's disappointment, and said many harsh things of the pew system, and on the exclusiveness of crimson velvet curtains. No such things were allowed in Scotland; they would not be tolerated, she said, in the Church that she belonged to; and Dawson paid her a just compliment upon her liberality in attending the services of the English Church, though born and bred a Presbyterian. He was then about to leave her (not wishing her, perhaps, to lose the sermon), when, after sundry little hesitations, and beatings about the bush, she brought the subject of her own little fortunes and her Edward's promotion on the tapis.

"The post-office at Redcross is a very snug thing, Lucy," said the senator, musingly and dubiously.

"It would suit Edward and me so very nicely," said the amiable girl, in her most persuasive tones.

"Well, Lucy," said Dawson, "suppose you were post-mistress, would you take great care of the Castle-Dawson bag? would you take particular care of my letters and newspapers?"

Lucy thought she might make herself useful in the situation, if she was appointed to it. The member of parliament thought so too, though neither he nor she stated precisely in what way the usefulness was to be shown. There are some things which it is not either pleasant or politic to speak of with precision even in the most confidential communications.

"Well," said Dawson, rising, "you are a jewel of a girl, Lucy, and to-morrow I'll see what can be done; but do not be too sanguine. I am by no means confident of carrying the point."

It was raining when they looked out of the porch of the edifice, which they had thus been desecrating, into the gloomy street, but Dawson had an umbrella and proposed to conduct Lucy home. This, however, she declined, having some curiosity, she said, to hear a little of the sermon; and besides, she just made the discovery that she had left her hymn-book

behind her. They parted, however, affectionately, he braving the elements out of doors; she, with still greater hardihood, venturing back into the house where the worship of God was still going on.

The rector walked home from church that evening, having resigned his seat in the carriage to a lady. As he moved along, keeping the most sheltered side of the street, and musing on the arrangements for his daughter's wedding, which was to take place in a few days, a tall young man, who was walking rapidly, passed him, and it struck Mr. Spenser immediately that he bore a striking resemblance to George Markham,

He instantly turned, and overtook him; it was indeed Markham, but the pleasure of the meeting seemed to be all on the rector's side, for when Mr. Spenser informed him where he was quartered, and hoped to see him at his house, George declined, with obvious embarrassment, and pleaded the urgency of the affairs which had brought him over, and the very limited time he had at his disposal while he remained in Ireland. They spoke of Vivyan, but Markham had no news of a recent date to give of his friend, and upon this, as upon other subjects, he was strangely uncommunicative, though the few words he did exchange with Mr. Spenser were not unfriendly, and at parting he shook his hand, and thanked him with warmth for his past and his proffered hospitality.

Mr. Spenser thought there was something strange in all this, but ascribed it to the preoccupation of the young man's mind with the urgent affairs he had spoken of, and continued his walk home, in doubt whether to blame himself or not for having omitted to invite Markham to assist at Arabella's marriage.

Elizabeth, however, was extremely pained and perplexed when she heard from her father what had occurred; she remembered what a frank, joyous fellow George had been at Redcross; and found it difficult to avoid the thought that Vivyan must be connected in some way or another with the circumstances, whatever they were, which had brought his friend back to Ireland.

"Did he ask for the Woodwards?" she inquired, with anxiety.

"No," replied her father.

This she thought very unaccountable, Markham having taken such a prodigious fancy to her uncle: it looked like either profound absorption in business, or as if, after all, there was no great solidity in the attachments which George formed yachting.

A letter from Vivyan, however, arrived the next morning, all tenderness and eloquence, as usual, and Elizabeth, having the cares of a wedding on her shoulders, thought little more of Markham, his business, or his abstraction.

The first event of any consequence that took place in Dublin was Arabella Spenser's marriage, and it was as heavy an affair of the kind as was ever transacted at St. George's, Hanover Square, or St. Peter's, in Dublin. Indeed, it only deserves to be chronicled as an illustration of Arabella's littleness and her uncle's magnanimity. It had been considered a settled point that the curate was to perform the ceremony, and we may remember that the rector had advertised him to keep himself in readiness to discharge that interesting duty, when called upon. In fact, Hercules had ordered a new coat, (not an iron-gray, but an actual black one,) and had been very urgent and impatient with his tailor about it. "Do be patient, my dear," Carry said more than once; "recollect what a time it must take to make a coat for *one*." The tailor

better than other people did. About a week before the wedding, it was decided that no ecclesiastic under the rank of a bishop would answer to unite so important a personage as Lieutenant-Colonel Dabzac in the bonds of matrimony with Miss Spenser, and as the bishop of one of the northern sees was a connexion of the bridegroom, the bride had a shabby pretext for cashiering her uncle the curate. The rector was excessively mortified and distressed, and indeed he was secretly more grieved than he owned to any body at the whole of his daughter's conduct in relation to her marriage; she showed such little concern at leaving her father's roof, and such a precipitate eagerness to identify herself with her husband's family and connexions. As to Mrs. Woodward, though very indignant, she knew her niece's character too well to be much surprised at her paltry conduct, so she was not sorry to find in the illness of one of her children an excuse for not being present at the wedding. Hercules, however, made it a point to go up to town, and he could not have more effectually revenged himself on Arabella, had such been his wish, for the curate's exterior was unquestionably ill-calculated to adorn a "marriage à la mode." The provincial tailor had done him more justice in the quantity of cloth than in the elegance of his cut. His shoes were very new, but made for the bogs, rather than the carpet; and as for the delicate white gloves with which he was duly presented, after a single glance of curiosity and contempt, he thrust them into his pocket for Carry, with grave doubts whether they were not much too small for her plump hand as well as his own. Indeed, it was no easy matter to adapt the curate to a drawing-room at any time; and now that he was left to his own devices, with no good wife to look after his toilette, the more he studied to be a *beau*, the more extraordinary was the figure he cut. Even Elizabeth herself could not help wishing that he had not got his hair curled so egregiously, and that he had seen the impropriety of putting cambric enough into his cravat to make a surplice. There were no fewer than five lieutenant-colonels (either relatives or friends of Dabzac's) present at the wedding. There were also old Mrs. Dabzac and her sister, old Mrs. Loquax, Lord and Lady Brabble, Mr. and Mrs. Pepper, several young Peppers, and a certain angelical Miss Vallancey, all of the Dabzac faction. The Spensers were inferior in number, but in number only. There was the rector himself and his daughter, the good curate (well worth an army of the colonels), the Ramsdens (excellent people, related to the Spensers), Sir Florus Bloomfield, and last and least of all, little Mr. Trundle, in full feather, and chattering at the very steps of the altar about Loch Swilly and the thirty millions. Mr. Trundle had been invited by both parties, being not only agent to Dabzac, but also to Lord Bonham, Mr. Spenser's friend and patron.

If Hercules was snubbed at breakfast by some of the company, he was compensated in some measure by the honour of an introduction to the bishop, who kindly shook his hand, and graciously said that he had heard of Mr. Woodward, and was happy to have the opportunity of making his acquaintance. Hercules was pleased to be thus noticed by one of the heads of the Church, and indeed the prelate was a man by whom it was almost promotion to be praised, for his life was as spotless as his lawn, and the lustre of his virtues outshone his mitre.

On the evening of the wedding-day the curate returned to his parish, having been absent from his pastoral duties only three days. He had not been in Dublin for ten years before, and it was a sore grief to him not to have had a single jolly night with his friend Tom Beamish. He breakfasted,

however, with Tom one morning, and was accompanied by Elizabeth, whose beauty and affability made such a sensation in the University that to this day her visit to it is matter of table-talk at College commons. Hercules showed her the chambers which he had occupied himself when a scholar; conducted her to the hall, and pointed out the precise spot where the illustrious Doctor Prior had examined him in Thucydides; led her to the academic kitchen, and explained the machinery by which one fire roasted innumerable legs of mutton; from thence to the buttery, where he and Beamish joked all their jokes, and punned all their puns over again, enormously exaggerating their old potations of October, while Miss Spenser unaffectedly laughed with them, although far from understanding one half of their quips and quiddities. She was greatly pleased, on the whole, with her reception in the College of her royal namesake; the only fault she found with it was that it was not sufficiently national, but her uncle luminously explained to her, as they walked home, that to admit a single Catholic on the foundation would be tantamount to placing a barrel of gunpowder under it, and blowing the establishment into the air.

CHAPTER XLIX.

MARKHAM REVISITS THE PARSONAGE.

"Revisit, say you?
Who ever visited the same mansion twice?
The walls remain, the roof, the gables, chimneys!
The mason's work will stand a century,
But 'tis not stone and mortar makes the house,
The bricks, or timber, but the hearts and faces,
And these change every day and every hour."

NEW PLAY.

ALMOST immediately after the curate's return home, he went to reside at the parsonage, which was a central point in the parish, whereas the town of Redcross was situated on the edge of it, bordering on Mr. Oliver's benefice. Hercules did not feel half so comfortable as if he had been in his own dear disorderly old house, for he was obliged to forego a number of his little innocent freedoms and enjoyments; he was no longer in a position to repel the invasions of housemaids; the sweeping-brush now swept all before it, and the Pope's head was too strong for him, sturdy Protestant as he was. Carry now kept him in reasonable order; only she could not prevent him from sometimes clapping his oil-skin head-piece on the bust of Curran in the library, the worst of which was that Billy Pitt followed the paternal example, and took the same liberty with the bust of Fox, who, in Billy's straw hat and green ribbons, looked like a superannuated Colin, or an Alexis of sixty.

Carry had just been talking one morning of writing to her friends in Dublin, when the curate was called out to speak to a shopkeeper of Redcross, who had come over the water to inform him that he thought he had discovered a clue which might possibly lead to the detection of the robbery of the tithe-proctor. The clue consisted in a bank-note for five pounds, on one corner of which the shopkeeper had recognised a mark, which he

thought exceedingly like Mr. Randy Maguire's signature. There was also a date immediately under, and apparently in the same cramped hand. The curate was not familiar enough with the proctor's writing to give an opinion; but Randy was sent for, and not only identified the initials and the date, but was enabled by the latter to pronounce the note to be one of those which he had received at Branagan's house from a tenant of Mr. Vivyan. Hercules hurried back to Carry with the joyful news of the probable discovery of the criminals in consequence of this occurrence; and then, taking the shopkeeper and Maguire with him, proceeded to Redcross to prosecute the inquiry. The shopkeeper had a dispute with his wife as to the quarter from which they had received the note. He maintained it was from a grazier in the neighbourhood; the wife was positive it had been received from Amby Hogg, the sexton, who has been already honourably mentioned in the course of our story.

"Well," said Hercules, "let us go to Amby first."

Amby was a vain little tradesman, who wished to be thought more familiar with considerable sums of money than in fact he was, so he talked of ascertaining the hand from which any particular note came to his as a thing not to be done.

"I'm happy to find you receive so many of them, Amby," said the curate.

"It would be a bad business, your reverence," replied the sexton, "if five-pound notes were as scarce as green peas at Christmas."

"They're not quite as plenty, howsomdever, as blackberries at Michaelmas," muttered the other shopkeeper, not pleased at his fellow-townsman's ostentation of wealth.

While these observations were passing backwards and forwards, Amby Hogg's daughter, a quiet but smart little girl of about fourteen, who kept his shop, and indeed made the most of his money for him, gave her father sundry winks and plucks by the coat, which the curate perceived sooner than the sexton himself did.

"Your daughter has got something to say to you," said Hercules. "Perhaps she may be able to jog your memory, Amby."

Amby followed the girl into a little parlour behind the shop where much of the profits of the trade were drank in toddy by himself, and in tea and toddy by his wife. In a moment he returned, and, with a mysterious face, said to the clergyman,

"Will your reverence step this way?"

Amby took the curate into the inner room, and there informed him that his daughter said the note in question had been received from Mr. Sydney Spenser.

"Why make a mystery of that?" said Hercules; "we must only try to find out how it came into my nephew's possession."

The curate was returning to the shop, when Amby held him back, and, in a low voice, advised him not to mention his nephew's name in connexion with the business.

This still more surprised Hercules, and he desired to know why Amby recommended such reserve.

"When I'm alone with your reverence, I'll tell you my maning," said Amby.

The curate was at a loss what to say to the other shopkeeper, who stood outside, but Amby's invention was quicker.

"Tell him," said he, "just nothing at all about it; only keep the bank-

"It's a serious thing," said the considerate Hercules, "to detain so large a sum of money from a poor fellow like him."

"Then your reverence must only give him another note in place of it," said the sexton, flippantly.

Never was the ascendency of moral dignity over mere pecuniary consequence more conspicuous than it was in the aspect of Mr. Woodward, as calmly and silently it intimated the fact, that it was entirely out of his power to adopt Mr. Hogg's last suggestion.

"I'll see if I've got as much in the till, myself," replied Amby, but not as conceitedly as he would have said it, if his little pride of purse had not been rebuked by the high-minded simplicity with which the man of education, and the minister of the gospel, had confessed how little he possessed of the world's wealth.

However, Amby went to his treasury, and produced the required sum of money, without seeming to have much trouble in making it up. The sexton of Redcross was a richer man than the curate.

As soon as they were alone together, Amby made a statement which wounded Mr. Woodward to the soul. Sydney, on leaving Redcross, had left several unsettled accounts behind him. Some of his debts (amongst others, that to Amby himself) he had discharged; but by so doing he only exasperated those creditors whose demands he left entirely unsatisfied, and nothing, in fact, but a feeling of delicacy towards the rector (particularly as he was parting from them under painful circumstances) kept them from making a noise about their accounts, and calling on Mr. Spenser to settle them. Imagine the feelings of the honest and humane uncle, when he heard that, in some instances, his nephew had actually borrowed small sums of money, on sundry pretences, from the poor shopkeepers, and that these sums had not been repaid. He was not in the least surprised when the sexton proceeded to inform him that some people in Redcross had begun to speak hardly of Sydney.

"Of course they have," cried Hercules, impetuously,—"to be sure they have."

"But," continued Amby, with hesitation, "there's some of them says what they have no call to say at all, but perhaps I'm wrong in telling your reverence any thing about it, as it's sure to aggravate you and make you unasy."

"That's the very reason I ought to hear it," said the curate, with stern composure.

"Why, then," replied the sexton, "I needn't acquaint you, sir, that there are people in Redcross, as elsewhere, with malice in their hearts, and bad tongues in their heads; and thim that have no character to lose themselves are the first to take it away from thim that has."

"Come to the point, Amby."

"I didn't like to tell your reverence before (but there's no help for it) that Master Sydney owes a trifle to the widdy Grogan, who keeps the little shop for ship's stores down at the harbour."

The curate's eye expressed his indignation; but he was too impatient for the upshot of Amby's narrative to interrupt him by a word.

"Well, she is a poor creature," said Amby, still beating about the bush, "and that's why people say it's so hard upon her in times like these."

"What do they say of my nephew?" demanded Hercules, almost savagely.

"They say," said Amby, at length driven to extremity, "that a young

man who would rob a poor widdy, wouldn't think much of robbing his own father."

"What do they mean by that?" cried Hercules.

"Then," said Amby, "they have no ground to stand upon the size of a sixpenny bit, for their wicked surmises; only that Ned Grogan, the widdy Grogan's husband's brother, (they're black Prasbyterians, your reverence), swears he met Master Sydney within a stone's throw of the Black Castle on the night of the robbery."

The curate's wrath, when he heard how his unfortunate nephew was slandered by the ruthless tongues of his little creditors, knew no bounds.

"It's well for him, you're a ministher," said Amby.

"My ministry shan't protect him," cried the enraged clergyman; but, of course, upon reflection, he abandoned his first violent intentions, and also perceived the prudence of the sexton's advice, that nothing ought to be said or done to give an appearance of countenance to what at present was a mere slanderous imputation, without a scintilla of evidence to support it; for as to Sydney having been seen near the Black Castle on that memorable night, what was there in that to support such a charge against the son of a clergyman; and moreover, as the curate remarked, there was just the same evidence against himself.

Leaving the suspicious five-pound note in the custody of Amby Hogg, who was indeed now its rightful owner, Mr. Woodward trudged back to the parsonage. What he had heard about Sydney grieved him sorely, and Ellen Hogg, the schoolmistress, whom he visited for a few moments, perceived that something was wrong with him, but she thought he had been visiting some death-bed, or performing some other melancholy office of charity, and after the performance of such duties, Hercules did not speedily get up his spirits, for though his exterior was so rough and hard, his heart was of another texture. He was a nut with a rugged shell and a sweet and oily kernel.

The first occupation of his thoughts was how immediately to pay off those small debts which his nephew had so shamefully contracted, and still more shamefully left undischarged. He then employed himself speculating upon the nature and singularities of circumstantial evidence; he put the case that his nephew should be unable to state how the note which he had given to the sexton had come into his possession; that some other circumstances with a sinister aspect should come to light; and he then figured to himself how difficult it might become for his nephew to meet a case of the kind, notwithstanding the apparent improbability that such a robbery had been committed by a gentleman, the son of a clergyman, and the identical clergyman who was the chief sufferer by the crime. That such a charge should ever be actually made, seemed, of course, altogether out of the question; but it was painful to contemplate the bare possibility of the event happening; and shocking to think that Sydney should have left a character behind him at Redcross, such as to suggest and countenance, instead of being itself an overwhelming answer to, the daring insinuations of calumnious people.

There was another distressing view of the matter which did not occur to Mr. Woodward at first. The sums of which Maguire had been rifled, included money of Frank Vivyan's as well as Mr. Spenser's; so that the imputation hanging over Sydney was not merely that he was concerned in defrauding his father, but that he had also robbed the man to whom his sister was then actually contracted in marriage.

This view of the case struck Mrs. Woodward at once, and she trembled to think of what Elizabeth would feel and suffer, were the lightest rumour to reach her of what slander was whispering in the miry streets of Redcross.

"These small sums must be paid instantly," said the curate.

"You had better write to Valentine at once," said Carry.

"Val has had a load of trouble lately," said her husband, "and a heavy increase to his expenses, what with removing to town, and sending that unfortunate boy to Cambridge—it was against my judgment—but there's no use in talking of that now. What I think of doing is to dispose of Sligo. Wilkins offered me twenty pounds for him not long ago."

"My dear, good, good Hercules!" cried Carry, jumping up and running to him; "to think of selling the pony!"

"Carry, my dear, I would do more than that to save Val trouble; and, after all, it's not doing much, for I'm not a bad walker, you know; and, at a pinch, I can always take one of the plough-horses."

Hercules sent the pony to Doctor Wilkins that very evening, with a letter stating that he had reconsidered his offer and felt disposed to accept it. The next morning the doctor called at the parsonage and paid him the twenty pounds; upon receiving which the curate set off instantly to Redcross, and went all through the town, accompanied by the sexton, settling the demands against his scampish nephew; carefully, however, concealing the fact that the money came from his own pocket. It gave him no great trouble to hide his good deeds, he was so accustomed to that kind of under-hand proceeding.

Hercules, however, grossly misreckoned in expecting that the arrangement of these little matters would silence the tongue of defamation. Already had an ill construction been put upon the detention of the five-pound note, virtually by Sydney's relative; the sexton had repeated to his wife (the slattern sextoness) all the conversation he had held with the curate about Sydney, and what people were saying of him, so that when the payment of the debts followed so speedily, the slattern sextoness shrugged her broad shoulders, only one of which was as much covered by her gown as it should have been, and said, "she knew very well the matter would be hushed up, and that, for her part, she thought it better it should be."

The curate's next step was to write to Sydney. Carry and he concocted the letter between them, sitting at the fire-side in a small parlour, connected with the library. It was wearing towards dusk on a dry but gusty evening in March. The letter was finished and despatched to Redcross for the next post by one of the farm-servants, who took the bull-dog with him for company and protection.

Carry and Hercules sat down to their plain but neat and excellent dinner. Neatness was Mrs. Woodward's luxury; she was satisfied when she had a snowy cloth on her table, and a substantial dish or two for the masculine stomach of her spouse. On this occasion there was part of a turbot, which had been caught opposite to the house, with a piece of boiled pork and pease-pudding (a union which the curate was nearly as much attached to as he was to that of England and Ireland). It was abundance in all conscience for two people, particularly as Carry's appetite was not, like the curate's, in direct proportion to the scale of her person.

They had not long been seated, when Carry's maid entered and announced a visitor. She thought she had seen the gentleman last summer, but was not very certain, he was so wrapped up. Hercules went out; and his

boisterous greetings reaching his wife's ear, assured her that it was no stranger who had arrived, but some old and very welcome friend. It was George Markham, whom the curate found in the hall, disencumbering himself of his coats and shawls. He had not dined, and after a few minutes' attention to the toilette (during which the fish and the joint were sent back to the kitchen to be kept hot), he made a third at the curate's table, but did scanty justice to his substantial fare. He appeared to be much fatigued and way-worn, so that neither host nor hostess pressed him with many questions, though one was nearly as curious as the other to learn what it could be that brought him back so unexpectedly to Donegal. When dinner was over, Markham preferred a glass of the rector's old Innishowen to wine, and dispelled the reserve which a very unlooked-for visit occasions as long as the motive of it is unknown, by saying, in his usual frank way that he had come down to the country on a matter of business, which he would mention to the curate in the morning. "I must be your debtor," he added, with something of his natural vivacity, "for this night's lodging, as I find you have not yet repaired your bridge."

The evening was a short one. Carry fancied that it was not altogether fatigue that made Markham unsociable; unpleasant thoughts occurred to her; her niece was uppermost in her mind, and she naturally apprehended that something or other had occurred to verify the old adage about the course of love. It was a relief to her when their visitor requested permission to retire, for she wished to be alone again in council with Hercules, to discuss what it possibly could be that brought Markham to the parsonage, and was evidently weighing on his spirits more than sleep on his eye-lids.

"Sufficient to the day, my dear," said Hercules, half quoting the text; "but Mr. Markham's business is obvious enough; he is come over about his friend's affairs, of course."

"Oh, Hercules, I am certain of it," she answered; "something is going wrong."

The curate laughed, and said he only alluded to the affairs of Vivyan's little estate, which it was but natural he should have begged Markham to attend to in his absence. Carry was not to be persuaded of this, though her husband said he had no doubt on the subject, and in this divided state of opinion the curate and his wife retired to rest.

Terrible was the disclosure of the following morning. Through the gunsmiths of London and Dublin, Markham had traced the ownership of the pistol found at the Black Castle to Sydney Spenser.

CHAPTER L.

LETTERS FROM TOWN.

"Let us hear from thee by letters,
And I likewise will visit thee with mine."
TWO GENTLEMEN OF VERONA.

MARKHAM went as abruptly as he came. With the utmost delicacy and tenderness he discharged what he considered his duty, and no man could have felt more poignantly for the distress he caused. His principal object

was to enable Sydney's friends to send him out of the way in time, before the discovery of his assumed criminality through some other channel.

It was some time before Hercules saw all the painful bearings of the case, as it now stood. The marriage of Elizabeth Spenser was involved in the result; it was evidently impossible it could take place until everything connected with this unfortunate business was cleared up, and cleared up honourably to the reputation of her brother.

Markham grasped the hand of the tender-hearted curate, in whose eye a great drop of manly sorrow glittered, as he thought of the grief that was in store for Carry and the niece, whom both he and she loved like a daughter. Hercules brushed away the tear with his sleeve. Markham stooped and plucked a primrose which grew opportunely at his feet, the firstling of the Irish spring. They walked side by side for some moments without speaking; then Markham again wrung his friend's hand, and hastened to the boat which waited for him.

Mrs. Woodward was as quick as her husband had been slow to see the connexion between Elizabeth's union with Vivyan, and even the shadow of guilt upon Sydney's character. The idea stirred all the woman, the friend, the sister, and the mother, within her; she entered with only too lively an imagination into all the miseries with which even a doubt was pregnant; the anguish to her sensitive brother, the ruin of Elizabeth's happiness, perhaps for life, the disgrace of the family, the cruel wrong to her nephew himself, who was redeeming his youthful follies at Cambridge (at least she thought so), little dreaming of the cloud that was gathering over his head at home. Some time, indeed, elapsed, before her husband could make her understand that there was anything in the aspect of affairs by which Sydney could be seriously compromised. Carry was not as familiar with the nature of circumstantial evidence as if she had been the wife of a lawyer, and probably few lawyers' wives know much more about it than what they read in slip-shod novels while their husbands go their circuits. Even when the curate did make her see what the cumulative effect of the various circumstances would be in a court of justice, Carry still took a woman's view of the matter, and said,

"But it is all nonsense, Hercules. Surely you can't think for a moment that Sydney is really guilty."

"On the contrary, I firmly believe him innocent," said her husband, "but it is not a question of fact at present—God forbid it were—it is a question of opinion; not of your opinion, or mine, Carry, but what the opinion of strangers will be—of a man like Mr. Markham, for example, or a man like Vivyan."

"As to Vivyan," she replied, "he would just as easily be brought to believe that Elizabeth herself committed the crime."

"Sit down, Carry," said Hercules, and, leading her to a sofa, he seated himself beside her, and then resumed, speaking slowly and collectedly,—"Elizabeth was not out of her bed on the night of the robbery; she was not seen that night close to the scene of it; she did not settle an account with money that bears Maguire's private marks; she was not the possessor of a brace of pistols, one of which was found by George Markham and myself amongst the weeds, not many yards from the spot where the outrage was perpetrated."

"Oh," cried his wife, with strong emotion, "are all these facts in evidence against Sydney?"

"There is, unhappily, not a shadow of a doubt upon one of them,—but

support yourself, my dear Carry, for this is a severe trial, and may possibly require all our strength to sustain, not only ourselves, but others."

"Oh, Hercules, if it should be *true*, when the very imputation is so shocking to think of!"

She threw herself back on the sofa, and spoke with her hands clasped over her forehead.

"Let us face it boldly," said the curate, "and shut our eyes to nothing; it is the wise course, were it only for the sake of the unfortunate boy himself, whom I firmly believe guiltless, despite of all the appearances against him."

"Guiltless!—impossible!" cried Carry, almost distracted, and now thinking it hopeless to reconcile the facts which had been just recapitulated with her unfortunate nephew's innocence.

"Not so; far from impossible," said her husband; "and yet I have not enumerated all the adverse circumstances,—two just occur to me; I now recollect that Sydney declined to visit the Black Castle with Markham and me on the day we found the pistol—I thought it odd at the time—and when we exhibited it on our return in his presence, he did not claim, or seem to recognise it."

"It was growing dark, Hercules,—I remember the evening perfectly."

"Well," said the curate, rising, "I shall write to the unfortunate boy again; I trust and hope he will be able to explain everything."

As he was leaving the room, Peter brought letters which had just arrived, and amongst them was one from Elizabeth and one from the rector. They were both for Carry. Miss Spenser did not write from home, but from a villa in the neighbourhood of town, which the Bonhams had lately taken for a short period. The health of Lady Bonham, whom, next to her aunt, Elizabeth loved most tenderly, had recently been declining; and as it was always her greatest happiness and comfort to have Elizabeth with her, it was so particularly now, when her illness unfitted her for general society, and made that of one beloved friend more than ever valuable. This part of the letter was written in great depression of spirits, for Lady Bonham was a woman who was loved enthusiastically by the few who knew her sufficiently to love her at all. She was indeed a woman of the Eleonora race, though when she died, as, not many months after, she did, she had no Dryden to honour her memory in verse that will never die.

She was a woman of lofty figure, and singularly fascinating and gracious aspect; her mind was highly cultivated and richly stored, not with common-place acquirements, but with the knowledge that is at once elegant and profitable. Her taste in books and conversation was, perhaps, somewhat masculine, like that of Elizabeth herself, but not to the extent that displeases men, though it disqualified her to live with the frivolous of her own sex. Distinguished and remarkable in many ways, her most striking attributes were the earnestness and fervour of her character. This showed itself most in her religion, which was not so much a principle as a divine and sweet enthusiasm, which made her a very apostle in her sphere. She did more than many divines to diffuse the spirit of Christianity wherever her influence extended, and she enjoyed, if ever woman did, that "heaven upon earth" described by Bacon, when "the mind moves in charity, rests in providence, and turns upon the poles of truth."

Such was Lady Bonham. She deserves this passing notice, were it only for the sake of the rector's daughter, who was so devotedly attached to her.

Mr. Spenser's letter was full of interesting matter. Exclamation after

exclamation escaped from Mrs. Woodward, as she ran her eye rapidly over it. "Miss M'Cracken gone—such a scene—such a fracas—my poor Valentine—and Elizabeth absent—a monster of ingratitude—married to that policeman—pos.-mistress—impossible! Oh! Hercules, only think of that abominable woman being at this moment post-mistress of Redcross!"

"Of Redcross!" cried the curate, in amazement.

"Mr. Dawson's interest, of course," said his wife.

The rector gave the following detailed account of the circumstances connected with the departure of Lucy.

He was sitting one morning after breakfast reading the *Edinburgh Review*. Miss M'Cracken entered in a particularly smart walking-dress, and approached him smiling,

"Well, Lucy," said the bland clergyman, laying down on his knee the book in blue and yellow.

"I have news to tell you, sir," she said, with a sly simper.

"Something good of yourself, I hope, Lucy."

"Yes, sir." Then she cast her eyes on the ground, like a marble modesty, and added, "I was married this morning."

"The clandestine marriage," said Mr. Spenser, with good-humoured surprise; "but I congratulate you with all my heart upon the happy event, though I suppose its ultimate effect will be to deprive us of you."

"Yes, indeed, sir, I fear it will," she replied, with well feigned regret; and then in a faltering tone, also assumed for the occasion, she announced her second piece of intelligence—the appointment to the provincial post-office.

"Have you communicated all this good news to Mrs. Spenser?" asked the astonished rector.

"Not yet, sir; I was so afraid of agitating her, sir."

"Indeed, Mrs. Peacock, I fear it will," he replied, anxiously.

"Mrs. Edward Peacock, please, sir; my husband is only a younger son."

The rector found it difficult to suppress a smile at the girl's ridiculous airs; but the sequel was no laughing matter. It was absolutely necessary to break the news to Mrs. Spenser, and as neither the rector nor Lucy would undertake the task alone, they agreed to go about it together.

The first question the hysterical lady put was—"by whose interest the appointment had been obtained?"

"My husband's parliamentary connexions," replied Lucy, with ludicrous importance. Dawson had charged her to keep his share in the business a secret.

Mrs. Spenser scoffed like a maniac at the parliamentary connexions of a police-constable. Lucy was about to reply in the same tone, but the rector laid his hand on her arm, and in a low, earnest voice, besought her to be quiet. She bit her lip, and commanded her busy member.

Then came the critical question—"When did Mrs. Peacock propose to resign her present employment?"

Lucy knew the effect her answer would produce, and had armed herself in triple brass to make it.

"To-morrow, madam, if you please," she said, with the most impudent composure.

"I do not please," shrieked the irritated invalid, not irritated, indeed, without cause in the present instance.

Lucy contented herself with replying, that Mr. Edward Peacock had already taken places in the Donegal Mail.

The excitement and rage of Mrs. Spenser were indescribable. The distracted rector, while he sought to calm her, could not but join in severely censuring Mrs. Peacock, who at length waxed hot, too, stoutly defended herself against her master, and repaid the invectives of her mistress with usury.

The rector was eventually compelled to push the termagant young lady out of the room; and when he returned to the bedside of his wife he found her in a truly alarming state, and a serious apprehension was entertained for some time that she had ruptured a blood-vessel in the paroxysm of her passion. When Mr. Spenser wrote, she was not entirely out of danger.

"Well," said Carry, "I am heartily glad they are rid of that odious woman, at all events; although I wish she had been provided for anywhere else in the world but in our neighbourhood."

"She can do no great harm as post-mistress," said the curate.

When he walked into the town that same evening, and went to the post-office, amongst other places, he actually found the Peacocks installed, and Lucy transacting in person the business of that confidential department. She had only arrived the preceding day, and almost the first letter committed to her charge was that which Mr. Woodward had just written to Sydney, at college. After congratulating his old acquaintance upon her marriage and advancement,—being extremely anxious about the subject of his correspondence, he was particular in his inquiries as to the hour of forwarding the mail, and strict in his injunctions to Lucy to take care to despatch his letter by the earliest post. Perhaps this piqued the new post-mistress's curiosity, or perhaps she was impelled by her more general thirst for information; be this as it might, the curate was no sooner gone than Lucy Peacock, putting the letter into her bosom, retired into a neat little bed-chamber, adjoining the office, bolted the door, lighted a taper, and very cleverly slipping the heated blade of a small pen-knife under the wax of the seal, raised it daintily from the paper, and made herself rapidly acquainted with every syllable of the despatch to Cambridge. This done, she heated the knife again, nicely melted the under surface of the seal, and brought the edges of the paper again into contact with an adroitness that would have been wonderful if this had been her first attempt of the kind; which it probably was not. This delicate little proceeding having been taken, the new post-mistress deposited the letter in the bag with the strictest probity, and went about her household arrangements. She had a small, but neat and cheerful suite of apartments, which she tastefully decorated with all the little nicknacks, gimcracks, and articles of cheap *virtu* which she had accumulated in the days of her governess-ship. Over the mantel-piece of her "drawing-room" she hung up, in seemly order, her gallery of exemplary men and pattern women, to which she had made some nice additions in Dublin: and, on the shelves of a very gay glass-case, she displayed all the pretty books of her own property, with several to which her right might have been fairly disputed, particularly by members of the Spenser family.

CHAPTER LI.

DAWSON IN PARLIAMENT.

"Master Robert Shallow, choose what office thou wilt in the land, 'tis thine. istol, I will double-charge thee with dignities."

SECOND PART OF KING HENRY IV.

If the curate's first letter to his nephew did not much alarm him, the econd had more success. It found Sydney occupied with neither

"Wit, eloquence, or poetry,
Or search of deep philosophy,"

ut carousing in a circle of young debauchees of his own age, whom he was reating to wine, fruits, and ices, and enchanting with his Irish melodies nd mimicries, comic songs and stories, some of which he sang and told s cleverly as Mr. Lover. Never had greater folly been committed than o launch a youth like Sydney Spenser, without studious habits or tastes, ithout the ballast of principle or judgment, upon the dangerous sea of an English university. He scarcely made a week's stand against the multiudinous seductions of the place. Accustomed not merely to the gratiication of his senses, but to the practice of many little clandestine and nworthy arts to procure the means of self indulgence, he arrived at Cambridge in a high state of preparation for a course of extravagance and ensuality; and if Science and Literature found him a slow scholar, Vice nd Folly, on the contrary, had no cause to be dissatisfied with his progress. The progress from dissipation to debt, and from debt to dishonour, has too often been related to need reiteration here. It is enough to say, that Sydney Spenser found the road to ruin as free from obstructions, as broad, smooth, flowery, and inviting as any young man who ever travelled it. It was easier to raise a hundred pounds at Cambridge than it had been to raise ten in the county of Donegal. At Redcross, the position and means of his father were known to everybody, and besides, the shop-keepers were too poor themselves to give long or considerable credits; but on the banks of the Cam it was quite different. Instead of soliciting credit from the tradesmen, the tradesmen solicited him to become their debtor; and such was the current impression as to the wealth of the Irish Church, that directly it was known that Sydney was the son of a beneficed clergyman, there was scarcely an amount to which the tailors, hatters, confectioners, and fruiterers would not have accommodated him; and, what was more, there was no so monstrous price for their goods, or no usury on the sums of money they supplied him with, which they did not think it perfectly fair to impose. It was only to be wondered at, considering all this, that his involvements at the present period were not greater than they actually were; what they did amount to, he himself had no notion, but had all the demands of his Cambridge creditors been totted up, and his various debts of honour added to them, five hundred pounds would not have cleared off the score, even after a smart taxation, and he had not yet been six full months a pupil of the excellent Mr. Peters.

Sydney had not seen Dawson for some time, but on receiving the letters from his uncle, he determined to go up to London, seeing by the newspapers that there was a call of the house, which would probably bring together the scattered elements of the council of the nation. But it was necessary to write to his uncle before he left Cambridge, and again he might have redeemed himself by frankly stating the truth upon both the points that so urgently required elucidation—the hand from which he had got the bank-note, and the way in which he had lost the pistol. He persisted, however, in the same course of infatuated insincerity; declared that it was utterly out of his power to say, after so long an interval, from whom he had received a particular sum of money; and with respect to the pistol, he made a careless statement, partly true and partly false, namely, that he had lost a brace of pocket-pistols about the time in question, that it was possible they might have fallen into bad hands, but he suspected there must be some mistake about the identity of the pistol found last summer by Markham and his uncle, as he had not recognised it at the time. So much of Sydney's letter was lamentably defective in truth and good sense; but the scorn and indignation with which he repelled the monstrous charge which his base slanderers at Redeross seemed disposed to fix upon him, were perfectly sincere, and exactly in the tone to be expected from the son of a gentleman accused of a crime so inexpressibly heinous. He concluded by saying, that, though he thought it right to reply to questions put to him by his relatives, yet he would not stoop to vindicate himself to any other quarter; the enormity of the imputation was an answer to itself, and he would take no further notice of it except with one of his uncle's clubs, or with another pair of pistols which he fortunately had still in his possession.

Dawson was at the Burlington, confounding night and day as usual, legislating, drinking, jobbing, gaming, leading a life of miscellaneous profligacy between clubs, committees, taverns, and billiard-tables. There is always a little knot of lawgivers who live in this sort of way during the session, call it parliamentary life, and make a great merit of sacrificing in the public service the health and strength which they really squander in disgracing the legislature, not in performing its duties.

Sydney called at the Burlington at twelve o'clock on the day of his arrival in town. Mr. Dawson had not been long in bed; he generally breakfasted at three in the afternoon. Sydney called again at four. Mr. Dawson had gone down to the house, leaving a line for Sydney on a card, requesting him to follow and send in his name by the door-keepers.

Who ever forgot his first impressions of the lobby of the House of Commons? It seemed at first sight to Sydney merely a dim, dirty, noisy room, crowded with people, either passing to and fro in several directions, or standing chatting in groups. The first intimation he had that there was any regularity in its seeming confusion, was a civil but peremptory order to stand back, given him by a stout short elderly man in a plain black suit. Sydney perceived a baton in his hand, and thence inferred that the elderly man was a constable, and not the Speaker. His next discovery was, that there was one leading thoroughfare in the apartment between two rows of wooden pillars. There was a double door at the far end, continually opening and shutting, and revealing, when it opened, momentary glimpses of a hall, lighted with gilt chandeliers, and not very unlike a parish church. Now and then Sydney thought he saw a personage at the upper extremity in a big wig, who might have stood for the rector, while a couple of lesser

gs beneath him represented the curates assistant. Incomprehensible ings were going on at the door. In the first place there were posted ere, one upon each side, two men in complete black suits, with white eds, very red faces, and an alternate gentleness and fierceness of aspect d demeanour which seemed as difficult to understand as the British nstitution itself. Sometimes these mysterious red-faced men bowed to e ground, and seemed all blandness and servility. Then, again, they emed to wax suddenly ferocious, and sometimes even flew like bull-dogs gentlemen who approached them, though in many instances of much ss questionable exterior than those upon whom they fawned. Repeatedly ople stepped up to them, and with the utmost humility presented them ith cards or papers, which sometimes they superciliously received, and en anon contemptuously spurned. This looked almost as if they were o of his Majesty's principal Secretaries of State; but then the deference ey were seen to pay the next moment to shabby fellows, not half so well ressed as themselves, negatived that supposition, and left their functions ill a conundrum. While he was trying to solve, and on the point of sking some of the bystanders to solve it for him, he spied Mr. Trundle ot far off, still carrying his roll, now nearly as thick as himself, so easy is to get millions of signatures to any document, no matter how preposerous its contents. Trundle, however, was probably the honestest man a the lobby, for he was seeking nothing for himself, only a modest thirty millions of money for the drainage of Loch Swilly. Sydney watched his novements with interest. He was pressing forward with vigour, as fast s he could with his burden, and had just gained a position within about a ard of the door, when the two red-faced men sprang at him simultaneously, which was the first circumstance that seemed clearly to establish their anitorial functions. Poor Mr. Trundle was good-humour itself, and being lso supported by his patriotic enthusiasm, he was returning to the charge, when the valves of the door were opened from the inside; a gentleman walked rapidly out, — "Lord ———" —"one of the ministers" — ran through the crowd; the red-faced men did homage as he passed, and Mr. Trundle rushed, or rather rolled, after him. This was highly amusing to Sydney; but there was more diversion in store for him, for Mr. Connolly, the droll attorney, whom the reader has already seen in the waiting-room of Dublin Castle, was one of the throng, and was keeping, as usual, everybody near him in roars of laughter, by the never-ceasing flow of his fun, anecdote, and shrewd remarks upon men and things. Connolly, however, had his eyes bent upon the door like others, and at length approached it. He was put back. After some interval, he tried it again, but again was repulsed. A third time, and one of the fierce men with red faces ran at him as he had done before at Mr. Trundle, and Sydney heard him say,

"You must stand back, sir; you are not a member of the house."

"Thank ye for the information," retorted Connolly, with humorous composure, and undauntedly regarding the gruff official; "but if I'm not a member of the house at this present moment, may-be it won't be so some of those days, and the first motion I'll make, my fine fellow, after taking my sate, will be that you and your colleague opposite shall wear red plush inexpressibles."

A burst of laughter followed this sally, particularly from Connolly's countrymen, who were present in great force, and most of whom had, doubtless, received what they considered affronts from the fiery officials at the door, which were now handsomely avenged by the disparaging

speech of the humorous attorney. But the wrath of the red-faced man in black was not to be described; dreadful deeds would have been done, as Homer says, and Connolly might have been committed to the coal-hole for his audacity, had not the scene instantly changed.

The door of the house was suddenly flung open, and poured forth an impetuous tide of senators, flying from a speech of Sir Andrew Agnew, or some other dinner-bell, the Urquharts and Ansteys of the period. Foremost in the rout was Dawson: he spied and seized Sydney by the arm, and carried him away to Bellamy's.

Sydney spoke during dinner of what was uppermost in his mind, the annoying news he had received from Ireland. Dawson treated the matter with the utmost levity and contempt, and advised his friend to do so too.

"I have always through life, my dear fellow," said Dudley, "made it a rule to stand on my character; it's the best way, rely upon it; never defend yourself against the charges of a rascal: thrash him, or kick him, if you like, but give him no other answer."

"But one can't thrash cobblers and tinkers," said Sydney. "I only wish a *gentleman* would impeach my honour."

"You are very well off, I think," said Dawson, "to have your honour only impeached by cobblers and tinkers."

"I shall never be at ease," said Spenser, talking in the lowest possible tone of voice that could be heard by his friend, "until the fellows are found out who committed the robbery. For my part, I cannot but strongly suspect the men who were at Castle-Dawson that day at dinner."

He then informed Dawson that he had positively received from Thomson, in settlement of the account of the whist-table, the five-pound note which he had paid over to his father's sexton. Dawson said it was very strange, and quite possible that Sydney might be right.

"Did you ever see him since?" Sydney inquired.

Dawson said he had not, and thought he would scarcely recognise, were he to meet him.

The conversation then changed. Dawson was dull and abstracted, as usual, until the wine operated: he drank port freely, and grew more parliamentary and patronising at every glass. He began by talking in a strain of indignation of the scandalous exclusion of Irishmen from high offices in the government.

"I don't care for salary," he said, "but I care for place, and place I'm resolved to have. I want to be able to advance my friends, and first of all yourself, my dear fellow; I pledge you my word of honour as a gentleman you shall be my first object."

They drank more wine, and Dawson next requested Sydney to say what he would like to have; from what branch of the public service he would like to have a thousand a year or so dropping into his mouth.

Sydney's eyes glistened, as he answered that he would count himself a lucky fellow to have such a salary in any department of the state. He thought of his debts at Cambridge, and how pleasant it would be to pay them off out of the public purse. Then he inquired what office his liberal friend proposed to fill himself.

"*Men generally begin with the Treasury*," said Dawson; but after another pint of port, he was disposed to think that he might possibly, in certain contingencies, and with particular stipulations, be prevailed on to accept a situation abroad, but nothing under the government of a colony or an island.

"In such an event," he added, now overflowing with generosity and friendship, "what would you think, my dear fellow, of going out with me as my secretary?"

Sydney had no time to answer this serious question, for immediately a bell rang loud and sharply: Dawson jumped up; the house was going to divide, and every one flew to his place.

"Breakfast at one to-morrow," said Dawson, shaking the astonished Sydney by the hand, and flying with the rest.

Between the unusual noise and bustle, the port wine, and the visions of place and power which his parliamentary friend had filled his mind with, Sydney's brain was now seething like a kettle; his eyes were beginning to swim; he felt feverish, and the cool air of the streets was an agreeable relief. He wandered about for some time, and then feeling drowsy, returned to his hotel, threw himself on a sofa in the coffee-room, and slept for more than two hours. He then rose, and seeing that it was only eleven o'clock, he went out again, intending to drop into one of the minor theatres, to see John Reeve or Liston. Liston was then killing the public with laughter at the Olympic, and Sydney, having ascertained this from the bills, proceeded there to lay in a fresh stock of fun for his boon companions at Cambridge. Several people of both sexes were loitering about the piazzas as usual. Two men stood so close to the door that he had to brush close by them in order to enter the house; a stream of light from a lamp fell directly on the face of one of them. Sydney's memory for faces was good; he thought he recognised the ghastly features of Mr. Thomson, and a second glance assured him that his conjecture was right. Instead of entering the theatre, he now withdrew to some little distance under the vestibule, undecided whether to accost his suspicious acquaintance, or only watch his movements. He had not been debating this point with himself for three minutes, when a cab drove up within a couple of yards from where he stood. A gentleman jumped out; it was Dawson, and Sydney was just running up to him, when he was anticipated by the man he had been observing. Sydney was amazed. Only two or three hours ago his friend Dudley had stated that he had never seen Mr. Thomson since last summer, that he scarcely recalled his features, and now he saw him shake him by the hand, and they walked away together immediately in close conference towards the Strand.

Sydney neither kept his appointment with Dawson the following morning nor sent him any message or communication. When Dawson inquired about him at the Union Hotel, he was informed that he had left town by a morning coach for Cambridge.

Dawson wrote to him at the University, but received no answer. Sydney had started for Ireland.

CHAPTER LII.

THE CURATE IN TOWN.

"A poor man, sir, in point of gold and silver; he has not land enough to serve him for a grave, but he has a treasury of worth in his heart, and will travel round the globe bare-foot, to be at the side of a friend in need." NEW PLAY.

THE vindictive Mrs. Peacock was not long in turning to account the information she had picked out of the curate's letter. Lucy had an old flirtation with the sub-editor of the *Tyrconnel Mercury*, a certain sentimental Mr. O'Dowd, whom she had once even thought of marrying, but was deterred by the name, which she did not think a pretty or imposing one. Through her influence with this literary gentleman she procured the insertion of the following piquant little paragraph in the journal with which he was connected:—

"Strange reports are current on the subject of the robbery committed last summer on the proctor of a well-known clergyman in this county. A small pistol, of exquisite workmanship, is said to have been found on the spot where the crime was perpetrated, which will probably lead to the detection of the guilty parties. In the meantime we deliberately suspend our opinion; but it would seem highly improbable that such a pistol could have been in the possession of any person under the rank of a gentleman."

The pain which these few lines gave the Woodwards was intense. They tried in vain to conjecture how the fact alluded to could have become known to the conductors of the *Mercury*, and were apprehensive that Markham had not been sufficiently reserved upon the subject. Mr. Spenser, when he saw the paragraph, wrote instantly to his brother-in-law, being naturally curious to learn what the reports were to which allusion was made. Hercules and Carry consulted together, and the result of their deliberations was, that Hercules resolved on a journey to Dublin. The old portmanteau was again compelled to yield up the extraordinary miscellany of odds and ends of which it was the depository when off regular duty, and Carry packed it herself with the curate's Sunday suit, and put in his gown and cassock, in case he should be invited to preach some charity sermon.

The rector, indeed, was never more in want of the presence and support of his strenuous friend. His wife's illness had assumed a dangerous aspect; and on the very day of the curate's arrival in town, Mr. Spenser received his first intimation, in a letter from Mr. Peters, of the career of extravagance which his son had been running at college.

The letter coolly stated that the debts, on the whole, did not probably exceed six hundred pounds, and the writer excused himself for not having made a very minute inquiry on the ground that he was then deeply absorbed in some abstruse mathematical researches. Six hundred pounds was more than one-half of Mr. Spenser's income, and he had already, as we have seen, contracted a debt of five hundred, to meet the expenses consequent upon his removal to town. Dearly was he now beginning to pay the inevitable penalty of his conjugal facility and his parental *insouciance*.

The critical situation of Mrs. Spenser had already recalled Elizabeth to

town. How lovingly she flew to welcome her uncle, when, totally unexpected, he entered the drawing-room; how tenderly the huge good man returned her affectionate embraces. Mr. Spenser was in his wife's room. Elizabeth saw anxiety on Mr. Woodward's forehead, and concluded that he, too, had heard the untoward news of Sydney, and had good-naturedly come up to cheer and advise her father. Mr. Spenser appeared in a few moments. Each saw dejection in the visage of the other, and each ascribed it to the cause of uneasiness with which he was acquainted himself. It was not until Elizabeth retired that they mutually discovered that there were two sources of trouble instead of one, and that Sydney was concerned equally in both.

But Mr. Woodward was more deeply affected by the information his brother-in-law communicated, than the latter was by the business which brought the curate to Dublin. Mr. Spenser thought that the curate was frightening himself with a bugbear in attaching so much weight to the gossip of idle and malicious tongues at Redeross.

"This is one of those accusations, Hercules," said the rector, "which would require the most positive and direct evidence to support it. What the boy states in his letter to you is no doubt the simple truth. Besides, no human being in his senses would ever suppose that the paragraph in the *Mercury* could possibly refer to Sydney. I heartily wish his follies were as visionary as his crimes. His debts are unfortunately only too real."

"How will you meet them, Val?"

The rector looked profoundly melancholy, but made no answer, and Hercules did not allude to the subject again. On the other point, too, he said as little as possible, trying to persuade himself that his brother-in-law took the right view of it, and unwilling to add to the cares of a man who had care enough on his mind already. In conversation with Elizabeth he never alluded to either subject; she had not as yet a notion of the suspicions afloat to her brother's prejudice, and as to the newspaper paragraph, she fancied that it was aimed at Dawson.

It was fine weather, and as Mrs. Spenser repelled the attentions of her relative, and preferred to be waited on by a hired nurse-tender, Elizabeth was her uncle's constant companion during his stay in Dublin; they perambulated the town a good deal together, and much speculation they caused in the fashionable thoroughfares. The tall uncouth formidable man in clerical attire, with that refined and handsome girl hanging on his arm, looking so ill-assorted, and yet perfectly well pleased with her rough companion, like the fair maiden in romance under the escort and patronage of the lion. Everybody saw that Hercules was a country clergyman, at most a rural dean; and it was a question whether Elizabeth was his daughter or his wife, though it was difficult to conceive how she could be connected with him in either or in any way.

The Dabzacs were now in town, having taken a house for the season, not far from where the Spensers resided. Mrs. Dabzac called almost every day to inquire for her step-mother, and sometimes dropped in for a moment to see her father or Elizabeth; but it was only a moment, for she was always on her way to some gay scene, a *déjeuner*, a concert, or a flower-show; or Lady Brabble was in her carriage, or she expected Lord and Lady Western to lunch. Then the curate saw her name daily in the newspapers in the accounts of drawing-rooms, balls, dinners, in short, all the festive doings of the Dublin world, and he thought it strange that a daughter should lead such a life, while her father was in so much trouble. But Elizabeth made

twenty excuses for her sister, and often reminded her uncle that Arabella was not long married, and that her husband was not the sort of man to forego his social enjoyments because his wife's step-mother was indisposed. Hercules met Mrs. Dabzac only once. Elizabeth took him with her to pay a visit of civility, which he was the more particular to do, as he had been so ill-used at the wedding. A chariot, with a lady in it, was standing at the door, which opened almost directly Mr. Woodward knocked, and Mrs. Dabzac appeared at the same moment, tripping down stairs, superbly dressed, and thinking of anything but her rural relations. She uttered an exclamation of unaffected surprise, but feigned and ill-feigned pleasure, and received her uncle the curate with her habitual cold simper, only giving him two of her fingers, to save her gloves from being violated, and pouring out a torrent of frigid nothings, partly addressed to him and partly to her sister, while at the same time she kept beckoning to her friend in the carriage, as much as to say "what a bore!—what a *contre-temps!*" She kindly offered, however, to return to the drawing-room, and have "a long chat about old times" with her unwelcome visitors; which they, of course, would not hear of; and they also declined to go into the parlour, where there was luncheon, as they had lunched before. So far Hercules acted perfectly to the satisfaction of his heartless niece, but he spoiled all by insisting on handing her into the chariot. It certainly made an amusing scene. A group of Mrs. Dabzac's gayest acquaintance were passing, and two superfine men of an hussar regiment also rode up at the moment, so that poor Hercules found himself suddenly surrounded by a set of people who looked at him as if he was an ourang outang; and as to Mrs. Dabzac, she could not have felt or looked more ashamed of her uncle, had he actually been an animal of that species.

The next day the cards of Colonel and Mrs. Dabzac were left for Mr. Woodward, and also an affectionate note, in which his niece proved to a demonstration, by a list of her engagements, that it was out of her power to have her uncle to dinner any day for the next week, but trusted she would see a great deal of him on his next visit to Dublin, or perhaps at Dabzac House in the course of the summer. The only remark Hercules made upon this (whatever he may have thought of it) was that "it was no time for dining out." Nor indeed was it, at least for people like himself and Elizabeth, for not only was Mrs. Spenser sinking apace (having, in addition to her regular train of maladies, been attacked by an epidemic then raging in Dublin), but Lady Bonham was declining also. Elizabeth knew that her friend would gladly receive a visit from such a man as her uncle, and Hercules was always ready to go to the house of mourning. He held a long private conversation with the declining lady, and when he rejoined his niece in another apartment, he found her alone and in tears. She had seen Lord Bonham, and had heard from his own lips that the physicians had abandoned all hopes of their patient. Elizabeth wept again upon her uncle's shoulder as she told him the cause of her sorrow. "She deserves those tears," he said, as he comforted her, and shed one or two himself; "she is a noble creature, Lizzy; she is fit to live, and she is fit to die."

The next day was Sunday. It was Mr. Spenser's turn to preach at the Castle Chapel, but at nine o'clock in the morning his wife was pronounced in imminent danger, and the rector had no one to do the duty for him but his brother-in-law. It was a trying situation for the modest country parson to preach at a moment's notice in the presence of the court; Carry

never dreamed of such an event when she packed up his gown and cassock: but Hercules, acquitted himself well, and his robust style and fervent manner attracted the gracious attention of the excellent viceroy himself. When he retired to lay aside his sacred garments, an aid-de-camp was announced, and was in the act of inviting the astonished curate to dine with the Lord-Lieutenant, when a hurried note from his niece was put into his hand—Mrs. Spenser was no more.

At the same hour, and perhaps the same moment, Mrs. Woodward, having just returned from church, was in her dressing-room at the parsonage, when she was startled by the abrupt appearance of Sydney Spenser. His agitated looks, his disordered dress, his excited manner, frightened her. She sharply scrutinised his features, holding him at a little distance ere she embraced him, but the scrutiny was satisfactory; she found alarm there and indignation, but no guilt. He understood the meaning of her eye, and said, with a scornful smile,

"No, aunt Carry, I am not an highwayman."

"You did well to come over," she answered, sitting down on a sofa to recover herself, and motioning Sydney to sit beside her.

"Where is my uncle?" he asked.

"In Dublin."

"Then I shall not stay here an hour; I must see and consult with uncle Hercules without loss of time."

Carry approved of his resolution, but was naturally anxious to have from his own lips an account of the circumstances which had awakened suspicion, not doubting but that, when related by him, they would make the groundlessness of the charge as plain as the light of the day. But he had not gone far in his story before she clearly perceived that he was not making a clean breast; that he was concealing some things and varying in his statement of others. In truth, he was driven to and fro between his suspicions of Dawson, and his reluctance to implicate a man whose spell was still upon him, and of whose power to injure or to serve him he entertained an habitually exaggerated notion.

Those doublings and falterings alarmed Mrs. Woodward more than she had been alarmed yet.

"Sydney," she exclaimed, with passionate emotion, "you are not adhering to the truth, even with me, whom you can have no earthly object in deceiving. Beware, I implore you, I warn you, how you make your innocence look like guilt by unavailing concealments, dictated, I am convinced, either by false shame, or by your desire to screen somebody, I know not whom. Nobody will believe you guilty, if you do not condemn yourself by acting the part of guilt."

Her feminine vehemence produced a sensible effect. It was as if a Siddons had thus accosted him. Carry pressed her success.

"I fear nothing," she said, "but your own want of candour and directness. Sydney, I implore you, as your near relative, as your true friend, as you value your father's character, your sister's happiness, the respectability of your family, and your own personal safety, do not tamper with the truth. Frankly disclose every circumstance connected with your visit to Castle Dawson previous to the robbery; disclose them fully, without considering what construction they may bear, or what inference may be drawn from them, and my life upon it, Sydney, you will come out of this cloud without a shade of suspicion on your character."

It was the advice of a wise woman, given with a force of which only

women of a certain mettle are capable; Sydney walked about the room, and promised to act upon it.

"There may be circumstances," added Mrs. Woodward, more calmly—indeed she had fatigued herself with the foregoing appeal, and was now reclining upon the couch where she had just been sitting so erect and commanding—"there may be circumstances which to me you may not think it necessary or proper to reveal; but in the name of heaven, my dear boy, conceal nothing from your uncle; put him in possession of the whole truth, from the first to the last, and remember, spare no false friends at the expense of your true ones—you well know my meaning."

So saying, she rose, hastily adjusted her hair, which had fallen into disorder in the agitation of the scene, and took her nephew down to the dining-room, where she prevailed upon him to take some refreshment before he returned to Redcross.

She embraced and kissed him at parting with the affectionate fervour of a mother, and now for the first time remarked the improvement in his personal appearance. If Cambridge had not moralised and intellectualised, it had mannered and dressed him. He looked like a gentleman, though a foppish one, not like Dudley Dawson any longer. The flash coat, the gaudy cravat, and the check shirt had disappeared. His coat was the work of a Bond Street artist, his boots the handy-work of Hoby. They were not paid for, but they looked not the less handsome and well-made on that account.

Very little now passed at Redcross that escaped the piercing eyes of the new post-master's wife, or lady, as he called her. She was up early and late, and people that are so see twice as much as sluggards and snoozers do; at least Lucy did. However, it was not very surprising that Sydney's arrival and departure were not unknown to her, for at least twenty pair of eyes saw him as well as Mrs. Peacock's.

"There's something mysterious in it," said the sexton's slut of a wife, shrugging her broad shoulders at her shop-door, and alternately disclosing them to view, her draperies were so loose and classical.

"It's above my comprehension," said the tobacconist's spouse next-door, taking a curl-paper from her head, to wrap up a pennyworth of snuff for old Randy Maguire.

"Randy knows more anent it than he likes to let on," said Farmer M'Swyne, the knight of the thistle, who had come into town to sell a slip of a pig, and discourse about the weather with the idlers in the market-place.

"Then I just know as much as your own self, Sir Roger," said old Randy.

There was a laugh at the farmer's expense, so he went up the street with his slip of a pig, which was making as great an uproar, and with as little meaning in it, as if he had been the leading politician of the place.

The sexton's wife and the tobacconist's lady prolonged their gossip at the shop-door, until it was time for tea, when the former invited the latter to share that repast with her; and the sexton coming home soon after, accompanied by the proctor, the four of them sat down to a game of cards, which they enjoyed exceedingly, while the kettle on the hearth performed a sprightly overture to a supper of punch and oysters.

CHAPTER LIII.

THE REWARD.

"*Plutus.* What!—I!—can I do such mighty matters?

"*Chremes.* Can you! Ay by Jupiter, and many more, too, for no man ever had his fill of thee. Of all other things we may be surfeited, even of love! of you never." ARISTOPHANES.

SYDNEY arrived in Dublin at an early hour on the day but one after his sudden appearance at Redcross. On reaching the street where his aunt had informed him that his father lived, he found the thoroughfare obstructed by the mournful preparations for a funeral. If there was sorrow, it was not a silent one. There seemed to be no mutes assisting at the ceremony. There was a crowd assembled, and a great bustle amongst coachmen, footmen, and the regular standing army of the horseboys, beggars, and idlers of the quarter. The undertakers' men were distributing, and the servants were wrangling for those trappings of mock distress, called scarves and hatbands, a custom introduced into Ireland by way of encouraging the linen manufacture. Sydney had never before had an opportunity of observing the details of a funeral as it is managed in the Irish capital, and he stopped to observe what went on. The black hearse, waved over by black plumes, and drawn by large black horses, led by grooms in sable livery, stood at an open door, thronged with faces of which few were even grave. Behind the bier was a train of some half-dozen carriages, two evidently belonging to the funeral state, for like the hearse they were black, and drawn by horses of the same colour. The other carriages were private ones; two looked like those of the physicians who had either accelerated or failed to defeat the triumph of disease and death. The windows of the upper apartments of the opposite and adjoining houses were thrown up, and curious cooks and excited house-maids were eagerly gazing down upon the obstreporous scene, as if they had never seen black plumes and white scarves before. Sydney, with his fondness for coarse humour, could not but enjoy, as he could not but hear, the singular mixture of drollery and pathos which characterises the dialogue of the lower classes of Ireland. While he stood listening, a stir took place in the throng; the people gave way upon each side as the coffin was borne out. For a moment the crowd was still. The chief mourners followed. Sydney marked them as they issued from the door, and notwithstanding their downcast heads, and the sable mantles that enveloped their persons, he recognised his father and his uncle.

The truth immediately suggested itself, for he had heard from Mrs. Woodward of the dangerous illness of his step-mother.

But one servant remained in his father's house after the funeral had slowly moved away. Sydney asked for his sister; she had been removed the day before to the house of her friends, the Ramsdens. He obtained the direction, and hurried to find her. It was now about ten o'clock, and the streets were beginning to look lively, if not business-like. Those strange, uncouth, wild, convenient, and inconvenient vehicles, the jaunting-cars, drawn by wild horses and driven by wild men, were beginning to career about the town, obeying no law, human or divine, reckless of

the lives and limbs of the passengers, the most of whom indeed, seemed reckless of their own carcases, for they preferred the middle of the street to the trottoirs, and when any of the Celtic charioteers, having a drop of the milk of human kindness left, raised a shout of warning to his probable victims, as he drove amuck amongst them, the fellow warned either doggedly despised the caution, or profited by it with a savage execration.

As Sydney was walking rapidly along, rather closer than was prudent to the edge of the *pavé*, one of those unsightly conveniences came sweeping down, the driver on one side yelling to the populace, a passenger on the other swearing at the driver, and the intermediate space crowded and piled with portmanteaus and travelling-bags. Sydney recoiled to save his knees from collision with the iron steps of the vehicle, and at the same moment meeting the eye of the passenger, discovered that it was his honourable friend the member for Rottenham.

Dawson instantly jumped off, and Sydney's hand was in his grasp before he could agree or disagree to be so embraced. They stood before the hotel where Dawson was in the habit of staying when in Dublin.

"You are cold to me," said Dudley; "how have I offended you?"

The question was not hypocritical. Dawson was really ignorant what offence he had given to young Spenser, who returned some gruff reply, but with an agitation which the other did not fail to notice and take advantage of. He spoke in his most soothing tones, merely inviting Sydney to step into the hotel, and candidly state what he complained of. To so much Dawson was fairly entitled, and Sydney accompanied him into the house, where the senator, being well known, was speedily accommodated with a private room.

"Breakfast for two," he said to the waiter, as coolly as if nothing had happened to vary his relations with young Spenser.

Sydney's bolt was soon shot. He charged his friend Dudley with playing him false respecting his acquaintanceship with Mr. Thomson. Dawson winced under the charge visibly, if Sydney had been collected enough to mark it, but he was over-excited, and at no time very observant. Dawson, however, recovered himself instantly, burst into an affected laugh, and exclaimed—

"Well, they *are* strikingly like one another; I am not in the least astonished at your mistake, ludicrous as it is. Why, man, the fellow you took for Thomson was a reporter of the *Morning Chronicle;* I had an assignation with him, certainly, and I'll tell you for what, to correct his report of my speech that night on the state of the country."

Sydney remarked that the piazza of the Olympic was an odd place for an appointment with a reporter.

"Quite the contrary," said Dawson, "the office of the *Morning Chronicle* is in the Strand, you know, hard by."

"And did you speak that night?" continued Sydney, fancying that he was cross-examining his friend very acutely.

Dawson rang the bell.

"Did I, indeed?" he replied, triumphantly; "the Tories know whether I spoke or not. I made a speech, and, what's more, it was a hit, my boy; why, I spoke for one hour and twenty minutes. Sheil only spoke for half an hour, and O'Connell was not on his legs much longer. Waiter, bring me the file of the *Morning Chronicle*. You shall read my speech, corrected by myself from the report of the very fellow you took for Thomson."

"I see I was mistaken," said Sydney, completely hood-winked, "but he was extremely like Thomson, Dudley."

The waiter re-appeared with the file, followed by another with breakfast. Sydney then had to listen to two mortal columns of that species of declamation of which the Imperial House of Commons has such a lively horror, but which, it is to be presumed, would rank in an Irish one with the speeches of Cicero, or above them. It was a proper punishment for young Spenser's simplicity. Had he even examined the dates, he would have detected the imposition.

Thus was the misplaced confidence once more re-established, and the fatal ascendancy once more restored. Sydney breakfasted with Dawson, who seemed profoundly affected by the account of Mrs. Spenser's death (much more, indeed, than Sydney himself), and made several touching remarks about the precariousness of earthly things. Then they separated for the morning, after an appointment to meet again at a later hour of the day.

Sydney and Elizabeth met. Elizabeth was in the deepest grief, not for the loss of a step-mother, in whom she had never had so much as a friend, but for the sorrow in which the event had plunged her father. But she little knew the extent of his distress that melancholy morning. The rector confessed to Hercules, as they returned together in one of the gloomy carriages, after the performance of the funeral rites, that he had no means of paying off his son's debts and his own (the latter now amounting to a large sum) but by a sequestration of his living and the sale of his furniture, and even his books.

"Not the books—not the books, Val," said the good curate, his eye moist and his voice tremulous with sympathy; "we won't let the books go, come what will."

"Hercules, I ought to have taken your advice respecting that boy," said the rector.

"You acted for the best," said Woodward.

Such was the short sad conversation of the mourning coach.

They reached the silent house and entered it unnoticed. The rector buried himself in the inmost chamber, and Hercules went to make arrangements for the immediate return of the family to the country. Elizabeth hastened to her father's side, and informed him of Sydney's arrival. Mr. Spenser declined to see his son, and sent him a message by his uncle, conveying his desire that he should go to his sister, Mrs. Dabzac (who had gone down a few days before to her country seat in the north), and remain under her roof for the present. Uncle and nephew met. Dawson had regained his dangerous influence upon Sydney since the latter had conversed with his aunt at the parsonage, and all Carry's wise and eloquent advice might as well have been given to the winds. To such an extent, indeed, did the misguided young man now waver in his statements, and equivocate in his replies to the questions put to him, that he actually forced upon his uncle the terrifying conclusion that to some extent or another he was not unimplicated in the crime. All unhappiness about his nephew's debts disappeared from the mind of Hercules directly the idea of his guilt entered it. It was not without some difficulty that he brought himself to suggest a course which he had been turning in his mind for some time, namely, the expediency of offering a large reward for the discovery of the person or persons who robbed Maguire.

But Sydney seized on the idea with alacrity. "Let my father offer five

or six hundred pounds," he exclaimed, flippantly, as if the sum he named was a mere trifle.

He never forgot the tremendous look which his uncle gave him, as he passionately answered,

"Five or six hundred pounds, ill-conditioned boy,—that is about the amount you have squandered in six months in wine and gluttony, on horses and dogs, and your idle and unprincipled associates, reckless whence the money was to come to pay for your profligacy, never thinking what burdens you were heaping on the back of your father, what privations you were bringing on your good sister, what disgrace and misery on all your relations and connections! Five hundred pounds—you talk glibly of hundreds of pounds!"

Fiercely and impetuously delivered, this speech of Hercules amazed and overwhelmed his nephew: he quailed and cowered under every word as if it had been a blow, twirling a foppish little cane round his finger and looking extremely foolish.

Sydney was at a loss to divine how the news of his excesses had reached the ears of his family. He exclaimed, doggedly and at random, that his enemies exaggerated his wildnesses, as usual.

"No, sir," resumed his uncle. "I believe the exact contrary is the fact. Your enemies, indeed! Your enemy, sir, is yourself; and, let me tell you, you have a great fool and a great coxcomb for your enemy. Your tutor has inquired, and admits that your debts exceed six hundred pounds—some of them, no doubt, gambling debts—debts of honour, I understand you call them; and pray, sir, what do you call your debts to the poor innkeepers at Redcross, to the widow Grogan, for example?"

"All this, sir, is beside the present question," said Sydney, with pro-voking hauteur, though almost livid at the same time with shame and passion.

The curate was out of breath, and admitted that, to some extent, it was so.

"To return, then, sir, to the question of the reward," continued the curate, with the supercilious air of one who has gained an advantage in argument, and slapping his refulgent boots impatiently.

"My opinion is," said the curate, despising his nephew too much to enter into a dispute with him, "that the reward ought to be offered by the Lord Lieutenant."

"Or Tarse, that would answer equally well," said Sydney.

The negotiation was no difficulty about it. Mr. Spenser, that same evening carried a report of it a note to a leading member of the Irish Government, which Sydney the next day presented at the Castle. It procured him an an appointment interview, much to the surprise and envy of the throng in the "Quiz" room, who had been making merry at the curate's expense, and is in telling what he could be, or what he could be looking for, unless it was the office of chaplain to Newgate.

The following evening the *Dublin Gazette* announced that the Lord Lieutenant would give a reward of three hundred pounds to any person who would prosecute to conviction the robbers of Mr. Spenser's proctor and one hundred pounds to any body who would give such information as would lead to the discovery of the offenders. On the same evening a travelling-carriage drove up to Mr. Spenser's door, and the rector, his daughter, the curate, with the two children, stepped into it, and accomplished the usual first stage of the journey to Redcross.

Dawson heard of the reward first from Sydney. Sydney was dining with him, intending on the following day to go to Mrs. Dabzac's, should she be able to receive him, which he internally hoped she would not. Mr. Spenser had written to her before he left town, requesting her to send her answer to her brother directly. Dawson said the reward was a very proper step; he wondered it had not been thought of before; and then he asked Sydney to take wine.

"Bring some champagne," he cried to the waiter.

"Let it be well iced," added the luxurious young spendthrift, whose father's heart was at that moment breaking in a country inn, bitterly thinking of his benefice about to be mortgaged, and his library going to the hammer. But the iced champagne was drunk—to be sure the senator was to pay for it—and after the champagne they drank a bottle of claret each, and then they went to the play. After the play they resorted, accompanied by two of Dawson's Dublin friends (Bob Sharkey was one of them), to a notorious house, where they smoked cigars, eat lobsters, and drank mulled port, Sydney objecting to punch, and paying for his supper with his celebrated mimicry of his uncle Hercules. With this amiable effort of genius that virtuous night closed, and the next morning Sydney found on his table the following tender epistle from his married sister:—

"Dabzac House, Tanderagee.

"MY DEAR SYDNEY,

"My feelings so completely overpower me, that I hardly know what I am writing, or whether I am writing or not. Oh, my poor, poor father! what he has gone through—what he has endured; but what a blessing it was to have Elizabeth with him, and my dear good uncle, and you, Sydney, who came over so providentially, just when he required every support. Oh, what would I not have given to have been with you all! but Colonel Dabzac would not hear of it, and two of the carriage-horses are laid up, so it was not to be; and I hope it is all for the better: I fear I should have broken down under such a trial. Oh, Sydney, let this be a warning to all of us. No one can tell whose turn it may be next to appear at the dread tribunal. Oh, that we may be all prepared. I am sure, my dear, dear Sydney, if your coming to us just now would be any relief or amusement to you, it would only make me too happy to have you with us, and it would gratify my husband, too, more than I can tell. The way we are situated is this:—Lord and Lady Western are here for the summer, I fear, and the odious Dalrymples; then the assizes are coming on, and we are to have those stupid old Judges, and the High Sheriff, and half-a-dozen Dabzacs, as a matter of course; I don't expect to survive it, I assure you; but, my dear Sydney, if all this does not frighten you as it does me, do come down, I entreat; indeed, I do so want somebody to support me; I hardly dare promise you a bed, but you would put up with a sofa, I am sure, for the sake of being near me; and recollect, Sydney, you have not been my guest since I was married. Colonel Dabzac begs to join me in all I have said, and in condolences upon the late melancholy, but, I hope, instructive event.

"Your ever dear sister,

"ARABELLA DABZAC.

"To Sydney Spenser, Esq."
&c., &c., &c.

The truth was, that Mrs. Dabzac figured Sydney to herself as she had last seen him at her father's house, dressing, talking, laughing, blustering,

and swaggering like Dudley Dawson; she had no idea how effectually the tailors of Cambridge had brushed up his exterior, and its society rubbed down his manners; how the consciousness of owing large instead of paltry sums had quieted and dignified his bearing; how familiar he had grown with expensive luxuries and fashionable occupations; with the systems, nomenclatures, and usages of the great world, or she would not have been ashamed to present her brother to Lord and Lady Western and the odious Dalrymples.

Sydney forwarded his sister's letter to his father, as his excuse for not going to Dabzac House; but the rector had surely distress enough without the additional pang of a daughter's heartlessness.

CHAPTER LIV.

THE EXPLOSION.

"Oh, what was love made for, if 'tis not the same
Through joy and through sorrow, through glory, through shame."

MOORE.

THE gold offered by the Castle operated quickly—only too quickly. Vivyan, returning from the Peninsula, found his Elizabeth the sister of a denounced criminal, and a fugitive from the hands of justice.

The curate, whose strong keen eye was always on the watch under his beetling brows for opportunities of doing his fellow-creatures some service, or saving them from some harm (a faithful shepherd, if ever a flock had one), observed prowling about the neighbourhood of Redcross, soon after his return home, a stranger, whose features, at once profoundly melancholy and expressive of hardened guilt, exercised a painful fascination upon him. Once or twice he met him hanging about the post-office, and he asked Mrs. Peacock if she knew who he was, and what was his business in the town. She answered promptly, that she believed he was a poor young artist, who had come down to sketch the scenery on the coast. This was plausible, but still Hercules kept his eye upon him; probably thinking that it was not the pencil which had drawn those deep lines in the stranger's cheeks, nor the fine arts which had given him that air of pensive profligacy. Upon one occasion it happened that the curate was walking with Mr. Spenser (the first day the poor rector had been prevailed on to take the air), when this remarkable yet mean personage crossed their path.

"Of what age would you take him to be?" said Hercules.

"Young," said the rector; "but age is not altogether measured by years."

"A young man and an old scoundrel, I should say," added the curate.

They re-entered the curate's house (for the Spensers had not returned to the parsonage, nor was it their intention to do so for some time), and sat down to a homely dinner. Time was when the homeliest dinner in that house was a happy one; but now the faces were sad and the voices spoke with effort. Mr. Spenser was mourning both as a husband and a father; Elizabeth had also her complicated grief; Carry's big heart was bursting with solicitude for them both; and Hercules was all tenderness to every body

n his own rugged colossal way. Their sorrow at that moment resembled me of those sombre masses of vapour that so often brooded in calm wet weather over the mountains of the region, mists which poured down steady ain, and involved every object in the landscape in dense but serene bscurity. How different was it after the blow which followed! In the ourse of that same evening, a gentleman with whom both Mr. Spenser and Mr. Woodward were slightly acquainted, a magistrate of the county, rode up to the gate of the court-yard. He solicited a private interview with the rector, who received him in the curate's study.

Thomson had that morning tendered informations on oath against Sydney Spenser.

It is almost unnecessary to state that the outrage had been actually committed by the two fellows who had been employed at Castle Dawson, in aiding and abetting its proprietor in a lawless proceeding of another character. We have seen that one of those fellows, Lamb, had already been sent out of the country; and Dawson would have gladly disposed of Thomson in the same way, but he was not successful in inducing him to expatriate himself. His last attempt had been on the late occasion, when Sydney had accidentally witnessed their meeting by night in London. Whether Thomson had followed Dawson over to Ireland, or had returned to that country in search of another job, is uncertain, but he was in Dublin when the reward was offered, and its first effect was to agitate and alarm him exceedingly, for he did not know what had become of his accomplice, and the lively faith he had in Lamb's villany assured him that no time would be lost on his part in turning approver to clutch the money. Haunted by this well-founded apprehension, he accidentally met with Mr. Sharkey, his old employer, and from him he learned the fact that Lamb was gone to improve his fortunes and morality amongst the Yankees. How devoutly Thomson then wished that they had been a party of three at the Black Castle, that he might have had somebody to transport and make three hundred pounds by. Brooding still on the money, he recollected that he had met a man on the night of the robbery, and near the scene of it, whose features he thought he would recall if he was to meet him again. Acting on this hint from the author of all roguery, he crept by tortuous ways to Redcross. He had personated an artist at Castle Dawson to blind Sydney Spenser, and he now resumed the same easily-supported character; it only required a portfolio, a scrap of chalk, and a few terms of art gleaned from a penny cyclopædia. Ned Grogan (the man who saw Sydney that night in the neighbourhood of the old castle) had a narrow escape, for it was he who had been seen by Thomson, and whom the miscreant would infallibly have sacrificed, had he not been diverted from that scheme by accidentally falling in with his old acquaintance, Mrs. Peacock. Thomson had not been many days in the society of the unprincipled and revengeful Lucy, before he abandoned his designs against Grogan, and (having the benefit of all the information which the post-mistress had collected, not only from the gossip of the town, but from official sources) determined to fly at higher game. It was equal to him, of course, whether he earned the reward of the Government, or extorted the money from Mr. Spenser; and it was probably in the latter way that he reckoned upon securing his object.

To Elizabeth there was nothing to break the shock occasioned by the explosion of this "infernal machine;" the other members of the family had been in some slight degree prepared; at least, as far as knowing that malicious people had for some time been making free with Sydney's

character, and that there was a singular concurrence of circumstances to support a charge against him; but to his sister the first disclosure came in its last and most appalling shape; she fell with a harrowing shriek into Carry's arms, and Hercules carried her, almost lifeless, to her room.

That same night, at a late hour, a travelling-carriage arrived at the principal inn of the town. The handsome young man, browned by southern suns, who alighted from it, was Frank Vivyan. What fearful changes had taken place since he had been last in Redcross! But the saddest change of all was, that his return gave his Elizabeth no joy, but, on the contrary, made her sorrows more hard to bear.

He returned not to be a comforter, for dishonour admits of no solace; and alike incapable of performing the active offices of a friend, for the case seemed equally beyond the reach of friendship. He came back, too—in what a harrowing relation to herself! Elizabeth's share in the misfortune was the largest and bitterest of all.

Mrs. Woodward, knowing the force of her niece's character perfectly, was fully prepared for the determination to which she came in the first moment of recovered self-possession—to cancel her engagement to Vivyan. Mrs. Woodward communicated this inevitable result to the miserable young man before Elizabeth had directly alluded to the subject. In fact, so clearly did the noble-minded girl see the path which duty and high-minded love pointed out to her—so plain did the road to be taken lie before her, shining in the bright sun of honour—that her resolution to tread it was rather implied than expressed in her conversation, and Carry was not slower to divine, than her niece was to form, a right and high-souled purpose.

Vivyan, on his side, would have thought himself the blackest and most heartless traitor, had any guilt of Sydney's, whatever its amount, or how clear soever its demonstration, led him for one moment to waver in his devotion to Elizabeth. Some days elapsed before she was strong enough to support the severe trial of an interview with him. These days were passed by Vivyan in no company but that of Mrs. Woodward, for the rector and his brother-in-law had gone up to Dublin to be directed by professional advice as to the conduct to be pursued with respect to their son and nephew. Vivyan never doubted Sydney's innocence for a moment. Every circumstance attending the charge seemed a complete answer to it, —the nature of the accusation—the position of the accused—he might well have added the character of the accuser, as well as his personal appearance, had he been acquainted with either. All these topics were urged by Vivyan over and over again in long interviews with Mrs. Woodward.

"But, as to myself and Elizabeth," he repeatedly added, "let the issue of this unfortunate business be what it may, it does not alter our affections, and it cannot and must not prevent our union."

"Cherish no such hope, I implore you, Mr. Vivyan," replied Mrs. Woodward, who was already beginning to show in her cheek, and her diminished figure, the outward signs of sorrow and anxiety—"Elizabeth's love is too pure, too elevated, to suffer you, in the violence of your attachment, to connect yourself with a dishonoured family. Oh, no, nothing now but the most complete vindication of her brother in the face of the world, and in the eyes of the law—in fact, nothing but the discovery and conviction of the actual offenders—if, indeed, my unfortunate nephew is innocent—" Her voice and her tears fell at the torturing thought that

"Innocent! of course he is," cried Vivyan, taking her hand with affectionate warmth; "none of *us*, at least, have a doubt of it."

"Alas, my husband has," said Carry, and, no longer controlling her grief, wept abundantly.

Before Elizabeth was able to receive Vivyan, the rector and curate returned from Dublin. Sydney had been sent to Canada. It was the result of a consultation with an eminent lawyer and an old friend of the family, who, having had all the circumstances of the case before him, and viewed it in all its bearings, formed the adverse opinion upon which Mr. Spenser immediately acted.

Strong suspicion also fell at the same time upon Dawson. Indeed, the impression upon the mind of the lawyer was that Sydney had committed the crime at the instigation of his dangerous associate; in fact, that Sydney had been what is commonly called a cat's-paw in the transaction. Dawson had been invited to be present at the secret inquiry, but had excused himself on the plea of urgent parliamentary business, whereas in truth he was apprehensive of being cross-examined inconveniently as to the character and real employment of Thomson and Lamb. Besides, he had no direct evidence to give which could have been of use to young Spenser. The only way in which he could possibly have served him would have been by destroying Thomson's credit, which no man could have done more effectually, but he would have destroyed himself at the same time.

But Sydney had damaged his own case from first to last by his fatal deviations from truth. He reserved to the eleventh hour the statement that he had received the bank-note, which he had paid to Mr. Hogg, the sexton, from the hands of Thomson himself. There was no corroboration of this assertion, and he had previously assured his uncle that he had no recollection whatever of the way into which the note came into his possession. Again, he prevaricated with respect to the arms in the same suicidal manner. He had disowned the pistol found by Markham, a suspicious circumstance in itself; but when a solemn address from the lawyer extorted from him the other fact, that he had thrown its fellow into the loch, his unhappy relatives hung their heads down; the inquiry was considered at an end, and the unfortunate young man was sensible himself that he had no longer any support but the unavailing consciousness of his own innocence. "It is possible," said the lawyer, privately to Mr. Woodward, "it is possible that your nephew may not be guilty; the crime may, in fact, have been committed by the fellow who now appears to accuse him; but your nephew has done so much to give his case the aspect of criminality, and deprive himself of the benefit of character, that I cannot recommend you to trust to the verdict of a jury. My advice is, to send him out of the country before informations are sworn, after which it may be too late."

Elizabeth and Vivyan met. Her resolution, taken in the depths of her sorrow, and conceived in the spirit of the purest and most disinterested love (the love that prizes not its own gratification, but the happiness, and above all, the honour of the loved object,) never wavered for a moment. Its strength consisted in the very excess of its delicacy and tenderness; never did woman need the support of a lover and a husband more than in the circumstances under which this generous girl stedfastly declined it; never was more fervent attachment, more passionate remonstrance, brought to bear upon a woman's purpose, to warp her from it. It was the contest

of two spirits of the truest love, the struggle of two rival principles of the finest honour;—Elizabeth prevailed.

"No, dearest Frank," she said, with the sweetest sadness; "I shall always love you, only not in the character to which I formerly aspired."

He urged, and urged in vain, that love's trial was in the storms and vicissitudes of life, and that she was robbing love of its best privilege, by repelling its sympathy and protection at a moment when both were most needful.

"Oh! Frank," she answered, "if this were a misfortune which I ought to share with you, if it were only poverty, if it were anything but disgrace, do you think I would have come to this decision?"

"Dearest Elizabeth," he replied, "I will not hear you talk of disgrace. There is a mystery unexplained, that is all that can be said; I still believe firmly that your brother is innocent as I am; the criminal is his accuser, or Dawson himself: but at all events, does dishonour touch you?—oh, you talk of dishonouring me, and yet you would deprive me of the only honour I seek, all I am ambitious of,—that of calling you my wife."

"Ah," she answered, "with what delight I once listened to that language, and from you did not call it flattery; but how can I now deceive myself? I am no longer an object of ambition, but only, only of pity."

"Only of love, nothing but devoted and eternal love," cried Vivyan, clasping her in his arms. "How can you talk of separation, dearest girl, when I know your love is unchanged?"

"Unchanged it is, indeed," she answered; "unchanged and unchangeable. Alas! I love you too well to marry you."

From that determination neither tears nor eloquence, persuasion nor argument, could make her swerve. Vivyan's last appeal was founded upon the unfavourable inference which the world would draw from the breaking off of their marriage; but Elizabeth had taken her stand upon a clear broad principle of conduct, and all considerations of a secondary nature were pressed upon her to no purpose.

They met once more, and Vivyan went abroad soon after, miserable himself, and leaving those he loved best in the world in misery behind

BOOK X.

CHAPTER LV.

UNCLE AND NIECE.

"Oh, Goneril,
You are not worth the dust which the rude wind
Blows in your face; I fear your disposition."
LEAR.

THE world talked with its usual flippancy, impertinence, ignorance, and often malice, of the reverses of the Spensers. The great world in London and Dublin gosciped pretty much in the same style as the little world in Redcross. People judged every thing without knowing much about anything: and arranged what every body was to do, and the relative duties and obligations of every member of the family precisely as if they constituted a tribunal fully informed upon the whole of the case, and authorised to pronounce a decree settling the rights and reponsibilities of all the parties. Most coteries agreed that the Spensers must quarter themselves upon somebody, or at least distribute themselves among their rich friends and relations; Elizabeth was to go to the Ramsdens, the children were to be taken by the Woodwards, and Mr. Spenser himself would naturally devolve upon his married, wealthy, and favourite daughter, Mrs. Dabzac. This was all very nice and comfortable; but you may be certain many things were said by the world, in the course of these arrangements, which were not altogether so good-natured.

"I am not quite so sure," observed Lady Brabble, for instance, "that the Ramsdens will like to have Elizabeth Spenser again, after this very awkward affair about her brother; Mrs. Ramsden is very particular, and I really cannot blame her, as she has daughters."

"I know, for my own part," said old Mrs. Loquax, "I always judge girls by their brothers; it's a principle I have always acted on, and I advise every body to do the same."

"Then, you know, that was all extremely unpleasant about that terrible Mr. Dawson; and I'm told it's going on still," said Miss Vallancey, a wickedly virtuous old maid.

"Mr. Spenser, I'm told, is going abroad," said Lady Brabble.

"I can't tell you how I pity him," said Lady Towser; "at the same time, he has brought it all on himself, poor man; there's no denying it."

"Oh, I should think nothing about it, Lady Towser, if it had happened in any other family but that of a clergyman," said the godly Miss Vallancey. "Things like this give the enemies of religion such a handle."

"By the bye," said Lady Brabble, "talking of the Spensers, reminds me of the Dabzacs;—we are going down to them next week—what a dear good creature *she* is, and how much she is to be pitied."

This is just a specimen of the way in which the Dublin world discussed the affairs of the Spensers, shooting their poisoned little shafts at random, in morning visits, and the talkative corners of ball-rooms.

The Spensers did not quarter themselves anywhere, at least in the free and easy sense in which the Dublin ladies used the word. They certainly quartered themselves in no sense at all upon the Ramsdens, or even upon the Dabzacs. If they lived at free quarters any where at all for a short time, it was under the humble roof of the plain curate of Redcross, the roof which he was wont to repair with his own hands, when the storms stripped it.

As to Mrs. Dabzac, she wrote, indeed, several rigmarole letters, in the style of her epistle to Sydney, full of anxieties and tendernesses, commiserations and remembrances, but she never invited either her father or sister to her house, angelical as Lady Brabble pronounced her. Arabella, however, had excuses as plenty as blackberries for not doing what a daughter of any feeling would have done under the circumstances. Perhaps they did not altogether impose upon the rector; but if he questioned their validity he was silent upon the subject.

He had a child, however, who did not fail him in his troubles, who stuck the closer to him the more the tempest raged and the storms of life buffeted him.

"You have a daughter left, Val," said Hercules, when Mr. Spenser was speaking of his reduced circumstances, "who has worth enough to make any man who possesses her a Cræsus."

"Yes," said the rector, "Elizabeth has always done her duty."

"Nobody has lost so much as she has," said the curate.

So in truth it was; but minds that are strong and good are supported by trial under trial: the very variety of their afflictions sustains them. They are like the strong-rooted tree of the forest, which many winds conspire to overthrow, but which remain upright, though shaken, by the very conflict of the opposing blasts.

Those who saw the parsonage in a few months after the calamities recorded in the previous book witnessed a melancholy revolution there. The house was shut up; its furniture had been sold; the rector's pictures, bronzes, busts, and what he valued and regretted most of all, his select and beautiful library, with its curiously carved oaken bookcases, had been removed to Dublin, and were destined to the hammer, to satisfy the demands of his son's Cambridge creditors, and discharge his other pecuniary obligations. The horses and carriages had been disposed of; even the old black mare on which Carry Woodward used to sit so portly; and the Gipsy was no more to be seen moored alongside the little pier.

The curate did not let the books go without a vigorous effort to save them.

"All nonsense, Carry," he said, "the books can't be sold; it is impossible; I have turned it all over in my mind; his daughter will never allow it."

Carry looked surprised, thinking that he meant Elizabeth.

"Not allow it, my dear Hercules!—she is perfectly resigned on that as upon every other subject."

"I'm not talking of Lizzy, Carry,—I'm talking of Arabella, Mrs. Dabzac."

"Well, my love," said Carry, regarding him with curiosity, not knowing what he was driving at, "what of Mrs. Dabzac?"

"Why," said Hercules, "only that she is his daughter, and was always his favourite; I cannot but think, if she knew the actual state of his affairs, she would at least redeem his library,—if Val had only his books he would weather the storm."

"My dear good Hercules," cried his wife, smiling affectionately on him, in a way that clearly intimated her opinion that he was much too simple for a man of his years. He perfectly understood her looks, and vociferated, slapping his thigh,

"Why, Carry, she is not a Goneril, or a Regan."

"Very far from a Cordelia," said Carry. "Why, my dear, not to speak of her recent behaviour to her father himself, her very conduct to you—I mean the way she acted at her marriage—might show you how little is to be expected from her."

"Come, Carry, love, let by-gones be by-gones; I have forgiven her long ago. She probably thought that a bishop would tie the knot faster than a curate, and perhaps she was right. That is no reason for denying her the common feelings of a daughter for a father."

At day-break the next morning, Hercules rose, saddled Sligo with his own hands, and set out on a long journey across the country, taking the line of road that led to the county of Armagh. The reader may think it strange to see him bestriding Sligo again, as he had sold that redoubted steed to Doctor Wilkins for twenty pounds; but Sligo was a pony who had a will of his own, and whether it was that he preferred divinity to physic, or had grown so attached to his old shed in the curate's yard, that he could not make himself comfortable anywhere else, certain it was that the doctor could get no good of him; for, whenever he found the stable-door open, or had any opportunity of making his escape, he invariably trotted back to his former abode, and was found with his nose against the latch, as if trying to raise it and let himself in. After this had happened several times, Doctor Wilkins thought he might as well reconvey him formally to his ancient master, but he steadfastly refused to take back the twenty pounds, insisting that he bought the pony, subject to all his faults and eccentricities.

Dabzac House was a spacious, grey, formal building, with a story more than a country-house ought to have; it looked cold and ceremonious; there was a dull square piece of water in front of it, with two stiff swans lazily navigating it; the trees and shrubs seemed to have been trimmed by a carpenter, and the only flowers to be seen were hollyhocks and orange lilies. The house was just now full of company. A great many frigid and fashionable people were gathered together, the personages enumerated in Mrs. Dabzac's letter to Sydney, and several more whom she had not referred to, including two or three lieutenant-colonels and grand masters.

Arabella, habited in graceful and almost gay mourning, was standing, shortly before dinner, at a window, chatting with the Honourable John Dalrymple and the Honourable Tom Flinch; they were talking of Cambridge, and Arabella had been actually boasting of her brother's extravagant career there (that having been the cause publicly assigned for Sydney's abrupt expatriation), when with horror indescribable she espied her uncle riding up the rigid avenue, between the regular rows of beeches.

"Whom have we got here?" said the Honourable Tom, the first to call attention to the approaching curiosity.

"I think," said the Honourable John, "it must be Dominie Sampson."

"Or Doctor Johnson *redivivus*," said the other.

Arabella was a little short-sighted, though in the present instance she had been the first to descry her relative, and she now reconnoitred him through her eye-glass, just to gain time to arrange her ideas. While she was doing so, Colonel Dabzac came to the window, and instantly recognised his wife's uncle.

"Can it be possible?—really I believe Dabzac is right—my uncle, my dear good odd uncle," exclaimed his amiable niece, with her little affected simper.

The colonel went out instantly to receive Mr. Woodward with his habitual starched civility, but still as became a gentleman in his own house. Arabella received him, too, with a great deal more warmth in her manner than she really felt, and yet she looked any thing but cordial.

The Honourables John and Tom were too well bred to jest and more on the curate's personal appearance, now that he proved to be a relation of the family, but they saw in a twinkling that their hostess was disconcerted by the new arrival, and despised her vulgarity of mind much more than they did the curate's coat.

Hercules had all the great points that constitute the true gentleman. He was independent and unselfish, respected others, and respected himself; he knew his position, and though no man had a higher sense than he had of the dignity of a minister of the gospel, no man knew better the practical difference in society between the opulent drones and the indigent working-bees of the hive. As a clergyman, and a relative of Mrs. Dabzac, he was received respectfully by the company, who were accustomed to the homely manners of the northern clergy, and did not want to be assured that Hercules was a plain blunt man and an eccentricity, points that were repeatedly pressed by his niece.

As the people began to assemble before dinner, the Honourable John said to the Honourable Tom,

"Do you know, Tom, this is the first time, to my knowledge, that I was ever in the same room with a curate."

"Well," replied the Honourable Tom, "I have no recollection whether I ever met a curate before, but I was once in the same room with an attorney."

"That must have been very unpleasant," drawled his brother coxcomb.

Lady Brabble observed to Lady Western that she was positive Mrs. Dabzac wished her uncle in Jericho.

"Dear me," exclaimed Lady Western, and being a little deaf, she begged to examine Mr. Woodward very attentively, under the impression that he was a missionary, just returned from the city named by Lady Brabble.

When dinner was announced, Hercules was amazed. He had dined on the road, at two o'clock, and had purposely delayed his arrival at Dabzac House to an hour when he thought that dinner would be over, having no notion of spunging on his niece for more than a tea and a night's lodging. An eight o'clock dinner had never entered into his calculations, and he had hardly made up his mind whether the announcement was serious, when he found himself seated at a pompous banquet, with the deaf Lady Western on one side of him, and the Honourable Tom Flinch on the other. Hercules was called on to say grace, and his performance of that office drew all eyes upon him, it was at once so brief and so devout, so energetic and sonorous. Lady Western began immediately to attack him about his travels in Palestine. She was particularly inquisitive about Jericho, and

disapprove of that, sir; I disapprove of it mightily;—that, sir, is what I call defiling religion with politics."

"Is that all you have to find fault with?" asked Lord Brabble.

"No, nor the half, my lord," answered Hercules, roundly. "I don't like your orange lodges, what you call your organisation; I don't see the sense, and still less do I see the grandeur of it. Grand men ought to be above meeting in holes and corners. I don't like secrecy, my lord. What legitimate object is there which may not be achieved by proceedings in the face of the world? The presumption is, and will always be, that when men enter secret associations, whether in Tanderagee, or in Tipperary, their objects are of a nature that look better in a weak light than a strong one. And another reason, my lord, is this, that if *we* have our John Knox lodge, and our Beresford lodge, depend upon it the time will come when others will have their Emmet clubs and Wolfe Tone clubs. I disapprove of all such bodies, whether the ribbon is green or orange; they are all capable of doing mischief, and the best of them can possibly do no good."

"My uncle's a fine fellow," said the Honourable Tom to the Honourable John, as they both moved together from the dining room.

"Devilish fine," said the Honourable John, heartily weary of the political squabble, during which the wine had been kept standing half an hour before Lord Brabble.

Hercules thought the rest of the evening dreadfully tedious, so anxious was he to have a private conference with his niece, who, upon her part, was equally fidgety to learn what could possibly have brought him to her house, and not undisturbed by shabby suspicions that his visit was connected with the distressed affairs of her family.

At length the drawing-room was left to themselves, and Arabella, throwing herself on a sofa, in affected exhaustion, uttered a kind of thanksgiving for being at length delivered from the odious Dalrymples and that insupportable Lady Western.

"How I did pity you, my dear uncle," she said, with her counterfeit earnestness: "a clever man like you seated between that prosy old woman, and an absolute idiot like Tom Flinch.

"He seems a very good-natured young man," said Hercules; "he was very obliging and attentive to me at dinner."

"Oh, but, sir, I should have so liked to have had you all to myself; we have so many things to talk about."

"So many things, Arabella, and such sad things," said Hercules, with deep solemnity, seating himself at her side.

"Sad, sad indeed," said his niece; "I can't tell you, sir, how distressing it is to be obliged to receive all this company at such a time." And, as she spoke, she raised the corner of her little handkerchief of snowy gauze, to receive any pearly tribute which her eyes might be disposed to pay to the claims of sympathy and kindred.

Arabella looked, spoke, and dressed sorrow very respectably. Black lace, white cambric, and downcast eye-lids do a great deal; besides we all know what an advantage a handsome Mrs. Haller or Mrs. Beverley has over a plain one. Arabella imposed upon her uncle, and yet he found it no easy matter to bring the conversation to the desired point. At length he found what he thought a tolerably fair opening—

"I suppose you have heard," he said, "that it has been found necessary to dispose of the furniture and other property at the parsonage."

Arabella answered in the affirmative with a most touching expression of regret.

"The furniture—plate—pictures—horses—carriages"—repeated Hercules, detailing the items of poor Mr. Spenser's sacrifices.

"Not the books!" exclaimed Mrs. Dabzac, interrupting him; "my poor father always set such a very high value on his library."

Hercules was overjoyed; his niece was actually anticipating the object of his mission. He hastened to tell her that the books were not yet disposed of, and, for the first time in his life, fondled down her stately name from Arabella to Bell.

"It was only this very morning," she added, "the colonel and I were talking on this very subject."

Hercules seized both her small white hands with his huge brown ones, and could almost have knelt to her.

"We were saying," she added, "that the book-cases alone would produce several hundred pounds at a London auction."

Hercules dropped her hands as if her fingers were adders. He was expecting her pretty mouth to drop pearls and diamonds, and it opened to let out reptiles. He gave a very loose and unsatisfactory account of the remainder of his interview with Mrs. Dabzac. Carry concluded that he had given too loose a rein to his indignant emotions. Certain it was that he left Dabzac House the following morning long before breakfast, and arrived at Redcross the same night, a ride almost as remarkable as Turpin's.

"She's a Regan, Carry; she's a Goneril," he exclaimed, rushing into his study, where his wife was sitting up for him alone. For a full half hour he continued repeating, "A Regan, a Goneril;" as he tugged off his boots and his coats, and flung them to all corners of the room.

CHAPTER LVI.

THE MICROSCOPE.

'Oh, coward conscience, how dost thou afflict me!"
RICHARD III.

THE Spensers continued for a considerable time the guests of the Woodwards, and fortunately the crazy old white house was elastic, or it would not have answered the demands now made upon it by the consolidation of the two families. Though Dabzac House was not open to the rector in his adversity, many more agreeable mansions were, both in Ireland and England; but it did not suit his depressed spirits to make tours of visits; and Elizabeth, in the spirit of retrenchment, had taken upon herself the education of her little brothers and sisters, which was an additional reason for remaining stationary and retired. A happy domestic revolution it was to the little Spensers, after the negligent tyranny of Mrs. Peacock. The boudoir of an affectionate and accomplished sister was now their school-room; they were instructed by the lips of beauty, and governed by the hand of love. Carry called it the golden age of Queen Bess, and Hercules said it was a little 1688, the greatest era in his chronology.

The death of L. r: ' nam, while it added to Miss Spenser's sorrows, produced an unexpected change in the arrangements of the family. Lord Bonham went abroad immediately after his loss; but, before he went, prevailed upon Mr. Spenser to settle himself for some time at his shooting lodge, in the mountains to the north of the parsonage. It was painful to leave the Woodwards, but the rector felt that he had been long enough a burden to his curate; and another consideration, of a totally different kind, disposed Elizabeth also to accept the offer of Bonham Lodge. Her deceased friend had left three children of a tender age, who were now at the lodge, under the care of a person in whom Miss Spenser knew that Lord Bonham placed but little confidence. The idea of being useful to these little ones immediately occurred to her, for her mind was something like her good uncle's house, it was always so ready to expand itself for any number of new virtues or new duties.

As to Carry Woodward, she was more satisfied upon the whole than displeased at this new turn of event, for she knew that her niece required all the support of constant and engrossing occupations through her complicated trials; Mrs. Woodward's own experience told her how little time maternal offices leave for brooding on recollections, or indulging fancies; and she encouraged and applauded Elizabeth's benevolent resolution, as the wisest she could possibly take in her present circumstances.

The idle and talkative women of Dublin (for there were a few such women in that capital at the period of these events) took a different view of the matter.

"It's easy to talk," said Lady Brabble to Mrs. Pepper, "of Lord Bonham being Mr. Spenser's old college acquaintance; there's no disguising the fact, that Miss Spenser is going to Bonham Lodge in the capacity of a governess; the world will look upon it in no other light, at all events."

"I'm told Lord Bonham is to allow her fifty pounds a year," said Miss Vallancey.

"Don't you pity poor pretty Mrs. Dabzac, with such relations—such a brother and such a sister?" said Lady Towser.

"It's positively beginning to affect her spirits and her looks, poor thing," said another member of the group.

"I foresaw what it would end in, when I heard of the scrapes the brother got into," said old Mrs. Loquax; "my rule is always to judge of girls by their brothers."

But, undeterred by the slanderous gossip of her sex, Elizabeth Spenser entered upon her enlarged sphere of usefulness, and in the employment of the present laboured to forget the griefs and the impressions of the past. It was a lovely September morning when the Spensers parted in tears from their affectionate relatives, and at a late hour in the evening of the same day they reached their new abode.

Bonham Lodge was situated in an angle of the coast, about a mile from the beach. The mountains were piled about it in fantastic masses, possessing every variety of picturesque attraction that wood, rock, heath, and water, with their infinite combinations, could give them. The house was a cottage in form, but had some excellent rooms, and was built in the massive style that the stormy character of the coast rendered indispensable for stability and safety. Being comfortably furnished, and so charmingly situated, it was a most desirable place to pass a few weeks at, particularly at the season when the Spensers went there; and Mrs. Woodward was wont to say, that the only thing against it was the circumstance that the only

ad by which it was accessible from Redcross t. t to the road to Castle awson.

But it was now a good while since the proprietor of that dismal mansion ad presumed to molest Elizabeth; she had almost ceased to think of him, nd little dreamed of the fresh persecution that even now, in her grief and olitude, was impending over her. Little did the rector dream that he was ctually connected himself with Dawson in the most unpleasant way; amely, as his debtor for a considerable sum of money. The reader will ecollect the loan which Sharkey, the attorney, had negotiated for Mr. penser; the money had been found by Dawson, and the rector had accepted ills, which Dawson held not only as securities for the repayment, but (as e sordidly and vaguely calculated) as a means of influencing the daughter hrough the father's difficulties. In this scheme, however, he was baffled by the curious train of circumstances which we have now to relate.

When the bills were about to fall due (which was soon after the removal to Bonham Lodge), Mr. Spenser was but ill-prepared to meet them, and wrote to Mr. Sharkey with a view to procure renewals, or, in other words, to postpone the period of payment. Dawson was pinched for money at the time quite as much as the rector was; indeed, it was nothing but the desperate state of his affairs which, engrossing all his thoughts, had so long protected Miss Spenser from his attentions; but he could not resist the temptation now thrown in his way of at once revealing himself as Mr. Spenser's benefactor, and confirming his hold by preserving that generous character still longer. The rector's surprise and Elizabeth's horror were extreme, when Sharkey's reply disclosed who the owner of the bills really was. The affair was managed adroitly enough by both worthy solicitor and worthy client. The former communicated Mr. Spenser's request to the latter; the latter wrote to the former, cordially agreeing to the proposal, and graciously offering any accommodation the rector desired; then Mr. Sharkey forwarded the substance of this interesting correspondence to Bonham Lodge, not without the expression of a fear that Mr. Dawson would be displeased at having his name made known in the transaction. It was no easy matter to unriddle Mr. Sharkey's writing, he wrote such an execrable hand; and to this circumstance the rector owed his escape from the trap laid for him, for he was obliged to call in the aid of his daughter to read the letter, and she fell at her father's knees almost swooning, when at last she deciphered the name of Dawson.

"Oh, papa!" she exclaimed, recovering herself, "do not put yourself under any further obligation to that man; surely you are not driven to have recourse to such assistance."

In the most earnest and touching manner was this petition made, and the amiable rector loved her too tenderly to refuse it, although his constitutional weakness, and the facility of renewing an old negociation, would probably have led him to continue Dawson's debtor, had not this fortunate accident happened to prevent it. He wrote that day, nay that very hour (for Elizabeth anxiously pressed him), to thank Mr. Dawson for his kindness in grateful terms, declining, however, to avail himself of it, on the ground that altered circumstances made it desirable to him to close the transaction. How to raise the money to pay the bills was then the next question, and while both father and daughter were deliberating on that point, and taking such steps as seemed most advisable, a man rode up to the lodge, mounted on a strong white horse;—it was Dawson himself.

A great alteration had taken place not only in his position, but in his

personal appearance, since the last time the rector saw him. The portrait we drew of him in an earlier part of the volume must now be retouched. He was no longer the picture of robust vice and immorality with a good digestion. Anxiety was ploughing his forehead, and delving hollows in his cheeks; even his carbuncles were beginning to pale, though intemperance supplied their fires with even more than their former fuel. His eyes, however, had grown red, as if at the expense of his cheeks; they looked languid, as if sleep rarely visited their lids, yet watchful as if they momentarily expected the approach of an enemy, or the explosion of a mine. How his position was altered will be related afterwards; it is sufficient to mention here that he was no longer a member of parliament.

Elizabeth fled, terrified, to her chamber, and immured herself there on the pretext of indisposition, firmly resolved not to appear as long as a visitor so detested haunted the house. He inflicted his bad company on the rector for three days, pressing his services upon him, and still hoping that Miss Spenser would come forth and receive his homage. It would be injustice, however, to Dawson, not to add that he was far from being unconcerned at the misfortunes that had befallen Sydney, and that he would have done anything in his power, short of personal risk and exposure, to repair the evils of which he himself was so much the cause. It was even possible that he might have involved himself, by his feelings on this point, in admissions of a dangerous nature, had not the rector, on the first mention of his son's name, begged to be spared the fruitless discussion of a painful topic.

The seclusion of Elizabeth, and her firmness in maintaining it, embarrassed and mortified Dawson beyond measure. He scarcely refrained from making it a subject of complaint to the rector, but with all his assurance did not venture to hazard the rebuff to which such extreme presumption would have exposed him, even from Mr. Spenser. If ever Dawson felt distinctly and painfully the utter hopelessness of his pretensions, it was in the presence of the object of them, or in the society of her family. Still he was always courting the position in which he felt most humiliated. His pursuit of Elizabeth had all along been a sort of monomania, more or less active at particular times, according as circumstances chanced to excite it, or other passions more or less engaged him but its roots were deep, for it had its origin in his inordinate self-conceit and for the same reason it was utterly incurable even by the strongest possible demonstrations of repugnance on the part of the lady. Otherwise the delusion would long ago have been dispelled. Such men feel as if they were actually under recognizances to their own vanity never to take a repulse, or own that any woman has been found to resist their captivations. They have committed themselves to a hopeless adventure possibly made their object notorious by boasting and swaggering amongst their associates; and they prefer the ostentation of vainly persisting, to the ridicule of pocketing all their affronts and going about their business No consideration for the person, the peace of whose life is sacrificed in this barbarous and selfish game, ever enters the minds of the daring yet despicable coxcombs who play it.

Mr. Spenser had also been peremptory at first on the subject of the accommodation which his guest desired to force upon him; but on the morning of the third day, the answers he received from the parties to whom he had applied for assistance to discharge his obligations, proving extremely unfavourable, he began to waver in his resolution, and was on

the point of violating the promise he had made to his daughter, and again involving himself with Dawson, when the opportune arrival of the Woodwards (to pay their first visit to the lodge) changed the posture of affairs.

Great was the vexation of both the curate and his wife, but of Carry especially, when they found the rector entertaining a man whose presence was intolerable to his fair and virtuous daughter. Dawson was not in the house at the moment of their arrival, so they expressed their sentiments freely.

Carry went immediately to visit her niece in her captivity, and Mr. Spenser took his brother-in-law apart to put him in possession of the state of his affairs, and particularly the difficulty which immediately pressed him. Hercules no sooner cast his eye upon Mr. Sharkey's letter, than he cried out immediately that the hand-writing was the same as that on the paper which the police had found in the subterraneous chamber under the Black Castle.

"Carry has it in her pocket," he added; "she has kept it there ever since; it will be curious to make the comparison."

Hercules strode away to his wife, who came back with him; the two papers were placed side by side, and the ascertained characters on the one serving to determine the doubtful ones on the other, not only the identity of the hands was placed beyond dispute, but it was also most satisfactorily established that the paper discovered in the vault was the envelope of some letter which Dawson had received from his attorney.

"Now," said Mrs. Woodward, "if we could only decipher the writing in pencil on the other side!"

She had scarcely uttered the words, when the curate's eye was attracted by a solar microscope which stood on a table near a window, where the rector had, that very morning, been exhibiting the seed of the fern and the blazonry of a butterfly's wing to his little son. Hercules took the paper, placed it under the glasses, arranged the instrument properly, and the experiment was so successful, that he actually read aloud the list, or inventory, of which it had already been suspected that the writing consisted. Amongst other things he came to the following item:—"Two marble busts"—upon which Mrs. Woodward instantly suggested that these might possibly be the busts found in the island, and at that moment in the rector's library at the parsonage.

"Whose hand is the inventory written in?" asked Mr. Spenser.

Carry applied her eye to the glass, and did not recognize it; Hercules failed also; then the rector looked himself, and pronounced it Dawson's, without a question.

Carry went off to communicate all this to her niece.

Almost at the same moment Dawson entered. Hercules had not met him since he had first changed his opinion of his character, in consequence of his stolen visit to Redcross, now two summers since. In the interval many things had occurred to corroborate the impression which that occurrence left upon the curate's mind. Dawson quickly and keenly felt that Hercules was his friend no longer. There was no mistake about Woodward's manner; he never smiled when he was frowning inwardly; and when he took the hand of a man he despised or disliked, he never squeezed his fingers. He made Dawson extremely uncomfortable by the way in which he now received him, so clearly did it show that, for some cause or another, he had utterly forgotten the night on Loch

Erne, and upon the gallant saving of his niece's life. But worse was in store for the unwelcome guest. Wandering about the room he approached the microscope.

"We have just been trying its powers upon the faint writing on that scrap of paper," said Hercules, in tones as deep and hoarse as the murmur of the waves upon the neighbouring shore.

Dawson stooped and looked in. There he saw and recognised with the dismay that may be imagined a rough catalogue made with his own hand of the property of which he had rifled the creditors of his father's estate. His posture prevented the rector and curate from remarking how the wonders of the microscope affected the muscles of his face, but no doubt they expressed a stronger feeling than that of a gratified philosophical observer.

"Extremely curious," said Hercules, intently gazing in Dawson's face, the instant he raised it from the glass.

"Extremely," said the other, neither liking nor understanding the curate's keen steady scrutiny.

Woodward then withdrew the paper, turned it up, as if without intention, and again fixing his alarming eye on the disconcerted profligate, addressed him, and said—

"By-the-bye, Mr. Dawson, this is a scrap of paper which the police found at the Black Castle—it seems to be the back of a letter—perhaps you can help us to read the writing."

Now Dawson's face turned all colours in less than a second; and, divided between the fear of being frank and the danger of excessive caution, he pretended inability to decipher the address, but said, with an awkward laugh and a husky voice, that the hand was not unlike his attorney's.

"So we were just saying," said the rector, in his quietest manner, but it cut Dawson as if with a stiletto; for it made him apprehensive that some secret investigation or discussion was going on about his dark practices at Castle Dawson, and that the Spenser family knew much more than he wished of his secret history.

It was a relief to him when Mrs. Woodward entered. Her notice of him was studiously supercilious and unpleasant, for, in truth, she came down with a deliberately-formed resolution to drive him from the lodge before dinner; but it did not deter him from hoping that she had found her niece better. Carry's reply was contemptuously inarticulate. Dawson, whom it was the hardest thing in the world to abash, persevered, and said he hoped Miss Spenser would soon be able to leave her room.

"She has no present intention of it," returned Mrs. Woodward; not inaudibly, as before, but with the utmost possible distinctness, and in a tone that left no doubt whatsoever as to the meaning of her words.

Dawson mounted his white horse and went almost as abruptly as he came. The house looked brighter and the air felt purer when he was gone. Elisabeth came forth from her hiding-place, and instantly placed a letter in her father's hands, which relieved him from the embarrassment of his obligation to her prosecutor. She had been more successful in her financial operations than the rector. No sooner did he consent upon her account to repudiate Dawson's offer of accommodation, than she felt herself called upon to make every exertion in her power to procure from some other quarter the aid he wanted. After much anxious consideration of the subject, she could think of nobody so likely to stand her friend as

Mr. Trundle, though she felt that to apply to him (after the little fraud she had formerly committed, during his visit to the parsonage) was something like an attempt to impose upon him a second time. However, she made up her mind to write to him, not only as her father's friend, but as Lord Bonham's agent and representative; and his prompt and cordial answer, actually enclosing a draft for the sum required, proved beyond a doubt that a man may have his mind stuffed with idle crotchets and his heart at the same time replenished with solid worth.

While the Spensers and Woodwards were spending the evening in something like the old way, before misfortune overtook them, Dawson was galloping across the dreary brown mountains, not to his own house, but in the direction of Redcross. He looked, when the shades of night began to gather round him, not unlike the dreary horseman of a Rhenish legend; he looked defeated, yet dangerous; even since morning his visage seemed to have grown darker, and his eye more expressive of evil, as if his mind was beginning to harbour some purpose deeper and blacker than had hitherto entered into his most licentious calculations. And if then you could have turned that corrupted and tumultuous mind inside out (as naturalists do with certain zoophytes to examine their internal structure), you would have seen that it was so.

His route, on leaving Bonham Lodge, lay by the Black Castle and the parsonage, across the water; he passed the perilous ruins at full speed, eyeing them apprehensively over his shoulder, as they glimmered in the twilight, and reared their gaunt towers against the faded sky. The whistling of the evening wind in the ivy seemed to interrogate him as to his past life, and the few rays of light that straggled through the chasms or loop-holes in the walls glared upon him like the stern, pale eyes of justice. He would have shunned the parsonage, had it been possible, for it was only associated in his mind with mortification and repulse; but to reach the water it was necessary to pass beneath its very windows. Those of the library stood partially open: the servants had been airing the apartment and had lighted a fire there, which faintly illuminated the walls, no longer hidden by literary treasures. Dawson peered in, but there was nothing left of all that had once made that room so refined and beautiful save two busts, which stood seemingly starting at one another, like Calpe gazing at Abyla. Dawson trembled and raised the window-sash. There was nobody at hand to mark or hear what he did. He stepped into the library, and instantly recognised the pieces of statuary which had formerly done duty in the gallery of his mock ancestors. There was nothing very wrong in an acquaintance of the Spenser family, as he was, raising a window and stepping into an unfurnished apartment; he had seldom been guilty of a less shabby action; yet he felt like a housebreaker at that moment, and the sound of a door opening and shutting at a distance scared him as if in the middle of a burglary. He rushed back to his horse, and hurried to the little quay, but there was no boat there to transport him across the loch. His only resource was a desperate one; but he was in the mood to dare any thing. He sprang upon his steed, with whip and spur impelled him into the water, and with the utmost possible difficulty gained the further side of the creek in safety. Thence, dripping and jaded, he pursued his way to Redcross, where he passed the night in a low carouse with the Peacocks and the caitiff Thomson. The following morning, at a late hour, he had a private conference with Lucy and Thomson at the inn where he stopped, and almost

immediately afterwards started in a chaise for Dublin, *en route* for London.

The conference with the perfidious post-mistress was an important one. Dawson obtained from her an account of proceedings and movements in which he was deeply concerned; he learned that Vivyan had for some time maintained a correspondence not only with Mr. and Mrs. Woodward, but with Mr. Hogg, the sexton, and Maguire, the proctor; that letters had also passed between the curate and Markham, and that several had also been despatched to Sydney, directed to Quebec. Lucy had actually taken down in writing the substance of some of these letters, and the dates of all; and it was evident to Dawson that in one quarter, at least, there was no intention of letting the investigation drop. It enraged him to think that, of all men in the world, it was Elizabeth's accepted lover who was thus secretly hunting him. He had never seen Vivyan but once, at the pic-nic upon the island, and upon that occasion, (although Vivyan and Miss Spenser were then total strangers,) Dawson had conceived a violent dislike to him, which was subsequently strengthened and inflamed by jealousy, when he discovered that Frank occupied the proud place which he vainly coveted for himself. Dawson paid sharp attention to the dates of the correspondence betrayed to him, and observed that for nearly three weeks there had been no letter received at the Redcross post-office. This looked as if the inquiry had been given up, or intermitted; but there was another conclusion to be drawn from the circumstance, and one which was strongly confirmed by a letter of Markham's, namely, that the course of investigation might have led Vivyan to America. Lucy herself was of that opinion. It seemed natural that he should have followed Sydney, to consult with him upon the proceedings to be taken; but another and more disagreeable view of the case occurred to Dawson himself, whose conscience poignantly hinted that, if Vivyan had indeed crossed the Atlantic, his motive might be to discover and produce Lamb. It was in Lamb's power completely to establish Sydney's innocence, but unluckily he held the fate of the guilty in his hands as well of the innocent, so that the very idea of his being found and induced to return to Ireland, made Dawson perspire with alarm. Without confiding to his fair friend the extent of his fears, or the true nature of them, he adjured her at parting to watch the correspondence of the Spenser family with redoubled vigilance, and to be particular in apprising him of the import of all American letters. Between fear, jealousy, rancour, and despair, he carried a little private Pandemonium within him on his journey to England.

CHAPTER LVII.

DOWNWARD CAREER OF DAWSON.

"Who plays the knave, without a knave's advantage,
Plays the fool also; 'tis the sharper's fortune,
Who played with loaded dice and lost the game."
THE TABLES TURNED.

NOTHING had thriven, for some time back, publicly or privately, with Dawson. It is necessary to trace briefly his recent parliamentary career, in order to explain the precise position in which he stood at the present moment. He had, of late, been growing heartily sick of the life of a legislator, or, to speak more correctly, he was become thoroughly disgusted at having turned his influence hitherto to no good personal account. He procured an appointment for Sharkey; it was the last Dawson job; and Sharkey, in return, urged his generous patron to press his own claims, "make his hay while the sun shone," and demand something from the government commensurate in emolument and dignity to the rank of a member of parliament. Dawson then worried the ministry for himself, as a hundred times before he had worried it for others; he became as formidable as Mr. Fosberry with his liquid guano, or Mr. Trundle with his petition for the thirty millions; he badgered the Home Office, he beleaguered the Treasury, he infested Downing Street, and he laid siege to Dublin Castle. Gladly would the government have promoted and extinguished him; but it was not an easy matter to manage; he was too vain, as well as too grasping, to accept of small offices, and it was impossible to confer any considerable post upon him without damaging the public service to a degree not to be hazarded, either by a conscientious or a prudent administration. At length his necessities became too pressing, and since he could make nothing by his seat in any other way, in a tempest of rage and disappointment he made up his mind to sell it. Dawson sold the good-will of Rottenham for a thousand pounds, and accepted the Chiltern Hundreds, the only situation in life he ever filled without a blemish upon his character. He parted with his constituents with more hilarity than honesty. They gave him a farewell dinner, and he made them an oration, crammed with honour and virtue, as full as the speech of the expiring fox in the fable. He put his retirement on the grounds of his utter despair of ever achieving any thing for Ireland in the imperial parliament,—he, whose name had never been attached as sponsor to a single bill, who had never even suggested to others a measure of the slightest public utility, who had never done a day's work on any committee of useful inquiry, and who had never requested an interview with a minister, except to propose or promote a job. Nobody at the farewell dinner taunted him with this; for every guest at the table was either his dupe or his accomplice; the worthy elector who proposed his health was as arrant a political swindler as the retiring senator himself, and expected to make a nice thing of the new election for the borough. The feast ended with an extraordinary melange

of brutality and sentiment, a scene not to be witnessed except in the political conviviality of a place like Rottenham. The banqueters grew tender as they grew tipsy. Their eyes filled as the bottles emptied, and at length it came to falling on each other's necks, and embracing each other frantically. Everybody tried to embrace Dawson, who wept like Niobe, and at three o'clock in the morning by the town clock, overpowered by punch and pathos he rolled on the floor in the arms of his friend Sharkey, while another disconsolate attorney tumbled and rolled over both, vainly endeavouring, in the frenzy of fondness, to clasp Dudley to his breast.

In a few days after this affecting incident Dawson received the sum for which he had bartered his parliamentary position. In a few days more, not a shilling of that sum remained in his pocket; yet it was at that very moment he sought to force his aid upon Mr. Spenser, who had only declined the benefactions of a bankrupt.

No sooner did the rector find a friend in need in Mr. Trundle, than he hastened to acquit himself of his previous obligations. In fact, Dawson received the amount of the bills before they were strictly due; but it was no longer in the power of money to save him. Between his debts and his passions, there was a gulph that would have swallowed up a large fortune; his creditors snatched what they could; the rest was hazarded and lost at the gaming-table, or on the turf, and the characterless *roué* was cut in the morning by the men who had fleeced him the night before.

The day on which he received the amount of the bills from Mr. Spenser was almost the last of his London life. Flushed by the fullness of his purse, and being always social in a dissolute way, he invited Sharkey and some more worthies to a dinner at Blackwall. Dawson had ceased to be an eater; but he drank the deeper in proportion, and on this occasion outdid all his former Bacchanalian exploits. Before dinner was half over, he had commenced vapouring about conscience and duty, as he always did when the wine began to tell upon his brain. With the claret he began to swagger about his plans as a country gentleman; vowed he would put Castle Dawson in thorough repair; blustered about planting and draining; threw himself back ostentatiously in his seat, flung open his tawdry waistcoat, and deplored the time and talents he had squandered in the House of Commons, which might have been spent so much more profitably living on his estate and improving the country.

"In the buzzum of a happy and continted tinantry," stammered Sharkey, dropping his head on the table, and instantly dreaming of ejectments.

By what road, or by what conveyance, that jovial party got back to town, after that night's entertainment, was utterly unknown to all of them except Dawson, whom wine unfortunately inflamed without stupifying; for it left him in that state of excitement which usually drove him to Crockford's. Thither he repaired, after seeing his company safe in the hands of the watchmen, and dice ended the night, as debauchery counts the hours.

CHAPTER LVIII.

THE BURLINGTON.

"Mischief, thou art swift
To enter in the thoughts of desperate men."
ROMEO AND JULIET.

IMAGINE yourself now in a bed-room in the Burlington. A bed has just been deserted. The late occupier is flung in a great chair near a table at some distance from the couch. It is Dawson, just risen at two o'clock in the day. His posture and attire is that of the ruined gamester in the "Rake's Progress." The table is covered with all the appliances of vulgar foppery, in addition to letters, newspapers, pistols, and soda-water and brandy. The room is filled with parliamentary and rakish rubbish of all sorts. In one corner is a chaos of blue books; in another, a heap of clothes unpaid for, and bills never to be settled; in a third, a collection of brass-knockers torn by the senator from hall-doors. Scarce an article in the chamber but tells a tale of profligacy. Wonderful it is how some men live as they do, surrounded night and day with the monuments of their follies and their crimes.

Dawson is a ruined man. He lost last night the entire of the sum repaid him by Mr. Spenser. Even his bill at Lovegrove's will never be discharged. He is utterly ruined, and sits there in the savage gloom of desperation, nobody yet knowing how utterly and hopelessly lost he is, not even the friend of his youth and the attorney of his bosom.

He has just despatched a note to Sharkey, in order to acquaint him with the results of last night's amusement.

"Bob," said Dawson, when his friend arrived, wonderfully fresh after the night's excess. "Bob, I'm done at last."

"I don't feel quite comfortable myself," said Sharkey, supposing that Dawson alluded to the effects of last night's dissipation.

"It's not that, Bob; I'm done brown."

Sharkey laughed.

"It's not brown you are," he said, "but blue, Dud;—you are always blue before breakfast."

Dawson acquainted him with the mishaps of the night.

"I am cleaned out, Bob, and that's the long and the short of it; I must run."

"What's come over you this morning?" asked Sharkey, growing a little serious.

Dawson then made the fullest financial statement he had ever made to his man of business in his life, and in ten minutes fully convinced him he was worth several thousand pounds less than nothing.

"It's a bad business, Dud."

"You may say that, Bob."

"And where do you think of running to?"

"I have a brother in Van Diemen's land, and I'm thinking of joining him, scraping together all I can, and speculating desperately in sheep."

"It's a bad business, Dud."

"Bob, I haven't told you half my business with you this morning," said Dawson.

"I hope you have told me the worst half," said the other.

"I'm thinking of going to Castle Dawson for a few days, to wind up affairs there."

"I wouldn't advise you to do any such thing," said the attorney; "people might be looking for you whom you wouldn't like to have at your heels; and besides, what affairs have you to wind up there or anywhere else?"

"Yes, but I have," said Dawson; "and, at all events, wouldn't I like to see the old place once more before I leave it for ever; many a rollicking day we had there, Bob."

"Many a queer thing was done there, Dud."

"Many a queer thing," said Dawson, repeating the attorney's words, whether abstractedly, or with a new meaning, it was hard to say. His looks puzzled Sharkey, and made him ask Dawson what he was thinking of.

"I was just thinking," he replied, "that almost the only queer thing that was never done at Castle Dawson, to my knowledge, was—but no matter; that's neither here nor there," he added, suddenly checking himself.

"No," said Sharkey; "but take my advice, and don't set your foot in Ireland again, whatever you do; it would be a risk, Dud."

"What care I for risk?" roared Dawson, starting up, and striding melodramatically up and down the disordered room, with his gorgeous dressing-gown hanging about him, unshaven, ghastly, and hideous with sudden passion, to a degree that frightened Sharkey, who concluded him delirious between the wine and the losses of the previous night. At length he stopped abruptly opposite to the attorney, and broke out with furious earnestness, although still in the "Cambyses' vein," which was second nature with him—"What care I for risk? I never succeeded in anything in my life, and I tried everything; I played every game—I played for money, I played for office, I played for beauty—I played boldly, too; I was no dastard—was I, Bob? I ask you, Bob,—was I?"

"No one can say that, Dud, at all events," said Sharkey, too much alarmed by the frenzied manner of his companion to dispute any point with him.

"No, by heavens, they can't; I was no coward and I was no churl; I was liberal of my life and my money—I risked all and I won nothing. Nothing did me any good. I set my heart on a girl; you know who I mean, Bob,—was there anything I didn't do to deserve her? I need not tell you, Bob, all I did for her and her ungrateful family. My money, my talents, my parliamentary influence, my life; I put all at their service."

"You did, and I always said so," said Sharkey, heartily wishing himself out of the house.

"Is she a great fortune—is she a Miss Coutts? Is there anything against me?—I mean, that any one can prove." The voice altered and fell with this very proper salvo. The point would have told well on the stage.

"What's between you and me," said Sharkey, "is neither here nor there."

"Am I a Caliban, Bob?" was Dawson's next interrogation.

"You are not that, at all events," replied his friend, probably thinking that Dawson meant a cannibal.

"Well, Bob," continued Dawson, "the upshot of it all is, that by"—(it is unnecessary to quote Dawson's phrases *verbatim*)—"I'm not going to put up with it any longer. I'll right myself, if the world won't right me. Either it's fate or it's witchcraft that's fighting against me, and by ——, I'll try one fall more with the one or the other, before I shoot myself. My plan, Bob, is what I have just told you."

"You told me no plan."

"I told you I was going to Castle Dawson."

"I see no plan in that," said Sharkey.

"It's a resolution, then," said Dawson.

"It's a foolish one," said Sharkey; "and I don't see what good it will do you with the lady."

"I'll take leave of her at all events," said Dawson.

"You are too sentimental, Dud," said Sharkey, "but if you must go back to Ireland, go by long say, I recommend you."

"You don't suppose I am such a blockhead as to go any other way, in existing circumstances," said Dawson. "Captain Dowse is in the river with the brig that did the job for me before."

"Well, there's some sense in that," said Sharkey.

"You must come with me, Bob," said Dawson.

Sharkey at first positively declined the invitation, which seemed indeed no very tempting one, falsely alleging that he had a case to attend in the House of Lords, but Dawson overcame his reluctance, partly by holding out the prospect of a glorious farewell debauch with a few choice fellows like themselves, and the remnant of the wine in the Castle Dawson cellar, partly by tender reminiscences of their old rascally friendship. Sharkey, in truth, was not much better off in point of fortune or prospects than the ex-senator himself; and when a man lives from hand to mouth, the ties are never very strong that attach him to any particular spot on the earth's surface. The attorney further undertook to go down that very day to Blackwall, and order Captain Dowse to be in readiness to sail within twenty-four hours.

Sharkey was not long gone upon this mission, leaving Dawson ruminating upon some dodge to effect his escape from the Burlington without settling his bill, when a servant entered and brought him letters. One was from Mrs. Peacock. He tore it open. Its effect was like the pouring of oil upon a furnace, or vinegar into a wound. He started on his feet, tore his hair, tugged at his neckcloth, and ranged the room grinding his teeth and stamping like a maniac. The intelligence more than confirmed his apprehensions as to Vivyan's movements and the object of them. Two letters in Vivyan's handwriting, bearing American post-marks, had reached Redcross. The first was addressed to Mrs. Woodward, but it had been sealed in a manner that baffled Lucy's ingenuity, and with all her expertness she was forced to content herself with as much as she could read through the folds of the paper, without violating the wax. This was enough, however, to prove that Vivyan had found Sydney, and that they were both in quest of the fellow whose evidence was of such vital consequence. The second, which arrived with the first, although dated nearly a fortnight later, was more manageable, as the post-mistress expressed it; it was a letter to Elizabeth herself, and, as if Mrs. Peacock desired to drive Dawson frantic, she had copied almost the whole of it for his information. The name of Lamb was not mentioned, perhaps advisedly; but the letter (which seemed to have been written in a delirium of joy) announced in

general terms that the means had been discovered not only of triumphantly acquitting Sydney, but of establishing charges of almost incredible enormity against parties who little dreamed of the exposure that awaited them. The rest of Vivyan's letter was all made up of language, which, though perfectly innocent in its nature, the writer would never have committed to paper, had he dreamed of its meeting any eye but Miss Spenser's. Perhaps this was the part that most infuriated Dawson. Accustomed to indulge in violent bursts of passion, he dashed the furniture about the room, uttered a thousand horrid imprecations, snatched up a pistol and seemed on the point of blowing out his brains, then swallowed brandy, and looked as if about to tumble in a fit of apoplexy. The brandy, however, had a composing effect, and Mrs. Peacock's despatch only confirmed Dawson's previous intentions. He shaved himself, and looked a degree less rakish and desperate when Sharkey rejoined him close to dinner-time. They dined together, and when the attorney learned, amongst the confidences of the evening, that the return of Lamb to Europe was a probable event, he heartily concurred in the prudence of his friend's resolution to follow his brother to Van Diemen's Land.

The following evening, Captain Dowse's ill-looking brig, with an ill-looking crew, and several ill-looking passengers, in addition to Dawson and his agent, sailed for the west of Ireland. It was on the deck at midnight, while they were both smoking cigars, and the captain was blaspheming to his men, that Sharkey first learned the real object of the voyage.

BOOK XI.

CHAPTER LIX.

CAROUSALS.

"At one time he assembled three or four especial good Hacksters and roaring Boys, and made them drink like *Templars*." RABELAIS.

CAROUSAL at Castle Dawson. Old times come back again; wine flowing like water; awful drinking in the ruinous parlour; furious gaming in the decayed drawing-room; a select party of insolvents, black-legs, and desperadoes.

It was always a stormy place. The wind never slept there; nothing reposed within five miles of it; its atmosphere was the type of modern Irish patriotism, never a calm, or even a steady gale; nothing but squall and bluster. Now, as if expressly to suit both the riotous mirth of the guests assembled, and the gloomy habit of the proprietor's mind, the weather was dark as well as gusty; it was cold, too, for it was the fall of the year—a damp insinuating cold which penetrated your bones, and either cramped you with rheumatism, or wrung you with tooth-ache.

It was a house that demanded huge fires, mountains of blankets, and perpetual motion, to keep its inmates warm; and even then it called for, and almost justified, deep drinking, to make them forget, as soon as possible, what a dreary place it was at best. Some ruinous houses tell, even in their decay, that they had once been virtuous buildings, that the feet of worthy men had once trodden their halls, and that honest faces had once gathered round their hearths; but Castle Dawson told no such story. There was something more than bleak about its dilapidation. Its decline was not the decline of respectability; its antiquity was ill-looking; it reminded you of the old age of vice, which no lip blesses, and to which no knee bends.

Perhaps it was that the blankets were not mountainous enough, but certainly the party did not waste much of their night in bed. Dawson was of course master of the revels; he was dissolute and uproarious certainly, but he was too haggard and abstracted for a Comus. Still he drank himself, and he cheered the topers; many a time, too, did he descend into that mysterious wine-vault of his, which corresponded with the ocean, and bring forth remnants of bins, which had been stocked in the gay but wicked days chronicled by old Sir Jonah.

The dinners were solid and coarse, but the company was not fastidious. They drank generously, and generously overlooked the deficiencies of a bachelor's establishment. The "Repeal of the Union" was drunk vociferously every day; Dawson proposing it in a mad speech, and Sharkey always roaring for "one cheer more."

There was an anachronism in these festivities. They savoured of the jovial times before the Union, more than of the saturnine age which Pitt

and Castlereagh had the honour of introducing. Not only day and night were reversed at Castle Dawson, but even centuries were turned topsy-turvy.

But Dawson had not revisited his paternal mansion on this occasion with mere designs of hospitality and mirth, however coarse and licentious.

Within a pistol-shot of the house, which Dawson used swaggeringly to call his ancestral mansion, a brig was swinging at anchor, which Markham's eye would have recognised at a glance as the same respectable craft which he had seen trading so mysteriously in books and pictures on the memorable night of his bivouac on Spenser Island. If you had gone on board the Dolphin (for so the brig was named), you would have seen that active proceedings were in progress to furnish and decorate her small cabin with something more than comfort; there was an obvious, if not a very successful, effort to fit it up with some degree of luxury and refinement. Nay, more, you would have been struck by observing that the arrangements were of a feminine character; and, in fact, there was a tight, active, bustling, and good-looking young woman on board, not merely superintending, but, with her own smart hands, briskly and cleverly assisting in putting everything into the neatest possible order.

The bed-rooms of Castle Dawson had been ransacked for the principal part of the furniture of the cabin, for you may suppose that dressing-tables, sofas, looking-glasses, and such articles, were somewhat scarce on board a ship like the Dolphin, when in the best sailing trim. To transfer these things from the house to the brig, the secret communications between the cellars and the clefts or caves along the beach had been found extremely convenient; and the small black skiff employed in the transportation had not yet completed its work, but was still to be seen darting in and out of the mouth of the cavern, like a boat plying on a subterraneous canal.

It was night-fall, and the red lights thrown by the brig's lanterns upon the two rough faces in the skiff, as well as those which their flambeau, in return, cast upon the people on the deck of the brig, made the scene as picturesque as the transaction was irregular.

The features of the young woman were very imperfectly seen, and she seemed not anxious to display them. Her bonnet was close, and her hair, disordered by the breeze, and occasionally by the spray, streamed about her face, and assisted to conceal it. There was nobody, perhaps, whom she cared to favour with a peep at any part of her person, for she was most comfortably and impenetrably wrapt in a scarlet mantle, with a grey plaid shawl or scarf folded over it, and both were not more than the evening required, for it was damp, raw, and blustry, as indeed it generally was at this dismal part of the coast.

Occasionally a gust came from off the shore, and brought with it sounds like those of gross merry-making. Dawson's friends, if not Dawson himself, were evidently carousing deeply.

There seemed to be three seamen in the brig at the time; two of them were minding their business; the third, who seemed to have some command, was overlooking the operations going forward, and occasionally trying to engage the young woman in conversation. But she seemed disinclined to converse with him, and intent upon nothing but the business for which she had come on board. Though the wind evidently annoyed her, blew her bonnet half off her head, and made her grapple her shawl about her, she scarcely spoke at all, but only bit her lip, or uttered some little peevish but inarticulate exclamation.

The boat issued once more from the cavern: the effect then was particularly striking. A ruddy glow strongly illuminated for a moment the low-browed arch under the cliffs, and the next instant was diffused over the agitated water. The boat came alongside, and this time its cargo was a fractured looking-glass in a tarnished gilt frame of carved wood, a fragile table of some fanciful shape and material, and a couple of old tapestry screens, one of which was much torn, probably by Sydney Spenser's pistol-shooting. The articles were not heavy, and were easily hauled into the brig.

"Is that the last?" demanded the young female.

One of the boatmen replied in the affirmative.

"Then I'll just see those things put in their places," she said, "and I'll return with you."

In about ten minutes she was ready to leave the brig; the seaman who had been desirous to flirt with her now handed her civilly into the boat; she thanked him curtly, and ordered the men to pull back into the cave. She was evidently a bold girl; for the place she was going to, the fellows she was trusting herself with, and the time of the day, were sufficient to make most young women a little nervous.

The skiff plunged into the hole in the crags, whose jagged points and splinters sometimes caught the jackets of the boatmen and the dress of the young female, while the wreaths of sea-wrack pendent from the roof of the chasm bobbed against their foreheads, and now and then filled their eyes with brine. The air was cruelly cold, and the light only just enough to show the extremities of objects, the points of the rocks, the tips of the noses, the illuminated edges of the oiled-skin hats.

The young woman was well pleased when she reached the foot of the ladder. Directly the trap-door was opened, down came in gusts the noise of the coarse conviviality in the dining-room; and the kitchens, with the entire basement story, rang with it, to the exclusion of all other sounds.

In ordinary times you heard nothing in this part of the house but the squall and the surge, and they made sufficient hubbub. But now the roar of the gaiety drowned the thunder of the waves against the beach, and their dismal groaning under ground. The girl untied, partly raised her bonnet, and listened with attention, as if she wished to distinguish some particular voice among the rest; she then called to one of the wild attendants who were lounging about the passages, and ordered him to conduct and light her to her room. The fellow snatched a blazing brand of bog-pine from the kitchen-hearth, and preceded her through the mouldering corridors.

"Your master is still with his company?" she said, interrogatively, to her torch-bearer, who, uncouth as he was, wore a tarnished suit of the Dawson livery.

The clownish footman, ill at ease in a garb that had not been made for him, shrugged his shoulders, and replied in the affirmative.

The room she repaired to was the same remote and small one to which we may remember that Dawson, upon one occasion, dismissed two guests of his who were not presentable in decent society. There was no furniture there now, save a few creaking chairs and a crazy table; a sofa which it formerly contained had been sent on board the brig. There was, however, a good turf fire in the hearth, and the lady was not sorry to see it, after her long exposure to the night air. She flung her bonnet on the table, and sat her down before the blaze, her feet close to the embers, her arms

folded on her bosom, and her eyes fixed on the flickering flame, with an expression that did not imply the most virtuous train of inward meditation.

She probably slept, for on the door being abruptly flung open, she started up with a slight scream, and then laughed at herself for being frightened. It was only Dawson, just escaped from the dinner-table, at which he had left his friends—perhaps a few of them under it. The room was very dark, but there was light enough for present purposes. Dawson's voice announced the depth of his potations, if not of his designs.

It was thick and stammering, as he said,

"Is all ready, Lucy?"

She replied in the affirmative. He then asked her whether she had had supper and wine; but she was doggedly temperate, and only requested an immediate escort back to Redcross.

"Not to-night, woman," said Dawson.

But she was peremptory; her work was done, and she must return to her husband. Dawson pressed her, and cracked some thrice-cracked jokes at the expense of conjugal fidelity, as if Lucy had been renowned for fidelity in any relation of life. However, she was constant to her resolution now; and the same kerne who had lighted her with the blazing faggot was now directed to convey her on a swift horse across the hills. Dawson himself helped her on horseback. She mounted behind her wild conductor, and soon disappeared in the mountain mists. Until that night Lucy Peacock had always been a brave girl. If cowardice is a feminine quality, she was now feminine enough. She quivered with every bulrush which the wind stirred in the fens; the wings of the moor-fowl, fluttered from their nests by the horse's hoofs, dismayed her. She clung with convulsive tenacity to the waist of her escort, and the little light that there was in the pitchy sky, instead of being a source of comfort and hardihood, only ministered to her terrors, and metamorphosed every grey stone and wandering sheep into an object of alarm.

Dawson spent the residue of the night more soberly than his company. He tore himself from the social circle to hold clandestine conferences with Sharkey and the commander of the respectable craft at anchor under his windows. Captain Dowse was the name of that distinguished officer. He was a short, square, cadaverous, one-eyed villain, who looked as if nature had cut him out for the diabolical trade in men, and as if the horrors of the middle passage would be cakes and ale to him.

CHAPTER LX.

THE ABDUCTION.

"Beauty, like the fair Hesperian tree
Laden with blooming gold, had need the guard
Of dragon watch, with unenchanted eye,
To save her blossoms and defend her fruit
From the rash hand of bold incontinence,
Of night, or loneliness, it recks me not:
I fear the dread events that dog them both,
Lest some ill-greeting touch attempt the person
Of our unowned sister." COMUS.

It was a Friday evening. In September the days are generally bright in Ireland, but their span is of course much contracted; the sun departs precipitately for the other hemisphere, and when there is no moon to "take up the wondrous tale," the sovereignty of darkness is soon established. Mr. Spenser had gone over to Redcross after breakfast, to transact some parochial business, intending to bring the Woodwards back with him to the lodge; and Elizabeth (radiant with joy at the happy news from America, which had reached her only the day before), having occupied herself within doors the entire morning, towards the close of the day went out alone to take a short stroll, not purposing to go very far from the house. Lord Bonham had interspersed the heath that clipped in his wild retreat with little patches of shrubs and flowers, such as the sea air and the mountain soil suffered to thrive; Miss Spenser, having old gardening habits, was wont to pay occasional attentions to these tiny oases in the desert, and she commonly carried a garden-knife in the pocket of her apron, to assist her in her little horticultural operations. Thus occupied on the day in question, she strayed unconsciously to the edge of the enclosure, and lingered there awhile, smitten by the beauty of the evening, and of the scenery that surrounded her; the view bounded at some points by glorious glimpses of the sea, at others by the rocky summits of the hills, which were now attired in the richest autumnal colours. The labourers' bell rang six as she reached the spot we have mentioned, and, as she did not expect her father to return until near seven, she passed the enclosure by an opening in the fence, and planned a short tour, calculated to lead her back to the lodge in about twenty minutes. She had not proceeded far before she encountered a young man, whose countenance impressed her painfully. It was a face familiar to the reader, but to Miss Spenser entirely unknown. The fellow, however, was not physically formidable, even to a woman; his shoulders were contracted, and his cheeks pale and hollow, so that Elizabeth could not help pitying, while she gladly withdrew her eyes from him. A few moments brought her to the road-side; and there she was greatly surprised to observe a chaise, with four horses, drawn up in the shadow of some trees which grew there. A charming thought instantly suggested itself, that it might be Vivyan returned. She advanced to speak to the postillion, who was standing near; he uttered something unintelligible, and she turned disappointed to

resume her walk. In an instant two ruffians, masked and otherwise disguised, sprang on her from behind the fence; there was nobody to hear her shrieks, as they dragged her to the chaise. Terror now almost bereaved her of reason. When she first came to herself, she was alone in the carriage, and the postillion was urging the horses, at the top of their speed, across brown hills unknown to her. Her first thought was to open the door and cast herself upon the heath, which the wheels of the chaise grazed as it swept along. But she heard the clattering of hoofs behind her; she was guarded by outriders; and she opportunely recollected that if she was hurt by the fall, which was so likely to happen, she would only be the more at the mercy of the villains in whose hands she was. Who could they be?—what could this undreamed-of violence mean?—whither were they whirling her across the mountains? The fearful thought quickly flashed upon her that this could be the atrocity of only one man in the world. As far, too, as she could form a notion of the direction in which she was moving, it was towards Castle Dawson. The agony of her mind under that conviction (for it soon became one) is beyond painting. The dangers before her seemed as great as ever woman was exposed to: she stood in need, at that trying moment, of all the strength of mind, steadfastness of purpose, and energy of will, of which nature had implanted the seeds in her character; and fortunate now it was that her recent experience in life had educated and corroborated those hardy qualities. Yet what was any former trial to that which now awaited her? Now, it was brute force she was the victim of; no passive courage would carry her through the struggle that impended. She was in Dawson's fangs! She was going to the house, at the very name of which she was wont to shudder, as children do at the castles of ogres. The very name was a guarantee for everything lawless and licentious, and her heart sank within her when she reflected that the violence which she was now experiencing, was designed but as a mere preliminary to further deeds, which her blood ran cold to think of. Frantically she clasped her hands to her eyes, as if she could thus exclude the images of horror that presented themselves—images of danger to what was dearer than life. One hand fell down upon her lap; it touched the garden-knife—she was not without a weapon to face a Tarquin! She opened it; the blade was short, thick, but keen enough to deal a mortal wound. While she was gazing upon this heaven-sent protector, one of the masked horsemen rode up close to the carriage-window. Instead of returning the knife to the pocket in her apron, she thrust it open into her bosom.

It was now darkening apace. The horseman who rode up seemed to have done so only to quicken the postillions, for the carriage now flew like the wind, the course being down a long declivity, at the base of which the unhappy girl thought she could just discern the waste of the ocean, with a dim gray object on its margin, which, with unutterable horror, she concluded was the reprobate mansion of her persecutor.

It was black night when the chaise halted before the dilapidated porch. The movements were all so rapid, and the house was so dark, that Elizabeth could scarcely distinguish the objects she passed, while with force, but not with violence, she was hurried through gloomy passages and up dreary staircases, to a chamber on the first floor. Repeatedly and sternly she demanded whither they were bearing her; by what right or pretence of right her liberty was thus violated; and who was it that dared to commit this intolerable outrage? Her questions received no answers; her taunts no notice.

She now found herself a prisoner in a spacious room. It was hung with old and tarnished draperies; it contained a bed, some presses, and other bed-room furniture; there were two windows looking over the wide dismal yard, where the old hound was still howling, and there was a large ruinous fire-place, with some burning peat in it, which afforded all the light in the apartment, save the glimmering of a thin candle on a three-legged table in the midst of the floor.

About a quarter of an hour elapsed before anything occurred to prove that the house contained any inhabitant but herself; not a sound reached her ear but the whining of the hound, the melancholy dash of the waves, and the intermitted moaning of the blast. It was a dreadful interval. The appearance of her ruffian foes would have been a relief to its mysterious horror. She felt a desperate anxiety to know and to brave the worst —to see her assailants and to cope with them. Could she have unlocked the door, she would have ranged the house, seeking the villains who had dragged her there; she would have gone in quest of the ruffianism that seemed now to be skulking with some infamous design, perhaps biding its own time to pounce upon her when exhausted with fatigue, and less able to combat force. But the door was securely fastened on the outside; and the windows seemed equally to forbid egress. There are men, it is to be feared, who, in the situation of this fair young woman of two-and-twenty, would have lost some of the composure so important in great dangers. It is high praise of a girl to say that from the beginning to the end of the struggle to which she was now committed, she scarcely neglected any precaution, or failed to try any resource, which there was the slightest use in resorting to under the circumstances. She felt more and more every moment that upon her own resolution, and probably upon her own hand, her deliverance must depend. Inspired by a sacred enthusiasm, she fell upon her knees before the table, and with clasped hands besought the support of the God of purity and innocence to deliver her out of the power of wicked men, whatever shape their guilty purposes might assume. Rising already reinforced by that brief and fervent act of devotion, she recollected her secret weapon, drew it forth again, sheathed it in the folds of her soft raiment, and felt the spirit and resolution of a Lucretia to use it at her need.

Just as she returned the knife to her bosom, a step was audible—it approached—a hand was upon the key of the door—it grated in the wards—the door opened.—When it closed again she was shut up in the same lone room with the man whose approach to her person, even in her father's house and presence, had often made her shudder. His villany faltered under the eye of the outraged maiden; she faced him with an energetic composure that unnerved and petrified him. He forgot the love-speech he had framed to give the colour of romance to his nefarious conduct, and stammered forth a foolish apology for the unworthiness of the apartment and the badness of the fire.

"Confine yourself to an explanation of your behaviour, Mr. Dawson," she replied, with indignant scorn. "Why am I here?—why have I been torn from my friends by brutal force? Why am I thus barbarously insulted and abused?"

"Calm yourself, adorable Miss Spenser," he replied; "calm yourself, and I will explain all; do not tremble so—sit down."

"I do not tremble, sir—though I am in your house, Mr. Dawson, I do not tremble."

"Hear me, charming girl—but you are fatigued—be seated."

"I shall not sit down while I am at Castle Dawson," she answered bravely. "I demand my freedom; I neither ask nor shall I receive courtesy from you—let me go, and instantly."

She moved towards the door—he placed himself so as to obstruct her approach to it.

"No, Miss Spenser—you do not leave this to-night; you are in my power; it is my turn now to conquer; we shall see whether my passion is not as resistless as your charms."

"Oh, you shall dearly rue this atrocious outrage; you shall answer it dearly both to my family and to the laws of the country."

"Do not talk of your family—I do not wish to speak of them except with respect and affection. The old friend of your brother—"

"His corrupter—his betrayer."

"I did not betray him, Miss Spenser. This is more of your injustice—your cruel injustice to one whose only crime is to love you."

"I am not going to argue with you, sir—it is getting late—again I demand my freedom—release me—release me at your peril. Why do you thus cruelly detain me?"

"Do you talk of cruelty," he replied, now beginning to recollect some of his prepared address, "you, whose cruel insensibility to the truest, noblest, and sublimest passion that ever thrilled a human bosom, has driven me to this last resource of desperate affection. No, not desperate, I will not call it desperate; you see before you a frantic, but not despairing lover. You are one of those women—the grandest of their sex—who are not to be won by the ordinary tokens of sincerity. When I saved your dear life, adorable girl, did I not well know that it was not by such common-place gallantry a heart like yours was to be gained? No; you were only to be convinced by enormous sacrifices, such as my ambition and my country. I have already sacrificed one by retiring from parliament, and I am on the point of sacrificing the other by leaving Ireland for ever."

"What is all this to me, sir; what are your intentions to me?" Elizabeth naturally demanded, seeing no drift in this oration, and beginning to apprehend that she was in the power of a lunatic as well as a ruffian.

"That shall be explained to-morrow, or sooner, if the wind changes," said Dawson.

"No, no—I leave this to-night—this instant," she cried vehemently.

"Resistance is vain; but need I assure you that in this house you shall be safe from harm?"

"Depend upon it I shall, sir," she said, with quivering energy.

While he promised her security he looked dangerous in the extreme; he still stood between her and the door; his eye was sometimes rudely fastened upon her; sometimes it wandered strangely about the room. Again he alluded to her fatigue, and offered to take her hand to conduct her to a seat. With tremulous vigour she repelled the hateful attention, and repeated her declaration, that she would never sit while she remained his prisoner. He uttered some scarce articulate words, half reproachful, half passionate, and moved to the door. She thought he was about to relieve her from his presence, but he went to the door only to lock or bolt it. The terrified girl raised a scream that pierced through every corner of the dreary house. He advanced towards her with a savage declaration that her cries would call no one to her aid. She repelled him with her extended

arms, with the fierce action of beauty and virtue in the face of danger. He approached another step and attempted to catch her waist.

The garden-knife flashed in his face.

He recoiled before the instrument of death and safety.

"Do you depend on that?" he asked between his clenched teeth, with affected contempt for the weapon, and the resistance of a girl.

"Yes, Mr. Dawson," she cried, "upon this, and upon the support of heaven, is my resolution to defend my honour with it."

He laughed fearfully, and looked at once dubious and dreadful. The thought now occurred to her, that if she could but drive him from the room and fortify herself there, it would afford time for her father and friends to come to her rescue, as they would not fail to suspect Dawson to be the author of the outrage. Possessed of this thought, she did not content herself with standing on the defensive, but menacingly commanded him to leave her presence.

"Retire instantly, Mr. Dawson," she cried, almost unsexed by the exigency of her situation, and assuming the post and attitude of active hostility; "leave me this moment, or I will compel you with this weapon. If I am a prisoner here to-night, I shall pass it not only in safety, but in solitude. Begone, or I will chase you from me."

So speaking, she advanced upon him with no feigned determination, but with the actual fierceness of a noble high-passioned woman. As a beaten hound slinks from his chastisement, so did the baffled and degraded Dawson, white with rage and fear, retire before a garden-knife in the lifted hand of a girl.

Directly he was gone, she secured the door, not only with the key and the bolt, but with as much of the furniture as she could accumulate against it with the remains of her exhausted strength. There was no other door to the chamber. She examined the windows. The fall to the ground from one of them was some twenty or thirty feet. Immediately under the other was the roof of a stable; or some out-office, slanting towards the yard. Her defence on this side was therefore but slight,—only the shutters of the windows, which she made as fast as the arrangements permitted. There was, then, nothing to be done but to rely upon the providence which had so far protected her, and abide the course of events; but it was a harrowing situation; she thought of her very securities with terror; a few chairs and boxes her only barricade against the extremity of outrage. How weak she felt, too, now that the excitement of instant peril had ceased to give an hysterical vigour to her limbs! It was impossible to keep the resolution she had announced not to sit during her captivity. She sat for upwards of an hour almost motionless, listening intensely to catch any noise that might intimate either the approach of friends, or the return of the enemy; sometimes she thought she could distinguish voices, but in general the only sounds were those of the winds and waves, to which she would gladly have committed herself to escape from Castle Dawson. The fire was lowering, and the candle was growing short and dim. The room grew more gloomy and ghastly every minute. She shuddered with cold; there were blankets and a counterpane on the bed, but she would have thought their touch contamination. It was now, she calculated, about eleven o'clock. She paced the room for awhile, then returned to her chair, still listening and marvelling, either at the dismal noises, or the more dismal silence in the intervals between them; alternately shrinking with dread, and composing herself with calm reflections;

struggling to keep down fearful bodings with cheerful courage; trying to fathom the mystery of Dawson's designs, to divine what shape his violence would take, should he storm her in her present fortress before the arrival of assistance; often thinking of her father's despair and misery, on his return from his ride, and trusting that the Woodwards would not hear of her danger until after her deliverance—all the reflections and feelings of a brave and virtuous girl beset with perils, but not discomposed and unnerved by them.

Another hour elapsed, as well as she could mark the passing of time by the agonising train of controlled but not vanquished fears. Though unmolested, she was not unvisited during that interval. A hobbling step in the corridor, followed by a hoarse croaking voice at the door, varied the monotony of her dismal situation. It was the withered crone of the kitchen, with the offer of refreshment, and the tender of her delicate services to her master's fair visitor. Had Miss Spenser recognised female accents, she might have appealed for assistance to those female sympathies which are rarely quite extinct in the foulest form of womanhood; but the characteristics of sex were wanting, in the voice at least, of Mr. Dawson's housekeeper. Elizabeth declined her hospitable attentions, and the same hobbling step retraced the passage until its noise was lost, as well as that of the growl that accompanied it, in the other discords of the place.

Anxious to form a notion of the progress of the night, the thought now occurred to her to unbar the shutters of one of the windows and observe the heavens. She knew some of the leading constellations, and she thought if she could only see the Great Bear, she might divine the hour with some degree of accuracy. With extreme caution, she removed the fastenings, and peered out into the dark. It was a wonderfully calm night for the locality, and as bright as was possible without a moon. The concave blazed with stars, and the aspect of the room being fortunately northward, the remarkable group she wanted was easily distinguished, and its inverted position assured her that it was probably an hour or two past midnight. As still she gazed forth upon the firmament, which had nothing purer beneath it than herself, her eye glanced upon the slanting roof under the window, which seemed to slope downwards to the very pavement of the yard, and the idea of escape suggested itself. The difficulties seemed enormous, but the idea possessed her strongly. To flee from such detestable confinement, to get beyond the reach of such ruthless villany, were it to the most savage heath or the wildest cavern along the shore, was so desirable, that the more she thought of the dangers the less formidable they seemed. Her resolution to venture it was taken in a few minutes. The advantage of disguise was obvious, and the completest and most commodious would be the attire of the other sex. One of the wardrobes was unlocked and open. She looked into it, and discovered with surprise and joy, a kind of sailor's dress, a blue jacket, loose trowsers of grey plaid, and a round oil-skin hat, which she instantly recognised as belonging to her brother; in fact, it was the suit Sydney had worn on the memorable day on which he rode to Castle Dawson with the proctor, and which he had changed there for a hunting-dress of Dudley's. Elizabeth remembered how sharply she had reproved him for appearing in the flashy green coat, and now the jacket he left behind him in its place was about to save her from worse than death.

She speedily metamorphosed herself into a sailor's boy, retaining as much of her female gear as she could; gathered up her beautiful hair under the

hat, took her grey tartan shawl on her arm, to protect herself from cold, and thus, not forgetting her faithful knife, she proceeded to attempt the descent into the yard. Noiselessly she raised the window, and crept out upon the shed beneath it. Fortunately the inclination was gentle, so that she crept on to the edge without difficulty, but she was then at a height above the ground which far exceeded her estimate, and for a few moments her progress was balked. The yard was very obscure, but at some short distance she fancied she could discover what seemed to be a heap of litter. At all events, it did not appear to be stones, or any hard substance, and she thought she could gain it by a leap. She raised herself to her feet, and with a vigorous effort sprang upon the heap, which proved to be straw, and received her with a soft and rustling welcome. The egresses from the yard commanded her attention in the first instance. There were two, a gateway, which was secured, and a door at one side, which was also locked, but the key was in the hole; so that her escape so far was unimpeded. Her heart now, however, sank within her, when she thought of the wide waste of unknown heaths and hills that stretched between her and her friends. How could she hope to traverse them in safety; nay, to traverse them at all? A horse—had she but a horse—"a kingdom for a horse!" Familiar with the ponies of those mountains, it occurred to her that she might find one of them in the stables, and she returned and searched the sheds in the yard with that view. She found two animals of that small, hardy, sagacious species; and what was more, she found a side-saddle, the identical one that had been provided for Mrs. Peacock's use on a former night. The beast was more courteous to her than man had been, and she succeeded, to her own astonishment, in preparing him for the road. She found a whip, too, which she seized to her use, and leading the pony out of the yard, she mounted him eagerly, and having no choice of roads to distract her, simply turned her back upon Castle Dawson, and fled into the hills.

On rode the dauntless girl over moor and mountain, in the visible darkness, only bent upon leaving the abhorred house, and its more abhorred master, as far as possible in the rear. The pony was a brave, sure-footed animal, and seemed to feel that he was bearing distressed beauty from the reach of ruffian aggression. On she rode, not fearless, but with no fear that misbecame or overwhelmed her. The sounds of the heath and of the distant sea occasionally startled, but never bewildered her. Hers was

> "The virtuous mind that ever goes attended
> By a strong-siding champion, conscience,"

and hers was the unwavering assurance

> "That he, the Supreme Good, to whom all things ill
> Are but as slavish officers of vengeance,
> Would send a glistering guardian, if need were,
> To keep her life and honour unassailed."

On she rode, with unflagging spirit, with unabated speed, with undismayed heart, agitated yet constant, like the fair tree in the storm—how different from the girl who rode over the same moors a night or two before, after having atrociously aided Dawson to accomplish his nefarious purpose. Pursuit was what Elizabeth chiefly dreaded; into worse hands she could not possibly fall than those from which she was a fugitive; but to be

pursued and overtaken was a mischance so likely to befal her, that she resolved never to slacken her pace while the horse that carried her did his duty. Often she wondered how it came to pass that her friends had not already tracked her out; sometimes she feared that she had taken a wrong course; sometimes she conjectured, what proved to be the truth, that their pursuit had been diverted into a false scent by one of the stratagems of the gang.

It was not until just before sunrise, that exciting morning, that the distracted rector and curate discovered the artifice that had been practised upon them, and, tortured by the fear that its success had been fatal to Elizabeth, at length, after hours of vain search, and upon jaded horses, took the route they should have taken at first.

The curate was clothed in terror from head to heel. His passion was so towering that it seemed to add a good cubit to his stature. He looked like the incarnation of a whirlwind; his teeth were clenched, and he was dumb with the intensity of his indignation. The staff which he brandished was out of the category of all ordinary cudgels, for it was literally a young forest-tree, such as painters and poets arm a satyr with, or a Cyclops.

The two clergymen, with Lord Bonham's gamekeeper, and two officers of police, were now riding hard towards Castle Dawson, when, on gaining the crown of an eminence, from which miles of road could be seen winding through the moors, like an immense serpent, they discerned a rider approaching them at the top of his speed. The dress of a sailor was noticed before the features could be distinguished. As the speed on neither side was checked for an instant, the distance diminished rapidly, and Mr. Spenser exclaimed, with amazement,

"Good God, it is Sydney!"—his daughter looked so like her brother, in the garb which the latter had been accustomed to wear. But the next moment Hercules was supporting his lovely niece in his arms, to save her from falling exhausted from her horse.

CHAPTER LXI.

THE SHIPWRECK.

"Truth will come to light; murder cannot be hid long; a man's son may, but in the end truth will out." MERCHANT OF VENICE.

IT was not the great curate's fault that Dawson effected his escape. The minister of the gospel that day performed the work of a dozen officers of justice. His assault on Castle Dawson bore no faint resemblance to the actual storming of a fortress, except that, to his sore disappointment, no enemy appeared to defend its approaches. No nook or corner of that iniquitous mansion did the besiegers leave unransacked. When they reached the vault which communicated so craftily with the sea, Hercules, in the tempest of his fury, shivered into atoms the few bottles of wine which remained after the late debauchery; his tremendous weapon made the glass fly and the liquor spout in cataracts round about him, until some of his auxiliaries were literally drenched with claret. But the trap-door eluded observation in the din, fortunately for those who escaped by that

way on board the brig. For some time it was feared that the whole gang had got off, but at length a dapper little fellow in a white waistcoat, with a physiognomy of the same hue, through the excess of his terror, was detected on an upper shelf of a huge wardrobe, where he had endeavoured to conceal himself behind some bundles of old linen. Hercules, who alone was tall enough to make the discovery, dragged him down by the collar of the coat, and had he recognised him as Dawson's man of the law, he would infallibly have given him as good grounds for an action of assault and battery as ever plaintiff had. Not knowing Mr. Sharkey, he only delivered him over to the constables, by whom he was securely handcuffed; but though repeatedly questioned as to his name and calling, he was far too shrewd to confess either. Sharkey was the only prisoner made in the house, notwithstanding several hours' search, during which no probable or improbable place in which a man could conceal himself, and which a bludgeon could demolish or break open, escaped the curate's secular arm. Indeed, like the jealous Ford, he searched even impossible places. They were slow to relinquish the chase while a chance remained of discovering the principal malefactor; but the sun was going rapidly down, and the lurid colouring of the sky, with the surly tone of the blast, and other indications which the curate well understood, admonished him to think of withdrawing his forces, in order to have a reasonable chance of regaining Bonham Lodge that night. As it was, the shattered windows of Castle Dawson were reflecting the last dismal gleams of day, when, thoroughly exhausted with their exertions, they retraced their steps to Branagan's inn, carrying the captive solicitor with them, who preserved the determined silence of Iago after the consummation and detection of his crimes.

While they tarried at Branagan's to refresh themselves, the wind, which had been turbulent by fits all day, increased to a gale, and the night set in so frightfully, that anxious as Hercules was to travel, it was not to be thought of until there was some abatement of the storm. He passed several hours dismally enough in the same little loft which Mr. Maguire had occupied when he was surprised counting his money; and the curate's supper was very little better than what had been served to the proctor upon the same occasion. However, he was more accustomed to the rough than the smooth of life, and never complained of his hard fare, but after he had supped, stretched himself on the little settle-bed to enjoy a nap, while the wind was doing its best to batter the house down. There he slept until past midnight, but without outsleeping the hurricane, and he would probably have slept longer, had he not been startled from his slumbers by a cry which had startled many a sleeper in that little inn before, the cry that there was a ship upon the rocks. Hercules was already out of bed, huddling on his clothes in the dark, when Mr. Branagan rushed into his room with a lantern to announce the intelligence, well knowing the curate's reputation for skill and bravery in such emergencies. His renown, indeed, was known to all about him, so that they instinctively ranged themselves under his command and obeyed his directions. Having marshalled his force, and provided himself and them with everything the inn contained likely to be of use in saving lives, he led them forth into the dark and howling tempest, and hastened to the point where the halloos of the peasantry who were already on foot intimated that the disaster had occurred. It was no easy matter so much as to walk in the wind that blew, for it was furious enough to have plucked up the trees by their roots had there been any trees on that bleak shore to be plucked up. The

waves roared, too, so that a thousand bulls could not have out-bellowed them. The ship had struck upon a reef of rocks, at a point of the shore about a mile from the inn, and close to Castle Dawson. Hercules had never witnessed a scene so fearful as the shipwreck of that night, inured as he was to scenes of this kind, and with all his familiarity with that terrible coast. A party of the country-people, however, had assembled, and, having now experienced and able directors, they succeeded in saving numerous lives, though many a corpse was flung upon the beach, and the vessel itself, an American brig from Quebec, went, before the spectators' eyes, to a thousand pieces. The naked and the wounded (for few escaped without more or less injury), received all the attention and relief that could be afforded them under the circumstances. Some were carried to the inn, indeed as many as it was possible to accommodate there; the rest were distributed through the huts of the poor fishermen about the spot, whose dwellings were not more open to the storms than were their hearts to all charitable sympathies with their fellow-creatures in distress.

It was sunrise when Hercules again threw himself down on a long bench before the kitchen fire, to recruit his strength after his prodigious exertions during the night. But scarcely had he closed his eyes before he was roused by the gamekeeper, and requested to get up and visit one of the sufferers, who was reported to be on the point of death. The report was brought by a miserable old woman, in whose hut the dying man lay. The curate sprang upon his legs instantly, and huddled on his still dripping garments.

"I can't confess the poor fellow," he said, "but I may be of use to him, nevertheless."

It was no easy matter in the storm to reach the dreary place to which the crone conducted the curate, accompanied by the gamekeeper and Mr. Branagan of the inn. The old woman literally crept along the ground, grasping the tufts of sea-pinks to prevent the wind from whirling her aloft like a truss of straw. She led the way, however, to a small deep hollow close to the shore, surrounded, except towards the west, with an irregular wall of cliffs, and destitute of all vegetation, except a few amphibious plants, and patches of stunted fern. The winds collected and howled there like twelve legions of demons. At high tides, with a western gale, the sea usurped it completely, and left the blasted fern strewed with wreaths of sea-weed and shattered shells. It was an awful place either to die, or live in, but Mr. Woodward was accustomed to such scenes, and to find in them the haunts of men.

They entered the hut. The den of a fox could scarcely have been more unfurnished. A hole in the roof was the chimney, and a hole in the wall was the window. The ocean's spray bounded through both apertures. There was an iron pot, and a straw pallet, no other visible household stuff. Mr. Woodward approached the straw, which rustled with the writhings of the poor wretch who lay upon it; otherwise no one could have known that anything living lay there, so dark was the wretched place. Mr. Branagan, by the curate's directions, held a lantern which he carried so that its slender thread of light fell upon the face of the wounded man. It instantly struck Hercules that he had seen that gaunt and truculent face before. The idea agitated him, but he made no remark, not being certain that recognition would be prudent, supposing his impression to be correct. The man was as tall and muscular as himself; his countenance singularly fierce and forbidding. He had evidently received a dangerous, if not mortal hurt, and answered the questions put to him with an effort that seemed

to cause him acute anguish, and in a voice scarcely audible in the hurly-burly of the waves and winds. The humane curate stooped over him; administered some drops of a cordial he had provided himself with at the inn; and, examining the wounds came instantly to the conclusion that the case was past the resources of the ablest surgery. The cordial, however, restored strength, if it did not mitigate pain; the wounded man raised himself on his elbow, and expressed an eager desire to see a clergyman, naturally concluding the curate to be a surgeon, or a doctor.

"I am a clergyman, not a doctor," said Hercules, "but I am not a priest," he added, meaning that he was not a catholic priest, and could not therefore administer the rites of the Church of Rome to the dying man.

He tried to reply, but failing in the attempt, made a gesture with his hand, intimating that he wished to be alone with Mr. Woodward.

The gamekeeper and Mr. Branagan were very reluctant to leave the shelter, but Hercules (anxious himself for a private conference) insisted on their retiring; directing the former to remain within call, and Branagan to return to the inn and despatch a messenger for the nearest medical assistance. The old woman had crept into a corner of the hut, where she lay rolled up like a bundle of rags, and nobody saw or knew she was there.

"If I am not mistaken," said the curate, seating himself on the stool, and holding the lantern in one hand, while with the other he again administered some drops of the cordial; "if I am not mistaken, I have seen you before, my poor fellow."

The man looked as if he desired to ask where.

"At a place in this county called the Black Castle," said Hercules.

The man again raised himself for a moment, gazed with intensity on the face of his interrogator, muttered assent to his recognition, and fell back on the rustling straw. Hercules gave him time to rally, and then said, with deep solemnity,

"You have crime upon your conscience."

Crime, indeed a life of crime, was suggested by the pale ferocity of that countenance upon which Mr. Woodward gazed with the same strong eye with which he had once before encountered it, only that now there was pity in the curate's look, for to the expression of violence and guilt, in the face before him, was now added the awful physiognomy of rapidly approaching death.

"Ay, crime enough," was the answer.

"I will hear any statement you choose to make," said Hercules, "but I must reserve to myself the right to make what use of it I please; on that condition I am prepared to receive anything you have to say."

The voice was faint, hoarse, interrupted with the moans of pain, and often almost inaudible, in which the confession was made. It commanded the attention of Mr. Woodward so profoundly that he scarcely breathed while he listened. Portions of it agitated him extremely, and suggested various eager inquiries. At length he said,

"This must be stated in the presence of a third person, and taken down in writing, otherwise it cannot advance the ends of justice."

To this the dying man mutely but willingly assented, and Hercules stepped out and dispatched the gamekeeper for the policeman, not untortured by fear lest the vital functions should be exhausted before their arrival. It was a dreadful interval, and more than once it seemed as if death purposed to destroy the evidence, on the preservation and record of

police came in time to be of the service required, and by one of them the examination was put in writing, as slowly and intermittingly the story was repeated, or the answers returned to the questions which Mr. Woodward proposed. Life meanwhile was ebbing fast. Few moments remained for the exercise of the curate's good offices as a minister of religious consolation, but he made the most devout and zealous use of them, pouring all the balm he could into the hurt spirit, and devoutly hoping it was not, like his wounded body, past healing. The final struggle soon came and was soon over. When Hercules left the hut, the Atlantic foam was washing the pale grim features of the dead.

CHAPTER LXII.

THE HOUSE-TOP.

"For 'tis the mind that makes the body rich,
And as the sun breaks through the darkest clouds,
So honour peereth in the meanest habit."

TAMING OF THE SHREW.

THUS providentially was the curate the means of preserving from destruction the evidence on which the vindication of his nephew and the happiness of his family depended, for it has already been divined that the man who perished that night in the fisherman's hut was the accomplice of Thomson in the robbery of Mr. Spenser's proctor. It was owing to accident that Vivyan and Sydney had not made the voyage home in the same fated vessel. They had, in fact, secured their berths in it, when the captain of a British sloop of war, a friend of Vivyan, who was about to sail for England a day or two later, offered a passage to him and his friend, which was too agreeable a proposition not to be gladly accepted, and by accepting it they probably saved their lives. When Hercules first discovered who the dying man was, his alarm had been extreme, lest the two young men should prove to have been also amongst the passengers, and numbered with those who perished. Lamb, however, satisfied him on that point before he became speechless; but his strength failed before he could relate the circumstances under which he had been discovered, and the motives which had induced him to return to Ireland.

The curate's curiosity, however, was not destined to remain long unsatisfied, for the sloop of war had outsailed the merchantman, and was actually at that moment in the harbour of Plymouth.

Hercules hastened back from the scene of death to Mr. Branagan's inn, the storm still pelting him furiously. In defiance of all obstacles, he then mounted his pony, and, followed by the gamekeeper, rode back to Bonham Lodge at the swiftest pace to which, without inhumanity, he could urge Sligo. Never was an arrival more anxiously looked for. Carry had passed the night in a fever of apprehension for his safety, and now he rushed into her arms, not merely to assure her that he was alive and well, but to give her the happiest tidings of which he could possibly have been the bearer. Doctor Wilkins was in attendance upon Elizabeth, who did not recover the horrors of the night at Castle Dawson as speedily as she had done the

plunge in the ocean on a former occasion. Her physical exertions, as well as her mental tortures, had been inconceivable. She continued so ill for some days that it was not thought prudent to add to her excitement even by the communication of the most joyful news. Her aunt attended her day and night with the solicitude of a dozen mothers; indeed, Carry suffered by sympathy quite as much as if she had been the victim of the abduction herself; an exploit which in her case would have been one of the hardest. As to the curate, there seemed no rest for him. He had scarcely drawn his breath at the lodge before the thought of his old tumble-down house; the damage it was likely to have sustained in the tempest, and the hazard to which his children had been exposed, made him excessively uneasy, and he ordered one of the plough-horses to be saddled to convey him to Redcross, for the pony was quite done up. So great was his anxiety, particularly about a stack of chimneys immediately over the room where Billy Pitt slept, that he totally forgot he had made no breakfast, and his wife and the rector were too much engrossed to think of matters of that kind; but Lord Bonham's housekeeper had a great reverence and affection for Hercules, who had once brought her son through a fever, and she now proved her gratitude by bringing him a great bowl of tea and some proportionate huge slices of brown bread and butter, which he took sitting on the back of the plough-horse, who was by no means impatient for the road. The reader is aware that to reach the town he had to pass close by the parsonage, for it was the same route which Dawson had taken not very long before. When Hercules arrived at that point of his journey, he found certain things going on for which he was utterly at a loss to account. A small trading vessel lay at anchor, just where the smart Gipsy used to be moored in the prosperous days past, and she seemed to have just discharged herself of her cargo, for several boxes and bales of goods, covered with mats and tarpaulins, stood on the strand, while the crew and some of the rector's people were busy transporting other bales, seemingly of the same description, and depositing them in the house. Very little inspection showed that the goods consisted principally of household furniture; but Hercules got very little satisfaction from the people at work, when he inquired by whose orders they were thus employed, for he very well knew that the rector had no idea of what was going forward. Entering the house, the first person he met was the little proctor, who threw quite as small light on the matter as anybody else, although the curate could not but suspect, from the mysterious twinkle of his shrewd little pair of eyes, that he knew something more than he chose to admit.

Randy almost wept for joy, when he learned what had taken place at Castle Dawson, and how Providence had brought the guilt home at last to the real criminals. He said he knew all along that the truth would come out sooner or later, though he never expected to be spared to see the day, closing the speech with his queer little twittering cough.

"But," said Randy, "there's a bit of a question I wisht your reverince had axed the poor sinner, before his sowl passed, for it's too late to talk of it now."

Hercules desired to know to what he alluded.

"How he knowed," said Randy, "that I kept the money in the pocket in the left buzzom of my coat."

"Why, man, he saw you thrust your pocket-book into it the night he paid you the visit at Branagan's."

"The Lord be praised!" ejaculated the proctor, "I always said that was

the villain that done it. And did he tell your reverince all about it, and how he terrified the seven sinses out of my poor ould self? Och—ony—oh, it's myself that will never forget the looks of him when he seed the bank notes."

"He did, Randy," said Hercules, fixing his eye severely on the little officer of the Church, "he did, and he told me also what it was that took him down to the inn that night, and afforded him the opportunity of making acquaintance with you and your bank-notes. Randy, Randy, you incorrigible old gambler, it was that old pack of cards of yours brought this pack of troubles upon us all."

"Thin in some sense it was, sartinly, and I won't gainsay it," said the little proctor, greatly abashed, and coughing very pitifully.

"You never said a word about the cards; not a word about the cards, Randy, did you ever mention."

"I thought it would only aggravate your reverince to hear talk of them," said Maguire, "and I never liked displasing you, Mr. Woodward, honey, for you were always kind to me and mine, and always gave good advice."

"Some of it very unprofitably bestowed, Maguire," said the curate, moving away; "but enough of the subject, for the present. I see there is some goodnatured scheme on foot to give your old master an agreeable surprise; however, I won't ask you to let me into the secret."

"I'm mighty thankful to your reverince," said Randy, almost touching the ground with the tip of his nose, "and may providence pour his blessings on you and your good lady and all your beautiful darlings, and may you live to have many more of them."

The curate shook his head very doubtfully at the latter part of this benediction, and pursued his way across the water, after which a short time brought him to Redcross. He found his little Woodwards all safe and sound, but his mansion had suffered woeful detriment. The hurricane had smashed numerous panes of glass, which Peter was trying to repair with wisps of hay and as many old hats of his master as he could find; but the roof had been still more unfortunate; the court-yard was literally strewed with slates and fragments of tiles, and Billy Pitt and his brother were swimming their paper boats in the pools of water which had found its way into the upper story. Meditating how to remedy all this ravage of the elements with his own honest hands, Hercules walked down to the post-office for letters. Mrs. Peacock did not appear; her husband was on duty in person, and after considerable shuffling and going backwards and forwards between the office and an inner room, he handed the curate a letter, the seal of which he instantly perceived had been tampered with. It was a short note from Vivyan, announcing his arrival in England, and there was an allusion in it to a letter which Sydney had written to his father by the same post.

"Any letters for Mr. Spenser?" said the curate.

"None, to-day, sir."

"Be so good as to try, Mr. Peacock."

The postmaster was very confident, but turned over his packets, and persisted in his answer. The curate then stated the good reason he had to believe that there was a letter for the rector, and peremptorily commanded a further search. Peacock was visibly fluttered, and again repaired to the inner room. The curate's eye followed him, and directly the door opened he spied two persons in the background; one was Lucy and the other was Thomson. Hercules said not a word. Peacock

returned in a few moments with the letter in his hand. The seal, however, showed no sign of having been outraged like the other. Hercules paid the postage, put the letter in his pocket, and then, coolly walking into the office, accosted Peacock, in a deep stern voice, and ordered him to go back into his privy chamber and inform Mr. Thomson that the Reverend Mr. Woodward desired to talk with him. Peacock turned white as a shroud, and trembled from head to foot as he obeyed the mandate. The moment the curate's message was delivered, the fellow who was the object of it rushed at the door, and made a desperate effort to escape into the street. But Hercules sprang after him, seized him by the nape of the neck, and actually lifted him for an instant off his legs, as if he had been a hare or a rabbit. Peacock shrank cowering into a dark corner, not daring to interpose between the curate and his prey. Lucy remained paralysed with terror in the inner room, expecting to see her hollow-checked accomplice torn to pieces, or cudgelled to death before her eyes. But Hercules had too strong a sense of dignity to use any more violence than was absolutely necessary. Without addressing a word either to the postmaster or his wife, he strode out of the office, holding a terrible gripe of his captive, and trailing him along the principal street, just as Ellen Hogg, the schoolmistress, might have done with one of her scholars, who had vainly attempted to escape from her hand. A bare-headed and bare-legged mob was soon collected, and upon this occasion assuredly the sympathies of an Irish rabble were enlisted on the side of justice, for they cheered Hercules vociferously and lustily hooted his prisoner, probably judging from his aspect that he was more likely to be guilty of some petty larceny than any crime of dignity, such as an abduction or a homicide. Arrived at the police barrack, the curate found the Castle Dawson party just returned with Mr. Sharkey in custody, and Thomson and the attorney were locked up together for the night. It was not a very discreet arrangement, as the result soon proved.

By the time this adventure was ended, it was drawing towards dusk, and Hercules went home to his children, followed all the way with the applauses and benisons of his parishioners of all persuasions, every second blessing including a prayer for the fertility of Mrs. Woodward, and a rapid multiplication of the poor man's offspring. He found his progeny (numerous enough in all conscience), hungrily expecting his return; and a glorious Irish stew (a savoury compound of mutton, potatoes, onions, pepper, and gravy) soon smoked on the table in the study, round which they all pressed; the father looking like an affectionate giant entertaining a party of delighted dwarfs, and the corpulent cat going round and round the company, fawning on great and small, and purring parasitically, as loud as he could, to earn his share of the national dish. But the table-talk that day was far the best part of the entertainment. The curate had scarcely time to appease his appetite, whetted as it was by an unusually long fast, so eager were the little folks to hear all about their fair cousin's escape, and so proud were they of their father's prowess. He had only told his tale some three or four times over, when an uproar reached their ears from the main street of the town, and Hercules sprang up and rushed out to ascertain the cause of the hubbub. Thomson and Sharkey had made their escape out of the window of the room they had been confined in. It was owing to the gross negligence of the police, and Hercules was justly incensed at their conduct. He consoled himself, however, by reflecting that the attorney might have proved a troublesome customer,

and that the conviction of the other miscreant was comparatively immaterial, after the dying confession of Lamb. Neither Thomson, nor Sharkey, was ever retaken, or any tidings heard of one or the other from that day to this.

The curate retired to rest not very early that night, for the town continued long in a ferment, yet he was up with the first lark to resume the duties of his hard but happy life. Billy Pitt was an early bird also, and the morning being as bright a one as ever cheered the world, the curate and his son held a consultation whether they should set about repairing the roof, or mount their hacks and visit mamma and cousin Elizabeth at the lodge. Billy was for the latter plan, and Hercules was very well inclined to it also; but the former was more prudent, and the curate was careful never to set his children an example of postponing duty and business to pleasure in any shape. So Peter was despatched to the lodge to bring an account of Miss Spenser's health, and immediately after breakfast, and as soon as the curate had paid one or two pastoral visits to sick people in town, the slating commenced with vigour. Upon this occasion it was not by a ladder that Hercules got on his roof, but out of the windows of the observatory, which was a much safer way, and one that Carry always urged strenuously. The curate exchanged his coat for a flannel jacket, which he kept for his mechanical operations, and borrowed a coarse linen apron of Peter, for his worst clerical suit was too good to have spoiled with lime and mortar. The mortar was made in the garden, and Billy Pitt carried it up the stairs in a coal-skuttle, having previously collected the slates in the yard and conveyed them to the observatory also. Then the work went on actively; Billy remarking every five minutes that no regular slater could do it much better, and Hercules himself very well pleased with his performance, and now and then in the midst of his stories of Scipio and Epaminondas (for he and Billy were very classical at such times), stopping and surveying it not without considerable vainglory. The sun grew very strong, but still they laboured until noon, when the curate said he would set only half-a-dozen slates more, and then they would take an hour's repose and have luncheon. Scarcely had he spoken the words, when the bell attached to the outer gate rang, and the other children, who were diverting themselves about the court, ran to open it. Hercules paid no attention until he heard his name pronounced, and the sound of horses' feet in the yard below. Then he peered over the parapet and saw that a gentleman on horseback, accompanied by a servant, had arrived at the house-door. The gentleman's figure was too much foreshortened to be distinguishable; all Hercules could see was that he was attired in black, so he concluded it was Mr. Oliver, or some other clergyman of the neighbourhood, and sent down Billy Pitt to ascertain. But before Billy got half way to the hall he was met by his little brother Hercules, running up in violent excitement, screaming—

"Father, father! A bishop, a bishop! Put on you, put on you!"

The curate heard the scream of the juvenile from the roof, and, not believing his ears, put his head in at the window to catch the sounds again, when the door burst open and little Hercules rushed in, vociferating —"A bishop, a bishop!" It was as true as holy writ. A bishop was below,—an actual live bishop,—and had asked to see the Rev. Mr. Woodward.

"What did you say?" said the curate, extremely dismayed for a moment or two, and thinking ruefully that he had left his coat in the study.

"I said you were slating in the observatory, father," said the little Hercules, who had been brought up by both his parents in the ways of truth and simplicity.

While the child spoke, the solemn tread of clerical boots was heard outside, and the grave voice of the eminent visitor in conversation with Billy Pitt; the door opened, and instantly the curate in his working costume, with his narrow trowel in his hand, stood in the presence of the same excellent bishop, to whom he had been introduced at the marriage of Mrs. Dabzac. His lordship, both amused and puzzled at the reply of little Hercules, had desired Billy Pitt to conduct him up stairs, determined, (at the risk of intruding too far behind the domestic scenes,) to witness with his own eyes what promised to be a striking picture of poverty dignified by worth. Such a picture indeed was now presented to his view, and there was nothing in the bearing of Hercules to detract from its full effect. It was profoundly respectful without an approach to cringing; as Shakspeare says of the elephant, "his legs were for necessity, not for flexure;" and he was too much of a practical philosopher, and far too much of a true Christian clergyman, to be ashamed of his narrow circumstances or of the quaint occupation at which he was surprised. He stood in presence, indeed, of a man who would have despised him had it been otherwise; a prelate, whom riches had not corrupted, nor temporal elevation lowered; who represented in his person the glory of well-used wealth, as the curate did the dignity of nobly-supported poverty. But these considerations were perhaps too abstract for a boy of Billy Pitt's age, for while his father was entering into conversation with the bishop, Billy kept hovering round him, trying to untie and remove the white apron, probably being the more shocked at its impropriety by contrasting it with his lordship's black one. The two good churchmen noticed the boy's proceeding almost simultaneously, and were equally diverted by it. Still Hercules could not conjecture to what he owed the honour of a visit so unexpected, and his right-reverend visitor seemed equally at a loss to state the business which he really had in hand. His lordship looked out of the windows, and remarked the immense extent of view from them, the magnificence of the ocean, and the fine colouring of a small group of rocky islets in the offing. Then he made some observations on slates and slate quarries, and gave the curate a word of advice on the dangers of his employment and the perfidious nature of ladders; but still it was evident from his manner that it was not to speak of ladders, or quarries, or coast scenery, that he had pushed himself to the top of the house.

He was a shy, reserved, though well-bred man, and it was not always those acts which he performed with most pleasure which he performed with the greatest ease. At length, after briefly alluding to his first meeting with Mr. Woodward in Dublin, and expressing his regret that he did not see more of a clergyman of whom he heard so much, he came bluntly to the point, and said, there was a preferment vacant in his diocese, more valuable for its rank than its income, and "I am come, Mr. Woodward," added his lordship, "to request your acceptance of it, because I know no worthier man to offer it to, and I am anxious to have you in my diocese."

The bishop hurried away so fast that he actually mounted his horse before he thought of informing Hercules what the preferment was, or gave him time to express his surprise and gratitude in a connected sentence. The curate, by that unexpected visit, was made an archdeacon; there was

a small living attached to the dignity worth about three hundred a year, but there was a good house on the glebe; and the best of all was that it was at no very great distance from Redcross parsonage, which would have been a serious drawback.

The news reached Bonham Lodge in a few hours. The post-boy happened to be just starting, and Hercules wrote a line to Carry. Then he went to his luncheon with Billy, after which he returned to the roof and finished his repairs in silence, thanking God in his heart for having increased his means of educating his children, but otherwise not expecting to be a happier man for his preferment.

Had the Prime Minister written to Mr. Spenser and offered him Canterbury, he could not have made him happier than he was made by the promotion of his curate. Indeed, that promotion made a great many good people happy; and if it be true, as most true it is, though a poet said it, that there is "care in heaven," and "love in heavenly natures to us creatures base," it is scarcely a fiction to say that the advancement of Hercules made the angels themselves glad. As to Carry Woodward, she rejoiced serenely in the turn of her husband's fortunes, and longed to have the whole history of it from his own lips.

But the first members of the family who hailed him by the title of archdeacon were Sydney and Vivyan, who arrived late that evening at Redcross. The arrival, though not expected, was no very great surprise. The meeting of the nephew and uncle was at once affectionate and solemn. The curate was reluctant to acquaint Vivyan with the sufferings and outrage to which his Elizabeth had been exposed, but it was necessary to do so, and it was no easy matter to restrain him, or Sydney either, from pushing on to Bonham Lodge at midnight. Peter, however, returned with capital news of Miss Spenser, and a note from Carry, in which she said that Doctor Wilkins had pronounced her niece able now to bear any amount of good news, and hoped that, to-morrow or next day, she would be equal to any amount of agreeable company. There was no allusion to the promotion in the note, for the post had not arrived at the lodge when Peter left to return to Redcross. Vivyan and Sydney slept that night at the inn, and ere the following morning was past its prime, the whole party, on good mountain hacks all of them, were trotting over the hills to the hunting-lodge, Vivyan and Sydney beguiling the road with the narrative of their meeting at Quebec, and the adventures they both had met with in pursuit of the wretched Lamb. Hercules was astonished at the energy displayed by Vivyan, until he thought of the motives and passions under the sway of which he acted, and remembered that love, which makes hard natures soft as wax, has the opposite effect of rendering soft ones hard as iron. From the day that Vivyan parted in tears and misery from Miss Spenser, in her uncle's house at Redcross, he became an altered man, altered in character and constitution; the extreme gentleness of the former and the almost fragility of the latter disappeared; the necessity for great efforts seemed to produce not only the mental vigour but the physical hardihood to make them; he renounced all that bordered on the woman in his delicate and refined nature, and started on his almost quixotic enterprise as manly and brave a fellow as George Markham, or even Hercules himself. Markham would have accompanied his relative upon an expedition so germain to his taste for travel and exploit, but he was prevented from leaving England at the time by the death of his father, and the domestic affairs in which that event involved him. He beheld

the revolution in his cousin with agreable surprise, hardly recognising the same young man who a short time before had almost fainted under the load of a fowling-piece, and who was quite broken down by a walk of five miles in the Tyrconnell mountains.

CHAPTER LXIII.

THE RESTORATION.

"On to the temple! There all solemn rites
Performed, a general feast shall be proclaimed.
Sorrows are changed to bride-songs. So they thrive
Whom fate, in spite of storms, has kept alive."
THE LOVER'S MELANCHOLY.

No disparagement to physic and physicians, one cannot help thinking that there is great healing virtue in a happy turn of fortune, and something extremely tonic and cordial in the spirit of love and friendship. Doctor Wilkins was a very skilful as well as a very amusing man, and no doubt he acted discreetly in keeping Miss Spenser very quiet for a few days after the terrible trial to which she had been exposed; but she certainly recovered with marvellous rapidity from the moment she saw her brother returned reformed and saved, and her lover again at her side, in the character of Sydney's reformer and deliverer. Then she had also her uncle's prosperity to exult in, and it was almost enough in itself to restore elasticity to her ankle and bring the carmine of health back to her cheek.

There was no end of rejoicing in the curate's promotion, no end of practising to call him archdeacon, discussing whether he ought to assume the shovel or not, and making him repeat the story of the bishop's visit. Carry almost died laughing at the part borne by her little son in the transaction, and did nothing for whole evenings but repeat—

"A bishop, a bishop—put on you, put on you:—my poor little Hercules—a bishop, a bishop."

The story is told to this day round the firesides of the family in all its branches, Spensers, Vivyans, and Woodwards, and causes almost as much mirth as it did when the event was fresh. The newspapers in a few days announced Mr. Woodward's advancement in the article of ecclesiastical intelligence, and letter came upon letter to congratulate him from his old college cronies, Tom Beamish and others, from many of his wife's friends and relatives, and a few short but warm lines from the Hon. Tom Flinch, who never forgot him. But the warmest of all, at least in terms, though a little prolix, as usual, was the letter that arrived from Mrs. Dabzac. However, it had the rare merit of being perfectly sincere. No member of his family saw the poor homely curate exalted into a titled dignitary of the Church with greater content, and (as Carry remarked) it would have made Arabella still happier to have seen her uncle a bishop. It was not the least of the curious circumstances connected with the curate's fortune that he was partly indebted for it to his niece's vulgar vanity on the occasion of her wedding, and partly to his own magnanimity in overlooking her pettiness.

"Well," said the rector, "Elizabeth will have an archdeacon at least to marry her: that won't be so very bad, after all."

But the rector had to provide himself with a new curate, and that was a grief and trouble to him, for such another man as Hercules was not to be found on every coast, or met on every mountain. The choice of his successor was wisely left to the archdeacon himself, who wrote on the subject to Tom Beamish, upon whose fervent recommendation a fresh-coloured, simple-minded, and able-bodied young man was appointed to the curacy of Redcross, and inducted by the rector himself into the humble abode where his brother-in-law had dwelt so long in happy and honoured indigence. Upon that occasion Mr. Spenser made a happy application of Evander's speech to the Trojan hero, in the 8th book of the Æneid; for, laying his hand gently and impressively on the arm of the young clergyman, as they stood at the door of the old white house, in his solemn melodious voice he pronounced the lines—

> "Hæc limina victor
> Alcides subiit; hæc illum regia cepit.
> Aude hospes contemnere opes, et te quoque dignum
> Finge Deo."

The last clerical duty Mr. Woodward performed in the parish of Redcross was the marriage of his niece; but this did not take place during the sojourn at Bonham Lodge. One serene and sunny morning, when Miss Spenser's recovery was complete, an excursion to the parsonage was proposed by somebody, and though the rector would more willingly have gone anywhere else, he made no opposition, when he saw that the plan was popular. There was a phaeton, a jaunting-car, and ponies for the equestrians. The party set out, and some members of it certainly were astonished beyond measure to find the old house in complete order, furnished from bottom to top with its pristine taste and luxury. Mr. Woodward, we have seen, had some inkling of the matter, but to his brother-in-law it seemed the work of magic. The glee of the old proctor, as he beheld Mr. Spenser's amazement at the unexpected preparation to receive him, was the best comedy; but Randy had kept the secret so long that there was no keeping it any longer; so it was soon known that Vivyan was the sorcerer at whose command the upholsterer and cabinet-maker had made all comfortable again. But it was not until the rector entered the room which had contained his library, sadly thinking how it had once been peopled, and never expecting to see so much as the backs of his troops of silent old friends again, that his astonishment was complete. Here indeed a necromancer seemed really to have been at work, for his books were all there, marshalled by their nations and languages to receive him, in their ancient cases of curiously carved oak, folios, quartos, octavos, and duodecimos, according to their several dignities, and critically in their own arrangement, looking in fact as if they had never been molested or sent roving about the world. It was natural that this also should be attributed to Vivyan, and it was in vain he protested that he was as much surprised as the rector himself; but such was the fact; and only for Carry Woodward, who was in this part of the secret beyond all doubt, the restorer of the library might have remained a good while unknown. The truth was that almost every body connected by relationship or friendship with Mr. Spenser, had been anxious to replace him in his former ease and comfort, with the shabby and unnatural exception of Mrs. Dabzac. Mr. Oliver,

amongst others, had never enjoyed a day's happiness, since misfortune fell on the man whom he loved and admired. Being a literary man himself, he entered more keenly than any one else into the rector's sorrow when his very books were reft from him; but being unable himself to redeem them, he could only indulge his feelings in complaints and lamentations to his friends and correspondents, which he did so bitterly and incessantly, that at length Lord Bonham heard of the circumstances at Rome, where he was, and instantly wrote home to Mr. Trundle to purchase the library at a liberal valuation and thus secure it from irretrievable dispersion. Mr. Trundle, friendly himself to the rector, and zealously devoted to his daughter ever since the day that she gave up a whole morning to his loan-fund schemes, performed his part of the business with the utmost zeal and efficiency. The library was bought, the cases as well as the books, and by Lord Bonham's directions consigned to the care of the enraptured Mr. Oliver, who valued it beyond the Bodleian for his friend's sake, and would willingly have taken ten times as much trouble as it actually gave him to put it up and arrange it in its original order. The only member of the family he communicated with, while thus employed, was Mrs. Woodward, for it was necessary to have some confidant in order to gain access to the parsonage, and be secure from interruption and discovery while engaged in this clandestine labour of love.

Well, if friends did all that friends could do to make the return of the Spensers to their picturesque home as happy as possible, they, upon their part, made a great many people happy also. The reoccupation of the parsonage made many an eye bright and gladdened many a heart. There were fêtes given, addresses presented, and bonfires kindled on many a hill to celebrate the event. The first person to visit the rector was Father Magrath, the second was the Presbyterian minister, the third was the excellent Doctor Wilkins, with his face that disposed you to weep and his conversation that made you expire of laughing. Last came Mr. Oliver, more than ever shy and monosyllabic; nay looking as if he had actually given some particularly heinous offence to the family, and was greatly ashamed to present himself before them.

But no one was welcomed back so cordially and enthusiastically as the fair and good Elizabeth. No prince would have been thought too good a husband for her. She had always been not only so humane to the poor, but so actively useful to them, so beneficent as well as so benevolent, so considerate for the old, so tender to the young, so kind and so patient with every body. So popular, indeed, was Miss Spenser, that had she been possessed with a proselytising spirit, she would have been an actual little wolf in the Catholic and Presbyterian folds. In the midst of all the preparations for the wedding, and all the tumult of her new but still incomplete happiness, she resumed her attention to the children of the neighbourhood, and reopened her school, which was indeed a model one. Again the robins hopped on the slates at play-hours, and again the fat rosy child of the laundress came in for the cowslips and kisses, as it rolled and rollicked on the little green paddock. Again the yard echoed the multitudinous lisp and murmur of infant education, and the lusty matron at her tub hard by used to rest a moment from her sultry labours, with her bare stout arms in the suds, and try to distinguish the hum of her own brats in the Babel of tiny sounds.

One personage and one only regarded with an evil eye the happy revolution in the fortunes of the Spensers, and particularly the triumphs of

Elizabeth's love and of Sydney's reputation. The rage of the malignant post-mistress knew no bounds; but her career in that capacity was cut short abruptly, for Hercules, who never gave a malefactor a moment's rest in his own parish, or indeed anywhere within the reach of his influence, had no sooner leisure to attend to the matter than he forwarded to head-quarters a charge against the Peacocks of tampering with the letters of his family, called for an official enquiry, fully established his case, and succeeded in chasing the wicked Lucy and her husband with ignominy out of Redcross. Nothing was heard of them for a long time, until one day that Mr. Spenser observed in the *Times* newspaper the advertisement of a Mrs. Edward Peacock, who announced her desire to receive a certain number of young gentlemen into her house, promising to instruct them in the rudiments of Latin, to pay them more than motherly attention, and above all things to train them rigidly in the ways of truth and virtue. The bold hand of Lucy was not to be mistaken, although she neither referred to the Spensers or Woodwards for testimonials of her qualifications.

There was no reason for deferring the marriage, and it was not deferred longer than was necessary to give time for the arrival of George Markham, and the worthy little Mr. Trundle. It was a fine spectacle to see how Markham and the Archdeacon embraced, and how the former triumphed in the honour and reward of the man whom he venerated most of all the men he had ever met with, for his heroic combination of physical energy with plain sterling moral worth. The Dabzacs were present, of course; but despite of their frost and formality, the nuptial ceremony was performed with the devout hilarity that becomes it, and all the festivities before and after were as gay and hearty as ever ushered a bride and bridegroom into the holy and hazardous state of marriage.

"And so that extraordinary Miss Spenser is married at last," said Lady Brabble to old Mrs. Loquax, at a ball which Mrs. Pepper gave in Dublin some short time after the wedding.

"To Mr. Trundle, of course," said old Mrs. Loquax

"To Lord Bonham, I suppose," said Mrs. Pepper.

"Oh, no; not quite so good a match as that; to a Mr. Vivyan," said Lady Brabble.

"I am sure I am very glad she is married to somebody," said the sour and sanctified Miss Vallancy; "it was exceedingly unpleasant to hear a girl so very much talked about."

"She had beaux enough to her string, at all events," said Mrs. Pepper. "In my opinion, she treated poor Lord Bonham excessively ill."

"I'm told," said Mrs. Loquax, "that the dress she wore at her wedding was actually a present from his lordship."

"That's nothing," said another. "Lord Bonham gave her a superb suit of diamonds, which she never returned. I know it from Carcanet, the jeweller."

"Does any body know anything about that Mr. Vivyan?" asked one of the clique.

"Oh, nobody," said Lady Brabble, laying down the law.

Tom Flinch came up at the moment, and as he was a know-everybody-that's-knowable sort of man, Mrs. Loquax pounced on him and inquired if he knew anything about the Mr. Vivyan who had married Miss Spenser.

"Dab's sister," drawled the Honourable Tom. "Oh, he is Sir Thomas

Vivyan's brother; he got a large property some time since by the death of a rich relation in Spain."

"That explains Miss Spenser's conduct most satisfactorily," said the heavenly Miss Vallancy; "how shocking worldly!"

But the Vivyans cared extremely little for the chit-chat of any coterie; they were too happy even to recollect that there were such talkative and malicious people in the world as the Brabbles, Peppers, and Vallancys. Soon after his marriage Vivyan succeeded to his brother's fortune and baronetcy, and when Elizabeth became Lady Vivyan, and the mistress of a handsome fortune, she was deluged with civilities and flatteries by the same people who before were so busy pulling her beautiful character to pieces. Even old Mrs. Loquax was graciously pleased to forget that our heroine's brother had once been a scamp; and if Lady Brabble remembered the revolting fact that Elizabeth had acted as governess to the young Bonhams, she was good enough never to talk of it, nor did it in the least diminish her anxiety to push herself and her daughters into Lady Vivyan's circle.

The fate of Dawson continued a mystery for several years. It was Mr. Woodward's opinion that he had effected his escape in the brig commanded by the respectable Captain Dowse, but the brig was traced to an English sea-port, and, though several persons of suspicious appearance, and some who were known to have been Dawson's associates, were found on board of her, not a vestige of himself was discovered, nor anything to serve as a clue to his detection. Various other efforts were made with the same object and the same ill success. It seemed unaccountable; but after some time it ceased to be discussed, at least at the parsonage, except at long intervals on winter evenings, when in every family old topics are sure to turn up again, often for want of new ones of greater interest. Castle Dawson passed into other hands, and was ultimately taken by a mad-doctor for a private lunatic asylum, a purpose for which it was ill-suited, if the recovery of the patients was contemplated, but eminently fit, if the doctor's design was merely to make money, and to have his establishment as free from inspection and control as possible. It happened one day that Doctor Wilkins was dining with Mr. Spenser, when he received a summons from the coroner of the county to attend an inquest at Castle Dawson. He rode over there at the time appointed, not doubting but that some inmate of the asylum had come to a violent end, requiring legal inquiry into the circumstances attending it. But on his arrival he found that the case was one of a very different kind. The subject of investigation was a body, or rather a skeleton, which had been discovered in the subterraneous passage under the wine-cellar. It had been found at the foot of the ladder, which was all in a state of decay, the upper rounds fallen to pieces, so as to suggest the idea that they had given way under the weight of some one attempting to descend, and occasioned his death by precipitating him into the chasm beneath. But the first object was to identify the remains. They were produced before the jury, a hideous spectacle, without form or feature, the limbs scarcely continuous, the clothes in shreds and tangled with sea-wrack. Tattered, however, as the clothes were, they led not only Dr. Wilkins, but several persons present, to conjecture instantly that the corpse before them was that of the wretched Dawson. A minute investigation confirmed this impression irresistibly. Amongst other things, a signet ring was found, bearing his crest and initials, which, joined to the fact that the remains were those of a middle-sized square-built man, like Dawson, settled the

question beyond a reasonable doubt. The evidence which Dr. Wilkins gave as to the cause of death also confirmed the conclusion come to in the first instance. In fact the neck of the skeleton was broken exactly as in cases of falls from considerable heights. The verdict of the jury recorded their perfect satisfaction upon both points.

But little remains to be added; yet, little as it is, our domestic chronicles would be imperfect without it.

Vivyan was faithful to the romantic country where he found his incomparable wife; he loved it for her sake, and entered with zeal into all her benevolent schemes (now enlarged by her increased means of usefulness) for the improvement and happiness of her father's parishioners. Sir Francis purchased the wild islet where he first became acquainted with the Spensers, and built a cottage of solid blocks of granite nearly on the spot where he and his cousin were startled by the apparition of the formidable curate peering down upon them from the cliffs. He also rebuilt the wooden bridge at his own cost and charges, instead of waiting any longer for the county, the government, or a miracle to reconstruct it. The Hoggs and M'Swynes improved visibly under the indefatigable tuition and encouragement which they received from their resident benefactors. No doubt a chapter of the Knights of the Thistle might still be convoked in the neighbourhood of Redcross; an ancient father or mother of the borough may still be seen perched on the house-top, to steady the thatch in a gale of wind; there are still dirty faces in the streets, and still a few lions roaring at the Celtic sluggards and terrifying them from honest exertion: but, upon the whole, advice and example have not been thrown away. Between the rector's good-natured ridicule, the patient perseverance of his daughter and her husband in well-doing, and the occasional thunders of the Archdeacon, who frequently visited Redcross and preached in his old pulpit,—there are not so many anomalies as when the Circe sailed on her *voyage pittoresque*; or as Carry Woodward said only the other day · "Things are not quite so Higgledy-Piggledyish as formerly."

The Archdeacon himself did not reform his ways entirely. He continued to wear very odd hats and coats, and brandish extraordinary cudgels, for a dignitary of the Church, though he no longer glazed his windows and repaired his roof with his own hands. He attained no higher rank in his profession, but he got a better living a few years later, having a second time attracted the notice of the lord-lieutenant, before whom he preached. A few days after his promotion he was commanded to dine with the viceroy, and he obeyed very reluctantly, not being accustomed he said to the "ways of the courts, or how to talk to a lord-lieutenant."

"Just talk to him as you would to Carry," said the rector.

"Ho, ho," said Hercules, laughing as loud as when he was a stipendiary curate, "I say a great many things to Carry, which it wouldn't do to say to a chief governor."

THE END.

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