



Bizarre fables

William Arthur Brown Lunn, Arthur
Wallbridge, Alfred Crowquill, Archibald Henning

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BIZARRE FABLES:

A SERIES OF

Eccentric Historiettes.

BY ARTHUR WALLBRIDGE,

AUTHOR OF "JEST AND EARNEST."

WITH

FORTY ILLUSTRATIONS ON WOOD BY HENNING, AND A
FRONTISPIECE BY CROWQUILL.

Forester, Alfred Henry

"Shall quips, and sentences, and these paper bullets of the brain, awe
a man from the career of his humour?"—SHAKESPEARE.



SECOND EDITION.

LONDON:

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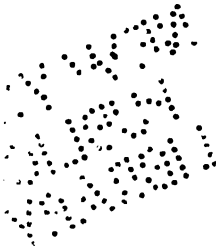
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PREFACE.

AMONGST the most amusing and instructive studies of our early years are those brief, unassuming compositions called "Fables." The period of action is usually the pastoral ages ; and the actors are the cunning fox, the cruel wolf, the innocent lamb, the vain peacock, the industrious ant, and other birds, beasts, fishes, reptiles, and insects, of established character, who most miraculously hold discourse in good set terms, and argue the point like reasonable creatures, as they are ; the incidents, though few, are sufficiently interesting ; and the moral at the end rounds off the story effectively, and leaves us in no perplexing doubt as to the particular doctrine incul-

cated. So, in school-hours and in play-hours, we read with a right good will, and improve accordingly.

But soon we leave our first quiet school, and enter that larger and more disorderly school—the world. Here work is harder and worse distributed ; the struggle for prizes is intense ; the upper forms fag the lower forms ; and the scourge is the ready punishment for error. Yet, even now, we are supposed to have some period for recreation. We have our play-hours, as in former days—few, and uncertain, and partially granted though they be—and can occasionally enjoy cessation from toil.

To add, then, to the common stock of resources for our idle moments, I, an humble world-student of the lower forms, offer these slight sketches. In memory of our old well-beloved FABLES, I have given them a similar mien, and have christened them BIZARRE to advertise their quality. Neglecting the pastoral ages, I have made the period of action our

PREFACE.

own exciting age; the actors, instead of abstract zoological types of humanity, are men and women as we see them around us, formed to be as they are by the peculiar influences of the time; and if sportiveness and sobriety seem mingled strangely together, and the moral at the end often make the matter no better, I can only plead in excuse that "it is my way:" the benevolent and intelligent reader will, I am sure, both forgive me and understand me.

If my bizarre story-telling help to entertain my comrades, and pleasantly occupy a few minutes of our play-hours, I shall hope that our monitors will not decree me the fool's-cap for my presumption.

CONTENTS.

FABLE	PAGE
I. THE PATRON	1
II. THE RIVAL	10
III. THE WISE FOOL	18
IV. THE TAILOR'S LAST HOPE	27
V. THE MOTHER AND THE DAUGHTER	36
VI. THE FIDDLER IN THE RAIN	43
VII. THE GREAT MAN TAUGHT BY A DOG	49
VIII. THE COQUETTE AND THE COQUETTE-TAMER	56
IX. THE GENTLEMAN WHO HAD SEEN BETTER DAYS	66
X. THE SELF-DENYING PLEASURE-SEEKER	72
XI. THE GLOVED PHILANTHROPIST	79
XII. THE LOVEFUL DISCIPLINE	87
XIII. THE ABIDING VEIL OF MERIT	94

FABLE	PAGE
XIV. THE TOSS-UP	104
XV. THE MAN OF HONOR	110
XVI. THE HARD HEART MOVED TO PITY	117
XVII. THE OLD MAN, THE YOUNG MAN, AND THE BOY	123
XVIII. THE DRUDGE	129
XIX. THE GOLDEN MAXIM	134
XX. THE RATIONAL LOVERS	144



FABLE I.

THE PATRON.

THE clocks in Regent-street struck two as Charles Linwood, a young musician, hurried through the length of that magnificent thoroughfare. It was the hour he had appointed to call on Mr. Dudley Hodgson, who lived in a house in a square : such men must not be kept waiting.

Mr. Dudley Hodgson had been, in earlier life, an eminent soap-boiler. Having realised a considerable fortune by this useful branch of national industry, he retired from business, took a large mansion in a semi-fashionable square, furnished it expensively, collected together several servants, and endeavoured, with the utmost energy, to force himself into society a few degrees above soap-boiling.

A gentleman who gives dinners and does not fail in champagne is pretty sure of finding his table filled. Mr. Hodgson, when he contemplated his distinguished, his aristocratic, his fashionable guests, thought that he had bought them very cheaply, and told them so. His lowly and humble thanks for the honor which they did him were somewhat disgusting, but at the same time so ridiculous, that the exhibition was rather pleasant than otherwise. The host and the buffoon were united in the same individual ; and, if the company seemed not much to respect his pretensions in the one character, they certainly testified, by laughter and waggery, their perfect appreciation of his powers in the other. He was the finest old fellow conceivable ; for he not only bore being laughed at without wincing, but paid handsomely for the infliction.

No man, however, likes to be treated with disrespect, and rarely submits without a desire for retaliation. This desire is either gratified at once on inferiors, or kept alive to be gratified at a future time on those who have called it into being. Mr. Hodgson preferred the former, as the more easy and certain : he determined to become a patron.

To become a patron it is by no means necessary to understand one iota of the particular thing patronised.

indeed, the less that is understood the better ; for the gentlemanly, independent ignorance of the patron is the better enjoyed by its possessor, as contrasted with the pedantic, compulsory knowledge of the client. The principal care with a patron is to indulge his vanity, and the advancement of science and art is always a matter of very secondary consideration.

Mr. Hodgson knew scarcely anything of music, and he had a concert-room in his house : consequently, he resolved to patronise music and musicians.

He subscribed to the Philharmonic ; he attended the Opera ; he had a reserved seat at all the musical festivals : once a week he gave a private performance at his residence ; songs, pianoforte pieces, and violin concertos were dedicated to him ; he was known at all the music-shops ; he spoke smatteringly and condescendingly of the science and its professors. He was a patron.

Our young friend, Charles Linwood, had been presented with a letter of introduction to this gentleman. It was lodged carefully in his pocket, together with his first overture. How delicately and elaborately was this maiden introduction copied out on the best music-paper, and tied up with the most alluring narrow green satin ribbon ! Nothing can equal the pleasure with which we pay ourselves these little grateful attentions. Every man, but a fool, makes a fool of himself with his first work : no man but a fool, does so with his second.

Charles Linwood reached the door of his patron, and knocked with some little trepidation. A gorgeous livery servant appeared. To Charles's request to know whether Mr. Hodgson were within and disengaged, the gorgeous livery servant deigned no direct answer, but, bidding him

enter, preceded him with a somewhat contemptuous air to a small, plainly-furnished apartment, where he left him without further ceremony. After Charles had meditated here for about twenty minutes, the servant re-appeared and informed him that his master was now disengaged and would see him. Charles followed the servant, and in a few moments was standing before Mr. Hodgson.

Mr. Hodgson was reclining on a sofa, reading the newspaper. On the table were books, a quire or so of music-paper, the "Musical World" for the week, and a goodly file of pianoforte, violin, flute, and other instrumental music, with songs, duets, trios, and vocal arrangements innumerable. In one corner of the room was a guitar lying carefully careless, and intended to appear as if just used. In another corner was a music-stand. On one side was nearly filled by a splendid grand pianoforte open—as it might be if its owner had lately been trying over some fantasia or trifle of the sort. The piano was always open—but never did Mr. Hodgson touch that piano.

Charles presented his letter, and the patron, motioning him to a seat, broke the seal and read the epistle from beginning to end—occasionally stopping to inspect minutely the subject thereof. At length the reading and the scrutiny were over, and Mr. Hodgson, smiling graciously, said :

"So, Mr. Linwood, I find you have been composing an overture, and want my opinion. My time is valuable, and my engagements, as you must be aware, are pressing ; but I always like to encourage young beginners, and if — What is the subject, Mr. Linwood ?"

"It is the overture to 'The Eve of St. Agnes,' sir," replied Charles.

"What is that?" exclaimed Mr. Hodgson; "a play?"

"The poem by Keats, sir," replied Charles.

"O yes, to be sure!" said Mr. Hodgson. "The poem by Kitts—very good! And now let's have the overture to this poem by Kitts—'Eve and ——,' what is it?"

Charles looked rather astonished; but, without making any remark, drew the manuscript from his pocket and untied the magnificent satin ribbon.

"Here is the overture in score, sir," said he. "Will you look it over, or shall I give you an idea of it on the piano?"

"Oh, play it on the piano by all means," said Mr. Hodgson. "Do you expect I'm to pore over your confounded scores? Here's a fine instrument, by Erard, that I touch sometimes when I'm in the humor. You play, Mr. Linwood—you play, and I'll listen."

Having thus uttered his dictum, the patron threw himself on the sofa, and Charles seated himself at the piano-forte.

He was a thorough master of the instrument, and played his composition admirably. It was very beautiful, and, for a first work, extraordinary. The dreamy, legendary, and exquisitely refined character of the poem, was preserved with the utmost truth in this overture. Every incident might be traced by its musical illustration, and the whole formed a perfect prelude to the story. The poet and the musician seemed to have thought with one mind.

Mr. Hodgson listened attentively. For some time after Charles had finished, he said nothing. At last, re-

laxing in a degree the critical expression of his countenance, he exclaimed :

“ Good—very well, indeed ! There is talent in this Mr. Linwood ; but there are many faults to be corrected. To begin : the poem you have chosen, is badly selected : scriptural subjects should always be avoided.”

“ Scriptural !” repeated Charles, in a tone of amazement.

“ Yes, sir, scriptural !” said Mr. Hodgson, sharply. “ Didn’t you say it was something about Eve ? If you *must* have such subjects, why not write an overture to ‘ Paradise Lost ’ ?”

Charles could scarcely help bursting out laughing in the face of this sagacious patron ; but, restraining himself, he said, in a sober tone :

“ You have slightly mistaken, sir. The subject of my overture is ‘ The Eve of St. Agnes ’—a poem by Keats. There can be no objection to that, I think.”

“ Oh, it’s not about Eve !” exclaimed Mr. Hodgson, looking rather foolish. “ Why didn’t you say so, then, at first ? I think there *is* an objection to the subject, sir ; it’s a deal too trifling. Then, the commencement of your overture is bad : it opens too quietly. The last part is bad also : instead of having a rattling coda, it ends so calmly that nobody imagines it has ended at all. Nothing like a good bang to wind up, Mr. Linwood.”

“ But these alterations would be contrary to the spirit of the poem, sir,” remonstrated Charles.

“ What have we to do with the spirit of the poem, sir ?” said Mr. Hodgson. “ We want a good overture, and that you haven’t given us. Will you take my advice, sir, or will you not ?”

“ Really, sir,” said Charles, “ your advice seems to me

in such false taste, that I must decline to act upon it. I cannot sacrifice all my opinions and feelings to your pleasure."

"Then, sir, I wish you a good morning," exclaimed Mr. Hodgson; "and, allow me to say, you have acted very foolishly. You have rejected my patronage, and you'll never get on in your profession. You will live a life of poverty and obscurity, and regret your obstinacy when it's too late. John, the door."

Charles did not reply. The servant, who seemed highly diverted, marshalled the way, and closed the door on him with a very significant grin.

"You have rejected my patronage, and you'll never get on in your profession. You will live a life of poverty and obscurity!" repeated Charles, abstractedly, as he walked along. "Yes: these were his words. These were the words of the high and mighty patron. We shall see! we shall see! If I know anything of myself, I am not without genius; and shall genius be kept down by the enmity or coldness of influential blockheads? We shall see! we shall see!" said the young musician again; and, so saying, he pulled his hat over his eyes, buttoned his coat tightly, and increased his pace nearly to a run. These several actions were intended to express his determination, and defiance to all opposition. He was so strongly disinclined to poverty and obscurity, that he had arrived half way to wealth and fame.

For two years afterwards he shut himself up in his room, and studied incessantly the works of his great predecessors. Pounds of candles burned away whilst he hung over the scores of Mozart, and Beethoven, and Weber—and still, with the earliest light of morning, he

resumed the task. At length he completed an opera, and sent it to one of the principal theatres. It was returned to him with a polite note of dismissal. Not discouraged he made another trial, and, after many disappointments succeeded in finding an opportunity of appealing to the public.

The house was full. Boxes, pit, and gallery were crowded with people anxious to hear what our aspirant could do, and prepared to give a fair and impartial judgment. In a private box, close to the stage, was Mr Hodgson, who sat with a critical face, ready and willing to condemn.

The overture was played. It was received with thunders of applause and a unanimous encore. Mr. Hodgson was astonished at the successful beginning of this young, unknown, and unpatronised composer. He did not applaud—but he did not hiss; for he felt that he was not exactly the dictator here.

The first act was full of beautiful music, and was applauded throughout. Mr. Hodgson did not dislike it, really.

The second act was received with still greater favor. Mr. Hodgson exclaimed "Bravo!" several times, and always had thought the young fellow possessed talent, if he only took the trouble to cultivate it.

The third act was a perfect triumph. The finale was encored twice: the composer was called on the stage, cheers burst from every part of the house, and bouquets and wreaths were thrown at his feet. Mr. Hodgson was enthusiastic in his applause.

Charles Linwood (no longer a poor student but a celebrated composer) and Mr. Hodgson are now warm

friends. As one of the Public, the rich, musical, ex-soap-boiler is entitled to give his vote, for his ignorance then is harmless ; but as a Patron, claiming superior powers for approval or condemnation, his ignorance is not only despicable but dangerous.

MORAL.

It is not by the voice of a Man, but of a People, that a fellow-citizen is immortalised.





FABLE II.

THE RIVAL.

“So, marriage seems in fashion!” said Basil Eustace, throwing the newspaper on the breakfast-table with an air of contempt.

“A good example for us bachelors,” said his friend William Norton; “and one I really think I shall follow ere long, if I can find some kind-hearted girl who will accept me. How feel you, Basil?”

“My dear fellow don’t ask me,” said Basil. “I trust there is no symptom of approaching insanity in my manner, and that alone could justify the question. Heavens! to become a husband—perhaps a father! To see eternally the same woman, and be called ‘Papa, papa!’

by an interesting miniature specimen of humanity in short clothes! Oh! the idea—the mere idea is dreadful!”

Here Basil Eustace cast his eyes towards a large mirror, so placed that he might behold himself reflected at full length. The excitement had certainly made him a degree paler.

“Gad, Eustace, this is too bad!” exclaimed Norton, laughing. “So, because you affect a horror of matrimony, all who have more courage than yourself are to be considered mad. You, ‘a good match’ too! as the conventional slang goes.”

“Oh, then you designate me ‘a good match?’” said Eustace. “Prove your words, William;” and leaning back in his luxurious chair, he dangled a slipper from the extreme point of his right foot.

“Thus it stands,” replied Norton: “you are the eldest son of a baronet, have five thousand a-year, and are a member of Almack’s. You are young, not ill-looking, not ignorant, and have talents—if you were not too indolent to exercise them.”

“You flatter me,” said Eustace, smiling languidly. “But, my good friend, if I possess all these advantages, why give up all the consideration they bring, by marriage? Who would care for me then? Depend upon it, the most foolish thing a young man of any pretension can do is to take a wife. If he must commit the folly, let him wait till he has had his day. Forty or fifty is the proper age for a husband.”

“Very philosophical, and very selfish!” exclaimed Norton. “Then, if ever you become that strange animal called a husband, it will not be until you are ‘forty or

fifty!' Mind you are not entangled before—that's all! The fair Ellen will hardly wait so many years I am afraid."

"Nonsense, Norton!" said Eustace, looking a little confused, however. "What should make you think of *her*? We have known each other from childhood, and I am sure she only considers me as a brother. We call each other Basil and Ellen—and that is too familiar by far."

"Well," said Norton, "take care no disinterested friend of the family asks you suddenly some fine morning 'what your intentions are.' If you were called upon at once to decide, you would find perhaps that you could not give her up very easily. But adieu! I must go home and write letters, and will leave you to meditate on my words and Ellen Dalton."

Norton departed, and left Basil Eustace indeed meditating deeply. His tirade against matrimony had been more in jest than earnest, and he began to imagine how he should feel if he had seen the marriage of Ellen Dalton announced in the newspaper that morning. He discovered plainly that he should not have felt at all placid. To say the truth, though he had talked to Norton about Ellen's considering him only as a brother, he had long entertained a suspicion that he did not look on her only as a sister; and at the present moment this suspicion became stronger than ever. He remembered how disturbed he had been more than once when some handsome young fellow had whispered compliments in her ear, and how indignant he had felt to see her smile instead of frown. "I hope to Heaven," said Basil Eustace, with a sigh, "I hope to Heaven I am not in love!"

A servant entered with a card, which he presented. It was Mr. Dalton's, and on the back was written in pencil: "Mr. Dalton requests the pleasure of Mr. Eustace's company to a quiet dinner at seven."

Basil wrote a brief reply, accepting the invitation, and the servant left the room.

"I shall see her then in a few hours," said Basil. "It is strange what an impression those few careless words of Norton have made upon me. Yesterday I should have met Ellen with perfect self-possession; to-day I feel that I shall not do so. Why is this! Can it be possible that I am in love?"

He sighed again more heavily than before, and, raising his eyes from the ground, was shocked to discover by the intelligence of the mirror how pallid he looked. His hair too was in great disorder, and seemed to solicit the friendly aid of a comb. He would not have had Ellen see him then for the world.

Precisely at seven the cab of Basil Eustace stopped at the door of Mr. Dalton.

"Basil," said that gentleman, shaking hands heartily with our hero as he entered the room, "I am delighted to see you. Let me introduce you to some old friends of mine: Mr. Thomson who has just returned from the West Indies, and Mr. Dawkins, and Mr. Hawkins, and Miss Arabella Jenkins——"

Basil Eustace bowed coldly, and, sinking into a chair, amused himself by pulling the ear of a favorite dog. In a few minutes afterwards Ellen appeared. She certainly looked most beautiful. There was some embarrassment in the manner of Basil as he offered his greeting, and it seemed to him that she slightly blushed. But why should

she blush on this particular occasion? Perhaps he was more observant than usual.

At dinner he found himself, somehow, seated by her side; and the conversation was so interesting that it was impossible to help resuming it as soon as the gentlemen joined the ladies in the drawing room. A quiet sheltered corner was the spot chosen, and the subject of the conversation was—marriage.

“Ah, my dear friend!” said Basil, with a sentimental air; “beauty and happiness are not always found together. For instance, there is the charming Lucy Melcombe; ’tis whispered that she is fully aware of the merits of another, whilst her father wishes her to marry that monster, Simmons. Really it is dreadful—perfectly dreadful! for there is the favored one totally and wilfully ignorant of what is evident to all but himself; and, in the meantime, the poor girl may be sacrificed to his blindness. So that you see, Ellen,” continued Basil, “a lady may be actually in love with a gentleman and he not at all aware of it.”

These words were uttered in our hero’s usual *nonchalant* manner, but they seemed to produce a strange effect on the fair Ellen. She became first flushed, then pale, as she turned away her head, and exclaimed, falteringly, “Too true, indeed! Poor Lucy! But come,” said she, resuming her composure by an effort, “the company, I perceive, is adjourning to the dancing-room. Shall we follow?”

Basil hesitated. He felt that he could have remained for ever as he was—he felt a wish to avoid the company below—and, in short, he felt for the first time aware that he loved Ellen. Her evident emotion at his last words

had filled him with delight, and he ventured to indulge the sweet hope that he was not indifferent to her. Had he, indeed, been describing his own folly in the person of another? and might not the same punishment await further delay?

"Stay, Ellen," said he, detaining her, "now that we are alone I wish to speak to you on a subject which I feel is essential to my happiness."

"Oh," said she, struggling to appear unconcerned, "you solicit my hand in the first quadrille? Well, your prayer is granted. But let us join our friends immediately, or I fear we shall lose our place."

"No, dearest Ellen," exclaimed Basil, "my prayer is bolder—far bolder. I can no longer conceal from myself, nor from you, how deeply I love you."

Ellen did not speak; but she suffered him to retain her hand, and her silence was more eloquent than speech could possibly have been. In a few moments, however, she turned her face towards him, and said firmly: "Basil, I will not answer only by blushes and half-finished sentences, as most of my sex perhaps would do, but I will speak to you calmly and sincerely. I am aware, then, that I have a favored rival to whom less attention must be paid before you can hope for any return of the affection you profess for me."

"A rival!" exclaimed Basil; "let me assure you——"

"Nay," interrupted Ellen, smiling, "I know all. Do not think to deceive me. Listen: There is one who, under the guise of a friend, continually lures you to the homage you now disavow. Have I your permission to remove this false friend from about you?"

“To do anything,” said Basil. “But what means this mystery? Believe me——”

“Enough,” said Ellen; “I accept your permission, and promise you I will act upon it.”

With these words, and a look full of meaning, she tripped away, leaving Basil in a state of the most unaffected astonishment. Too thoughtful to rejoin the company, he quitted the house and proceeded home.

He slept not at all that night, and morning found him still bewildered in a labyrinth of thought. A rival! What could she mean? “One who, under the guise of a friend, continually lures you to the homage you now disavow.” It was a perfect enigma. “There is but one way,” said Basil: “I will seek an interview with Ellen at once, and request—demand an explanation from her own lips.” He descended to the breakfast room. “But stay,” said he—“a feverish, sleepless night!—I must look wretchedly haggard.” Advancing to the mirror, he suddenly started back: it was shivered to atoms. He was about to ring the bell violently, when his eye was attracted by a sealed paper lying amongst the fragments. He seized it, broke the seal, and read as follows:—

“I have kept my word, and your false friend is no more. Do not be angry—for the murderess is ELLEN.”

The paper fell from his hands. “Sweet Ellen,” exclaimed he, “I thank you for the deed. Too well I understand now who was your rival. The enigma is solved, and I see how poor a part I have played. I have trifled with your feelings like a vain fool; but my future conduct shall make amends.”

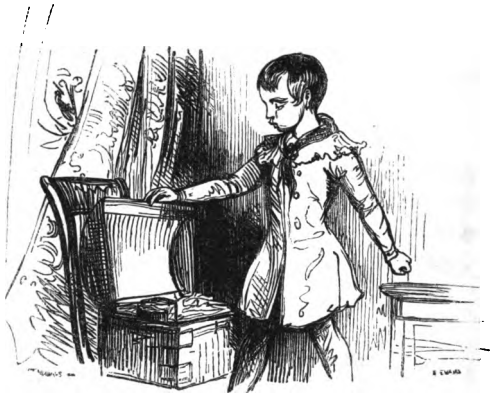
And it did. He was more affectionate and unselfish as

a husband than he had been as a lover. His friends were astonished at the great change in his character ; and a little change in his habits struck them too : in the whole house, from the garret to the kitchen, not a full-length mirror was to be seen.

MORAL.

A man who is so far enamored of himself as to neglect all others, is very apt to be left by others with the single object of his regard.





FABLE III.

THE WISE FOOL.

A DEGREE beneath wisdom is as much folly as twenty degrees beneath ; but those who are gifted with this quality, from its nearness to wisdom, mistake it for wisdom itself, and, whilst they suffer continually from their delusion, thank Heaven that they are not so dull as some people ! The ruling passion with these wise fools is to inspect every object minutely in order to discover and denounce its imperfections. Their gratification consists in being disgusted with what the unthinking many enjoy, or at least are satisfied with ; and this pedantic and perverse disposition they call hatred of error. They

believe nothing—for those who believe may be deceived. Beauty affects them not—for beauty soon fades. At all their feasts they set up a warning skeleton. They are, in theory, universal tee-totallers: because the world contains evil, they would abstain from the world. They carry with them two glasses of different powers: with the diminishing-glass they view merits; with the magnifying-glass they view faults. It is absurd to cast away a diamond for a small flaw; absurder, for blemishes which time and application would remove; but absurdest of all, to cast it away for defects which exist only in the morbid eye of its examiner. Nay, a sensible man will not enquire too curiously whether apparent diamonds be stones at all, but will feel quite happy, even under the possibility of paste. Not so your wise fools. *They* must test every thing with a philosophic conscience; and mightily do they chuckle at their superior sagacity in rejecting most things and valuing nothing.

Solomon Block, when a little boy, went to a fair. He was moved greatly, in his childish wonder, at the magnificence of the shows—the merriment of the clown—the studied politeness of the proprietor. Presently he walked through an inferior row of booths, and his friends presented him with a “golden king.” “A golden king!” exclaimed he. “What! all real solid gold? Oh, how pretty!”

Here he wetted his thumb and commenced rubbing hard the nose of his golden majesty. Suddenly his countenance fell, and he burst into tears. “Gold!” blubbered he; “gold! why it’s nothing but gingerbread!”

Solomon’s sworn crony at school was Jack Hadley.

They were always together, and each was accustomed to share his presents with the other. One day Jack's father called at the school, and (strange to say) departed without leaving any gift to mark his visit. Solomon had his suspicions, in spite of the assurances of his crony. He watched patiently, and in the course of a day or two, succeeded in purloining the key of Jack's box. Full of eager expectation, he hastened to that receptacle—raised the lid—and there, sure enough, were the remains of a large rich plum-cake. The eternal friendship was broken up at once.

"*He* my friend!" cried Solomon indignantly; "Jack Hadley *my* friend! He's a nasty, ungrateful, squinting, story-telling sneak—and that 's what Jack Hadley is!"

Solomon's parents were both dead, and he lived with his aunt, Miss Mountcastle, who treated the child of her adoption with the utmost affection. His father had been a captain in the army, who fell, gloriously fighting for his country, in the battle-field; his mother died with grief on hearing the news; so Solomon was left an orphan, and Miss Mountcastle adopted him. As Solomon waxed in years and knowledge, however, he somewhat suspected the truth of this story, and at last ascertained, after an ingenious cross-examination, that his father was an eminent tallow-chandler named Buggins, and that his mother was Miss Mountcastle. He was shocked at such an atrocious cheat, and resolved to run away without bidding the poor criminal farewell.

"Miss Mountcastle my virtuous aunt!" exclaimed he, as he turned to gaze with tearful eyes on the house. "Alas, how different is the reality! She is my naughty illegitimate mama!"

Having thrown himself upon society with a pocket but slenderly furnished, he began to consider what was best to be done. So many objections presented themselves to doing anything, that he consequently did nothing, and was shortly reduced to his last penny. He was wandering along the high street of a provincial town in a very disconsolate mood, when a gentleman tapped him on the shoulder and asked him if he wanted a situation. The reply was in the affirmative, and Solomon forthwith became copying-clerk to Mr. Saunders the solicitor, at a salary of five shillings a week and his board. He labored so diligently, and evinced so much intelligence, that in a few years he arrived to be partner in the firm, which was now carried on in the names of Saunders and Block. No sooner however had he reached this elevation than his suspicious temper, which had hitherto been kept much under, began to underrate the advantages of his position. It might be better to receive a fixed salary as clerk than have thrust upon you all the uncertainty, responsibility, and anxiety of partner. The business flourished, certainly—but there was no knowing how long it might continue to do so. Saunders seemed honest—but we should not trust too much to appearances: men have turned scoundrels at fifty, though previously as pure as snow. Solomon Block grew meditative and reserved, and often shook his head. He was miserable all day, and never slept at night. At last his resolution was taken. He dissolved partnership, and retired on a trifling annuity.

“A good business!” exclaimed he. “Ah, very well for that. But what business can stand against ill-fortune or treachery? I should have been a bankrupt in three years!”

He was now quite idle, and in the very situation to fall desperately in love. He fell as desperately in love as his nature was capable of with a charming girl, and an heiress, who was certainly not insensible to his passion. His comparative poverty, far from acting as an objection, pleaded in her gentle heart to his advantage, and there was every prospect of a happy marriage. He happened to call on her one day, however, and found a young man just departing. She gave this young man her hand as she bade him adieu—actually gave him her hand! and smiled upon him in a way that pierced Solomon to the soul. She introduced him as her cousin—and cousins are often very fond of each other. He went home in an agony of jealousy, and, after calling over in his memory every word and look of his mistress during the whole time that he had known her, came to the conclusion that she was an accomplished flirt—that she was merely amusing herself with him—and that she intended to marry her cousin. He resolved not to be duped, and wrote her a long letter, formally resigning all pretension to her hand. “Once,” sighed he, “I thought Agnes Graham perfection. I believed her sincere as beautiful. Now I know her to be a false and heartless coquette!”

A man who has sustained disappointment in love must betake himself to some absorbing pursuit, or he dies. Solomon was a householder—wore superfine broad-cloth every day—kept an account with a banker—and was entitled to write himself gentleman. He was therefore a person to form and express an opinion of his own, and he determined to become a politician. From the particular constitution of his mind, he never was attracted towards anything so much from absolute choice as from accident,

or contempt for something else which seemed antagonistic. Thus, in politics, he was sceptical of democratic promises, and disliked the democratic tone and manner. It followed that he must be a conservative, and a conservative he was. He became a member of committees, a pamphleteer, and an orator at guinea-dinners. He sneered at the march of intellect—and extension of the suffrage—and elevation of the laboring classes—and universal fraternity—and the rest of the nineteenth century talk. Opposition to conservatism he called “sedition,” and rather thought that all the opposers should be hanged. Working men, he considered, had no right to be thinking men as well, and, above all, should not trouble their heads with affairs of government. He wrote letters to the newspapers signed “A Conservative and True Briton,” and was sorry (for the sake of the cause) that the editors were so foolish as to refuse them insertion.

Thus passed his life until an election occurred in which he was very active, and which, after a hard fight, terminated in favour of conservative principles. He was so sickened however by the display of party violence and party falsehood amongst his associates, that certain doubts as to the soundness of his creed, which had before occurred to his mind, were considerably strengthened. Every day more convinced him that he had been wrong, and he lost no time in avowing the change. “Conservatism justice!” exclaimed he; “it is rank injustice from beginning to end! It is the sacrifice of the many for the preposterous aggrandizement of a few! It is a wholesale system of robbery, and all who support it are either robbers or abettors of robbers!”

He was now a red-hot radical, and assailed his former friends with a ferocity that won much praise from his new friends. He was a committee-man and pamphleteer as before, and spoke at half-crown instead of guinea-dinners. He was great on the absurdities of hereditary legislation—and the rapaciousness of bishops—and the corruption of courts. He hinted at the use of lucifer-matches to reformers, and hoped to see the time when the parks of the pampered aristocracy would be divided amongst the starving people. Petitioning, he declared, was of no avail, and he earnestly advised every man to provide himself with a good sharp pike. He enforced his opinions as formerly, in epistles addressed to the newspapers, and signed "A Reformer and True Briton;" but the same fate attended him as in his conservative days, for, except in a few instances, the epistles never reached the public.

In the meantime the eloquence of Solomon Block and his brother patriots produced its effect. The people rose against the government—were shot down and imprisoned—and, for the first time, were made aware that rebellion was a dangerous matter. The vivacity of his disciples rather cooled the zeal of Solomon, who had not calculated on their taking him so literally at his word. His coolness was increased by the discovery, which then took place, of base duplicity and sordidness on the part of many who had called themselves popular leaders. He retired from the cause of Reform completely disgusted.

"Reform!" exclaimed he, "Reform! They had better honestly call it rapine at once! What is their patriotic twaddle about liberty and equality but a veil to their real selfish intentions? They would glut their accursed

lust for plunder, though they plunged their country in ruin ! ”

He purchased a small cottage at some distance from London, and was delighted with his calm existence after the turmoil of public life. To occupy his leisure, he took up the study of physical science, and, in the course of his investigations, hit upon an important invention in mechanics, which promised to lead to great results. This, he hoped, would bring him both fame and money ; but how to give it to the world was the question. The patent-law was in so imperfect a state that it afforded little protection ; but to publish it, without a patent, would be to throw away all chance of pecuniary benefit. Solomon spent five years in deliberation ; at the end of which period, a scientific man made the self-same discovery—took out a patent—and realized a handsome fortune.

“ Ah ! ” groaned Solomon, “ this is the reward of my days and nights of thought ! Who would devote himself to physical science ? And what, after all, *is* physical science, when compared with the operations of the spirit and the awful truths of eternity ! I am sixty-five, and have never yet thought seriously of religion. Alas ! I have bestowed too much attention on the transitory things of this life—but I will now study only my soul’s health ! ”

Accordingly, he became absorbed in religious reading and their consequent reveries ; but, as he proceeded, he found doubts and difficulties spring up so thickly, that he resolved to undertake a critical examination of the evidences of Christianity. The critical examination ended in his thorough conversion to infidelity. “ Christianity a religion ! ” he was wont to exclaim, with a contemptuous

curl of the lip; "Christianity a religion! It is all imposition and priestcraft—and I can prove it!"

So Solomon Block died, as he had lived—distrusting.

MORAL.

To gain the best fruits of wisdom, it is necessary to be in the topmost part of the tree. If you sit on a lower branch and use a long pole, your spoils will be scanty and uncertain. If you stand on the ground and shake the trunk, your portion will be only the rotten and the dead-ripe.





FABLE IV.

THE TAILOR'S LAST HOPE.

IN one of the streets of that equivocal district, called Soho, was a dull, dingy, shabby-genteel, curtain-windowed shop, over which was inscribed in golden letters, rather the worse for wear, "James Jeremy, Tailor and Draper." It was an establishment which Stultz would have despised : nevertheless, coats and trousers, of tolerable make, were to be obtained therein.

Jeremy leaned, in a mood of pensiveness, on the counter, and looked over his books, and thought over his bad debts. Times were hard, and debtors' hearts seemed to accord with the times. No work penned by moralist on the

vanity of human wishes, could have filled the mind of Jeremy with half so many philosophic cogitations, as did that common-looking, blue-ink-lined, parchment-bound volume. He remembered his alacrity and hope when certain names had first been entered—the unwillingly-admitted, gradually-increasing scepticism as to their means to pay—and the sinking of the heart and tingling of the fingers, with which he had finally consigned them to the rogues' squad of "bad debts." As he thought thus, he thought aloud, and addressed his shopman, Robert Roberts, as follows:—

"Robert Roberts, I just ask you now, if it isn't enough to make a man do something desperate? Here's five hundred pound, and more, owing to me, and not a halfpenny of it can I get! Fellows come here and gammon me into dressing them in a first-rate fashionable style, and then when it comes to paying—oh! I must wait—and wait—till they bolt to Boulogne, or New York, or Botany Bay, or some other foreign parts, and I am left to look like a fool. I'll not stand it, curse me!"

"What'll you do?" laconically demanded Robert Roberts.

"Do?" exclaimed Jeremy, fiercely; "I'll do—I'll do—something! D'ye think I'm made of stone to stand such usage? Look at the set I've got here on my books! I'll answer for it, not one of them ever had the price of two dinners at a time."

"Ha! I dare say not," said Roberts, who seemed amused, in a quiet way, at his master's misfortunes.

"Here is Mr. Pelham Danvers," said Jeremy. "His romantic name has been a long time on the wrong side of my ledger, and seems likely to remain there much longer."

"Serve you right for trusting him!" said the polite Roberts. "What is this Pelham Danvers?"

"That it would puzzle me (or himself I believe) to answer," said Jeremy. "Sometimes he is one thing—sometimes another. When I first measured him, he earned his livelihood in billiard-rooms. Afterwards he was a singer at various Harmonic Saloons and Temples of Apollo. At present I have not the least notion what pursuit he is following, or whether he has any pursuit at all; but he's an infernal scamp, and so I'll tell him if ever I set eyes on him again."

As the injured tailor uttered these words, the door of the shop was thrown open with a sudden jerk, and a loud voice cried—

"Jeremy, my old boy, how are you?"

"Mr. Danvers, sir, good morning!" said the tailor, putting on the obsequious manner of the tradesman, apparently by a sort of uncontrollable instinct.

Mr. Pelham Danvers was a tall man, with a countenance at once pompous and jolly. His manners were *brusque* and assuming. He seemed perpetually attempting, first to convince himself that he was somebody, and secondly, to convince others of the same. He emitted a decided odor of tobacco, and displayed much the air of having been up all night.

"Jeremy, my boy," said this gentleman; "do you know it has been haunting me lately that there's some little account outstanding between us? I may be mistaken, but I thought it better to call in at once and ascertain."

Jeremy appeared rather astonished at this remarkably cool address, and muttered some words, of which the expression "Well, I never!" was alone audible;

however, he immediately resumed his calmness, and replied :

“ Mr. Danvers, sir, there *is* an account outstanding—and a long time it’s been outstanding. I’ve a bill against you of thirty pound, and I shall feel obliged if you will let me have the money, sir ; for really I’m in want of it.”

“ Be cool, Jeremy—be cool !” said Mr. Pelham Danvers, waving his hand. “ You have a bill against me, you say, of thirty pounds : good ! I have no money to pay you. Still in these cases an arrangement may often be come to, if proper tact and temper be only evinced by both parties concerned.”

“ But, Mr. Danvers, sir,” interrupted the tailor—“ I—.”

“ Silence, Jeremy, silence !” said Mr. Danvers, “ and listen. On Monday next I appear in ‘ Othello ’ at the Wells. It is an important epoch in my life, Jeremy, and I *must* succeed, if success be possible. Now, this is the arrangement I offer : Do all you can to aid me, and, if I succeed, I will pay your bill. There is *no possibility* of my paying as things stand at present ; but only help to make me leading tragedian at the Wells, and damme I’ll cash up to the last farthing !”

“ This is such a strange idea !” exclaimed the tailor, bewildered by the novelty of the plan, and the vehemence of its proposer. “ Where did you say you were going to appear, sir ?”

“ At the Wells—Sadler’s Wells !” replied Danvers. “ The place is rather out of the way, I confess ; but Garrick appeared in Goodman’s-fields, you know. Well, what say you to my offer ? Our interests are identified, remember. The whole thing will not cost you five pounds ; with this assistance I must and will triumph ; and the next

morning—the very next morning, mind—your bill shall be paid !”

“Five pound !” exclaimed Jeremy, his countenance elongating. “Five pound ! after having trusted you already for thirty ! I can’t do it, Mr. Danvers.”

“Not do it !” exclaimed Danvers ; “and so sacrifice us both for a paltry five-pound note ! Pooh—pooh, man, think again ! Less than five pounds would be too little. We must have twenty people in the boxes ; forty, say, in the pit ; and the rest in the gallery. I shall have enemies in the house, sir—I can tell you that—and shall require the presence of as many friends as possible.”

“But couldn’t you let me have any orders ?” said Jeremy.

“Impossible, Jeremy, impossible !” replied Mr. Danvers. “I *shall* have a few orders, certainly—but not one can I spare. Come, what say you ?”

“Well, Mr. Danvers,” said Jeremy, “under the circumstances I don’t mind coming down with five pound or so. It’s a great risk—but I’m afraid it’s my last hope of getting paid.”

“Give me your hand, old boy !” exclaimed Danvers, seizing the tailor’s hand, and shaking it until he almost dislocated his shoulder. “Damme, you’re a fellow of spirit—a regular lad of mettle ! You may consider the thirty pounds safe in your pocket. On Monday next, then, I shall rely on the hands and ‘sweet voices’ of your band of clacqueurs. Adieu, Jeremy, adieu ! I must be off to rehearsal, and it is rather late, I fear. By-the-bye,” said he, suddenly pausing in his retreat, “I just now remember that I came out this morning and left my purse in the pocket of another pair of trousers. *Have* you such a thing as half-a-crown about you ?”

"I'm sorry to say that I have not, sir," replied Jeremy, hastily buttoning up his pocket ; "I have no change at all sir."

"I'll get change at the Red Lion, in a moment," suggested Robert Roberts, with disgusting readiness.

"No, no," interrupted Jeremy : "they never have change at that house. Another time I shall be very happy, Mr. Danvers ; but at present I really cannot accommodate you."

"Very well, sir ; very well !" said Mr. Pelham Danvers, loftily : "'tis no matter. Some *friend* will oblige me with the trifling loan, I doubt not. Good morning, sir. On Monday I shall expect your presence and support."

And with these words Mr. Pelham Danvers left the shop.

A long colloquy ensued between James Jeremy and Robert Roberts, touching the probability of the former ever receiving the amount of his bill. Roberts blamed the folly of his master in risking the loss of more than was on his books ; but Jeremy defended himself vigorously, showed clearly that it was his *last hope*, and inquired whether it were not more prudent to stake five pounds with the chance of getting back thirty-five, than to put up with the inevitable loss of thirty. Roberts replied nothing, and was silent, if not convinced.

During the whole time which intervened between that day and Monday evening, Jeremy was in a continued fever of anxiety. He was ever and anon stopping in the street before the bills of Sadler's Wells, to read once more that on Monday Mr. Pelham Danvers, of provincial reputation, would make his first appearance before a London audience in the character of *Othello*. He went into three or four coffee-houses every evening that he might

talk aloud about Pelham Danvers in *Othello*, and say that he meant to be there on the first night, as of course all the world would. His friends were heartily sick of Pelham Danvers and *Othello*: however (as Jeremy paid) they readily agreed to go and applaud him—good or bad.

As soon as the doors of the theatre were opened on the eventful evening, Jeremy and his myrmidons rushed in and took possession of their seats. The party was a miscellaneous collection of men and tailors, and was distributed throughout the entire house. Boxes, pit, and gallery, held confederate Jeremites, pledged to clap the very skin off their hands, and bellow all tone from their voices, in praise of Pelham Danvers. Jeremy himself sat in the pit, close to the stage, that he might be in full view of his followers, and communicate with them by a previously-arranged private code of signals.

The curtain rose. Danvers, on his entrance, was received with a universal thunder of applause; but, as he proceeded, it became evident that his provincial would not blossom into metropolitan reputation. He mouthed and ranted in a style which shocked even the taste of a Sadler's Wells audience; and act after act ended to a steadily-increasing torrent of hisses; until, at the end of the fourth act, the Jeremites were left alone in their applause.

The tailor was in an agony. He recalled to mind the prophetic words of Robert Roberts, and cursed his own credulity. He could see now the misanthropic Roberts sitting in the front row of the gallery, with a lurking smile on his iron visage as the storm of disapprobation strengthened around him. Still Jeremy and his followers relaxed not in their endeavors; but at length the indignation of the public came upon them. Cries of "Turn out them

coves as come in with orders!" began to be uttered. He gave the signal of silence to his adherents, and resumed his seat. The fifth act commenced.

Matters only became worse. Danvers acted detestably, and the people had sense enough to perceive it. His concluding speech was interrupted by various annotative and jocular remarks by the audience, and his death was hailed by a tremendous burst of mingled laughter, hisses, and the faint, hopeless applause of the Jeremites. The curtain descended on the complete failure of Mr. Pelham Danvers, of provincial reputation.

Jeremy was furious, and determined not to yield an inch. He jumped on to his seat, waved his hat wildly, and yelled, at the top of his voice:

"Bravo! bravo! Danvers! Danvers! Danvers!"

His friends trembled at this mad proceeding. He was putting himself in direct opposition to the expressed opinion of the whole house; for the Jeremite faction had now yielded to fate, and ceased to applaud: nay, some few had so far gone with the stream as to become strenuous hissers.

"Danvers, Danvers!" shouted Jeremy.

"Turn him out!" cried the audience.

"Get down, you tailor!" exclaimed a costermonger-like voice in the gallery. "You're a tailor, out for a holiday—you are!"

It was a shrewd guess. Jeremy winced a little; but continued his disinterested exertions without abatement.

"I say, old feller," cried another voice, "vy don't you speak above your breath? Who's to hear you—vispering that vay?"

"Turn him out!" cried a chorus of voices again; and, skimming merrily through the air, came a hard apple

thrown from the gallery, which alighted with a crash on the head of the tailor.

"Who threw that? What blackguard threw that apple?" cried Jeremy, starting completely round, and gazing up at the offending region, with a withering gaze of defiance.

He was answered by a pull at his coat behind, which brought him to the ground. In a twinkling he was transferred from one vigorous pair of arms to another, and passed along until he found himself inhaling the cool air outside the door of the theatre.

Amongst the charges at Bow-street on the following morning, was one against a respectable tailor, named Jeremy, who was found, at three o'clock, wandering about the Haymarket, in a state of helpless intoxication.

MORAL.

In attempting to catch birds by throwing salt on their tails, it is extremely probable that the bird will fly away, and that you will lose your salt.





FABLE V.

THE MOTHER AND THE DAUGHTER.

IN a small cottage ornée at Richmond, commanding a delightful view of the Thames, lived Madame La Roche and her only child, Adeline.

At an early age the parents of Madame La Roche had taken her from her native country, England, to France, in order that her education might be completed. Here a certain Monsieur La Roche, a man much older but also much richer than herself, had solicited her hand. In obedience to the commands of her parents, and in spite of her strongly-expressed aversion, the match was concluded,

and the elderly husband and the young wife took up their abode in Paris. Three years afterwards Monsieur La Roche died, leaving one child, a daughter. Since that event Madame La Roche had resided in Switzerland first, and subsequently, in Germany. At length, tired of the Continent, she returned to England, where she had now lived two years, and where she firmly intended to spend the remainder of her days.

As woman is placed in our present social system, perhaps the most independent and life-enjoying of the sex is a young and attractive widow. Madame La Roche was both young and attractive,—and sensible too, or she would have been envious of her sweet daughter, Adeline. As it was, she treated her with the warmth of a mother and the confidence of an elder sister.

On a certain summer day Adeline La Roche was seated in a room opening on a lawn which sloped to the river. By her side, and close by her side, was a man youthful and handsome. He held one of her hands clasped in his, and was looking with a most impassioned air into her face. Her eyes were cast down, and the slightest suspicion of a blush was upon her cheek. The blush would have been deeper—but it was a situation she was somewhat used to. They loved each other.

“And you fear, George, that mama would never consent?” said Adeline, continuing a colloquy that had been proceeding, Heaven knows how long; for in such cases (I’m told) hours are like minutes.

“I fear it much,” said George Trevor. “What pretensions have I? A man of wealth and consideration like Mr. Crofton may hope—but I can hope for nothing.”

"Ha! ha! you are jealous," said Adeline, looking up and smiling archly. "Do you distrust me then?"

"No, dear Adeline, indeed," replied George. "I do believe that your heart is mine, and mine only; but say if I have not cause for suspecting that Mr. Crofton is my rival, and that your mama favors him?"

"Now you mention it," said Adeline, "I will confess to you that I am very miserable on this account. Ever since we first met Mr. Crofton at that horrid ball, he has been eternally at the house. He *must* perceive how coldly I receive him."

"And how does Madame La Roche receive him?" said Trevor.

"Ah, too well!" replied Adeline. "I often see them sitting together in a corner talking in a low tone, and every now and then looking towards me, as if I were the subject of conversation. He is trying to gain mama over to his interest, I know. It will be of no use if he does. I would sooner die than marry him!"

"So having experienced the misery of a forced match herself, she would doom you to the same fate?" said George Trevor, with vehemence.

"I hardly know what to think," said Adeline, gently. "When I remember how affectionately she always treats me, it seems impossible; but when I see her encourage so evidently the visits of Mr. Crofton, I am compelled to dread everything."

"We may be mistaken after all, Adeline," said Trevor. "These visits are probably intended for Madame La Roche. Remember, Mademoiselle, you are not the only young and pretty inhabitant of Vine Cottage."

"Oh, I am sure that is not the case," said Adeline.

“Mama has told me, often and often, that no consideration on earth should induce her to marry again, and that all her care now was to see me happily settled. Mr. Crofton and mama are now viewing the conservatory together. George, I feel a strange presentiment that he will propose formally for me this morning, and that I shall be called upon to give him his answer at once.”

“You will reject him, then, dear Adeline?” said Trevor anxiously.

“Can you ask me?” exclaimed Adeline. “I will never bestow my hand where I cannot bestow my heart. *That*, George, is yours—past praying for!”

“Ten thousand thanks for this one more proof of constancy,” said Trevor. “To doubt your truth now would indeed be to think you unworthy of love. But I hear footsteps approaching: they are returning from the conservatory. Adieu, dear Adeline, for a time. I will not meet Mr. Crofton—but I am not jealous, mind!”

Scarcely had George Trevor left the apartment when Madame La Roche and Mr. Crofton entered from the lawn. Mr. Crofton, rather precipitately, took his leave, and Madame La Roche and Adeline were alone.

“Sit down, Adeline,” said her mother. “I have something very particular to say to you.”

Adeline obeyed with the air of a martyr. Her presentiment had evidently been but too true.

“My dear child,” continued Madame La Roche, “you are now of an age when you should begin to think of being settled in life. Nature has given you beauty and talents; I have, to the utmost of my ability, given you good education; and I may say, without flattery, that you are capable of making any man happy. Why, then, re-

main single if you meet with one for whom you can feel an affection?"

Adeline offered no observation, and Madame La Roche continued :

"There is a gentleman who, I am certain, loves you. I have seen enough of him to be as certain that he deserves your love in return, and it will give me pleasure if you tell me that he possesses it."

"My dear mama," said Adeline, with firmness, "it is better to be candid at once. I know whom you mean, and all you are going to say; but it is in vain. I do not love him—I never shall love him—and I cannot marry him."

"Adeline, Adeline!" cried her mother laughing; "you are too quick by far for me. Do you not love—will you never love—and cannot you marry—George Trevor?"

"George Trevor!" exclaimed Adeline, her breath nearly taken away by astonishment.

"Ay, George Trevor!" said her mother. "So, you blush now, and I was not mistaken, I find, in supposing that you loved each other. I am glad of it, dear child, and give my most willing consent to your union."

"I feared you would not listen to him, or I would have confided in you," said Adeline, half laughing and half crying at this sudden and unexpected realization of hopes she had scarcely dared to entertain.

"Not listen to him! and that merely because at present he happens to be poor!" exclaimed Madame La Roche. "Ah, my Adeline! it is love, not wealth, that should be considered; and if George Trevor be poor—are we not rich enough? But," continued she, holding down her head and speaking falteringly, "now that I have wished

you all happiness and consented to your marriage, will you, dear little friend, wish me the same—and consent to *my* marriage ?”

“ You ! you marry again !” exclaimed Adeline.

“ And have you been so blind as to suspect nothing ?” said Madame La Roche, raising her head and smiling. “ I will conceal it from you no longer. You know that I was married in France at a very early age ; but you do not know that before that I had given my heart in England to a youth whose only fault was poverty. My parents had forbidden him the house, and on hearing of my engagement on the Continent, he went out in despair to India. Some two months ago, you may remember, we were at a large ball. How can I describe to you my sensations when I saw there the man whom I had loved in my early youth—whom I still loved ! I recognised him even before I heard his name.”

“ And that name was—Crofton,” said Adeline, much affected.

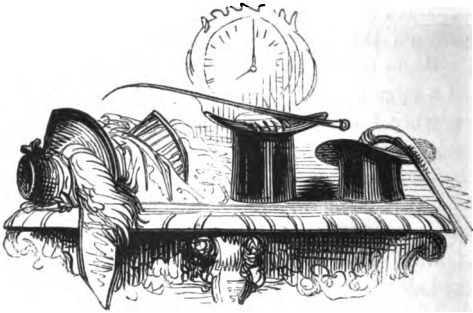
“ It was,” replied Madame La Roche. “ He had remained single, though he had grown rich enough to buy, if he had willed it, some poor girl—as I myself had been bought. Adeline, he has prevailed on me to change my resolution of never marrying again. Do you wish me joy ?”

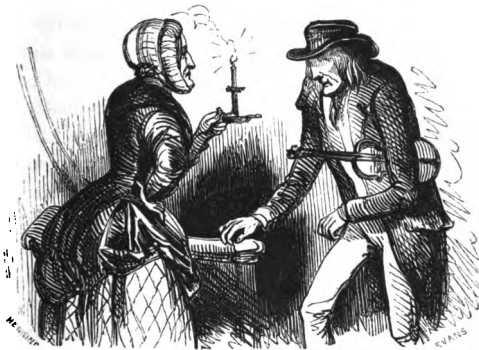
The mother and the daughter fell into each other’s arms and mingled their tears ; but assuredly they were not tears of sorrow.

On the same morning the two weddings were celebrated ; and opinions were divided whether the matronly or the youthful bride looked the more charming.

MORAL.

To diffuse happiness and forward improvement, let all parents use their children more generously and more rationally than their parents used them ; but if any sincerely believe *that* to be impossible, then let them make to themselves graven images of their fathers and mothers and worship them as household divinities.





FABLE VI.

THE FIDDLER IN THE RAIN.

THE shades of evening were about to close on a dull, cold, rainy day in November. Lamps began to be kindled, and glared redly through the mist. Blazing fires in kitchen, parlor, and drawing-room became more evident, and looked provokingly comfortable to passers-by as they lighted up the faces of those gathered around. The savory steam of dinner came from areas, and mixed with the unsavory fog without. Men hurried along wrapped up in cloak and great-coat; some with a contented home-ward-bound look, which evinced that their labors for the day were at an end; others with a discontented air of business, indicative of work to come. The rain descended

in a steady drizzle—the gutters were running—and all was mud and water.

In the middle of the road, in a half-quiet street, a man stood playing on the violin. It was dismally comic. The whole out-of-door world was suggestive of suicide—and this man was playing lively hornpipes and country dances. But though his music was merry, his face was sad.

He was old and very shabby. Sixty years had fallen on him, and fallen heavily. His face was pale and wrinkled—his form bent—his hair a silvery white. He was dressed in a worn-out, thread-bare, patched suit of black. The rain had soaked through his poor garments, and streamed from his wretched hat. The violin shone with an unnatural polish. It was an unpropitious state of things for violin-playing—where there exists any necessity to play in tune.

People paid small attention to him. Some laughed—some said that he looked poor—and others that he looked wet. At last a policeman came up and told him to “move on.” The old man, with an air of humiliation, immediately ceased from ear-torturing—put the violin and bow under his arm—and shuffled away with his hands in his pockets. He “moved on.”

The night had now completely arrived in all its desolation. The old fiddler had been out in the rain for several days, and on every day his health had become worse. He felt scarcely alive:—feeble to a degree, and cold as a stone. He resolved to seek his lodging at once, and go to bed and try to get warm. Sea-coal and blankets are good in November, but he had none of them.

He came to the house, situated in a squalid and poverty-stricken district, and was mounting the dirty, decayed

staircase, when his landlady encountered him, and, putting her arms a-kimbo, stood directly in his way.

"Now, old gentleman," said she, "when am I to get *your* money? Here you've been a living in my house better nor three weeks, and not a halfpenny I've had yet. This is the third time of asking, remember. I never let any of my other lodgers go over the week—only you've a respectable sort of look about you, and I don't like to be hard. Ah! I've lost a deal that way!"

"You shall have your money directly, my good lady," said the old man, supporting himself by the bannister—for he had grown almost too weak to stand.

Her money! He had been out all day; he had played unceasingly airs that are most wont to please; all might see that he was in extreme want; and many had seen it who were in want of nothing: he had been out all day—and he brought home fourpence at night.

"Directly!" repeated the landlady; "come, that's good now—that is! Here you've got a nice attic all to yourself, which many a gentleman, born and bred, hasn't got no better; and when the landlady comes on you for her lawful rent, she's put off with 'directly!' It won't do, old gentleman—it won't do!"

"To-morrow; I will pay you to-morrow!" exclaimed the debtor.

"Ah, to-morrow never comes!" said the landlady. "To-morrow is just the same as 'never.' I'd as lief anybody said 'I'll pay you never' as 'I'll pay you to-morrow.'"

"Upon my word, I'll pay you to-morrow!" repeated the old man, who seemed ready to cry.

"Well, I dare say you will if you can," said the land-

lady, softening, in spite of her rapacity, at his air of utter depression : " I dare say you will ; and if you don't, I must see and do something. I'm a poor widow, and I'm obliged to look sharp after every penny. Howsomever, as I've said, I don't want to be hard—so we'll talk about it to-morrow. Good night, old gentleman ! "

" Good night—good night ! " said the old man in a broken voice.

He ascended the staircase with difficulty ; and, as he did so, he muttered indistinctly, and as if to himself, " To-morrow—to-morrow—to-morrow ! "

The landlady watched him until he disappeared on the landing above, and then turned away with a sigh. There was a power in that old pale face, and that prematurely bent figure, and that white hair, and (above all) in that look of passive endurance, which was sufficient to melt the heart of a landlady. To any other lodger she would have been insolent, and blustering, and unyielding ; but to the poorest of all—to a garret-lodger—she was mild and considerate. Her destiny in the world had injured, but not entirely corrupted, her original nature.

The sun shone brightly on the morning following. The mists had cleared off, the air was mild, and spring seemed to have returned. Cheerfulness had taken the place of gloom. Fiddlers in the street shall not fiddle in vain, and hornpipes and country dances shall find listeners.

But our old fiddler has not come forth to take advantage of the change. The other lodgers in the house have departed—but the garret Orpheus still remains idle. The landlady in vain expected his appearance, and at last began to fear that he was ill. She remembered that he had walked very feebly on the previous evening—and

that he had spoken in a very low voice—and that his face was paler and more woe-begone than ordinary. She ascended to the topmost landing, and knocked at the door of his room. No answer was returned. She attempted to open it—but found it locked. With the assistance of a carpenter, who happened to be in the house, the door was forced, and they entered the apartment.

The old man was half-lying, half-sitting in bed, with his head propped up by the pillow, and the scanty bed-clothes drawn to his chin. He appeared at first to be sleeping; but when the landlady and the carpenter approached nearer, they found that he was dead and quite cold. He had passed quietly from a life like death, to death itself. On the floor, by the bed-side, was a bottle which had served for a candlestick, and in the neck of which an inch of candle had guttered itself away unheeded. An elegantly-bound book was lying on the counterpane, which the old man had apparently been reading, and had put down to die. Close by the bottle-candlestick were his clothes carefully disposed, and on the top of them lay the violin and bow.

The entire property found after his death amounted to sevenpence in money—the articles enumerated above—and the portrait of a young and handsome woman, set in a gold frame, which was discovered, on examination, suspended to his neck by a black ribbon. What recollections were connected with the gorgeously-bound book, and the gold-framed portrait, so strangely contrasting with the thread-bare clothes, it is impossible to say. The despised street fiddler had once, perhaps, played in drawing-rooms to admiring friends. He solicits charity, and suffers contempt, no more.

MORAL.

The most miserable of all misery is that which wears the outward covering of gaiety: it is well when the mirth it excites in us is but the outward covering of pity.





FABLE VII.

THE GREAT MAN TAUGHT BY A DOG.

It was the middle of a July day, and the sun was blazing down on the white London pavement with such power as to make the whole town one large oven. The stream of population flowed solely on the shady side of the street, if there were one ; if not, the wretched pedestrians walked slowly, wiping their foreheads not oftener than every hundred yards, and casting longing looks on the parasol borne by an occasional heat-defying lady. Dogs ran along with a hydrophobic air—and yet it seemed impossible that they could fear water in such weather.

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Shopkeepers with blinds extending over the pavement, had their blinds paid for a hundredfold by additional custom ; and those who sprinkled the pavement as well, were in a good way to make their fortunes : moisture and coolness were the two great objects of life.

Under the portico of a public building were lying two men, a boy, and a dog. They were sheltered charmingly, and, as it happened, in full view of a well-worked and sight-refreshing pump. If the granite on which they lay were not so soft as a horse-hair cushion, still it was a resting-place, and poor people and dogs must not be too nice.

The elder of the two men had seen sixty years at least. He had been an operative in Manchester, and from childhood had spent his life in cotton-facture ; but, though he yielded much wealth to his master in the form of calicoes, little wealth came back to him in the form of wages, and, as he became more and more the despised drudge of Steam, the privilege of living, and only just living, was all he dared to expect in return for the utmost exertion. At last this boon was denied, and he became a pauper—willing to work, but idle from necessity. His wife was dead—his children had gone from him—and he wandered to London to starve.

The other man was much younger. He was the son of a country curate, who had educated him with the utmost care, and, as he evinced much talent, had sent him to an English university. Here he remained until, by the sudden death of his father, he was reduced at once to indigence. Too proud to be dependent on cold-hearted friends, who would have brought him on his knees to receive a mouldy crust, he determined to seek his fortune in London.

He arrived there with nothing in his pocket but a manuscript poem. This, he found by experience, was a very unmarketable commodity ; and, after enduring for awhile the life of a literary hack of the lowest order, he fell into habits of dissipation—became marker to a billiard-table—then cad to an omnibus—then distributor of hand-bills—then a nondescript—moneyless, characterless, and hopeless ; living by chances ; always ragged and seldom sober. To think of the past was torture—to think of the future was worse—and the present had nothing of pleasure : he drank, and, though not happy, was less miserable—for gin delivered him from thought.

The boy who lay under that portico was a boy such as only large towns can produce. His mother he had seen nothing of for some years, and he had never had any particular father. He was twelve years old, very ignorant, but very knowing : cunning served him instead of learning. His costume was airy and well-adapted to the season. It consisted of a jacket, out at the elbows, and much too small for him ; trousers as much too large, but similar in rents and patches ; hat he had none ; and shoes and stockings were superfluities likewise absent. His profession was of an exceedingly miscellaneous nature. He held horses ; he carried trunks and carpet-bags ; he ran on errands ; he would tell a gentleman in the street that his handkerchief was hanging out of his pocket, and then would touch the place where his hat ought to have been, and beg a trifle as a sort of reward of honesty for not having stolen the handkerchief ; in winter he made a good penny by sweeping snow from doorways ; he occasionally sold bills of the play ; he sometimes exercised his voice on the popular songs of the day—but policemen were troublesome, and it was not very profitable either. In short, he was a merry,

sharp lad, not over honest, but tolerably industrious, and likely to turn out well—if he were not transported.

The dog, which, as in duty bound, I have placed last in my description, was a brown, good-natured, ugly animal, of a breed which it would have puzzled any dog-fancier to define. He lived a roving, dissipated, town life. He disowned the authority of any master, and acted entirely to his own taste. Sometimes he was lean—at other times in good condition ; sometimes he was burning with heat—and at other times shivering with cold ; sometimes he was in luck—and sometimes out of luck ; but, however the world went with him, he carried a light heart under his brown skin, and never troubled himself with useless complaints about what could not be helped.

These four creatures—the two men, the boy, and the dog—were attracted to each other by the sympathy of destitution. They were all vagabonds—without the pale of society—and existing only on sufferance. The chink of precious metals, the steam of savory viands, the magnificence of whole vestments, the luxury of soft couches, were matters beyond their hopes. They knew that such things were—but they knew also that they were only for the rich and fortunate. So they lay together under the portico very sociably ; when all at once they were startled by the approach of a Great Man.

He had been transacting some business in the building, and now issued from the door, and advanced under the portico to the outer steps. He was stout, red-faced, and vulgar. His dress was a brown body-coat covered with embossed gilt buttons, a white waistcoat, and black trousers. He wore a white hat, and carried in his hand a thick bamboo with a silver top.

Our great man had been, in time gone by, a slopseller

at Portsmouth. Here, during our glorious wars with France, he contrived, by various means, to amass a large fortune, and, retiring from business, he purchased an estate in Devonshire, and set up aristocrat. After living thus several years the legislative furor seized him, and nothing short of a seat in Saint Stephens, he felt, could effect a cure. He proceeded accordingly—at the next election announced himself a candidate—and, after the necessary number of barrels had been emptied, bribes taken, curses uttered, and heads broken, was declared duly elected a law-maker in a Reformed Parliament. At the present moment he had gone through two sessions—had acquired some influence with his party—was plentifully abused in the newspapers on the other side—and looked forward to place and pay as the certain compensation for his patriotic exertions. Time, temper, comfort, and common sense, he gave up for the good of his country, as a politician always does and must do, and was generously contented to take some thousands a-year in exchange.

This great man advanced under the portico, holding himself very erect, and striking the ground importantly with his cane ; but when he came to the recumbent crew of human and canine vagabonds, his indignation burst forth in the following terms :—

“ Well, upon my word ! What are the police about that they allow this ? A public building, too, where public business is going on all day ! Here, you fellow ! ” continued he, tapping the reduced gentleman with his cane ; “ move off, will you ? You’re after no good in this place, *I’m* sure ! ”

The reduced gentleman rose slowly, and staggered away, muttering something very indistinctly—for he was not altogether sober.

“ And you, you little rascal ! ” continued the great man,

poking the boy in the ribs with his bamboo ; “ why are you not working for an honest living, instead of idling here ? Come, troop off ! ” and, by way of stimulating his industrious propensities, the great man gave him another poke in the ribs.

The boy got up sullenly and moved away, blubbering and threatening ; but the only words audible were something about a “ coward,” and “ hitting one of his own size.”

“ Come, I’ll leave none of you,” continued the great man, touching the old operative on the shoulder with his cane ; “ be off, and don’t stop the way in this manner.”

The old operative had no spirit to reply. He rose, with some pain, and shuffled away silently.

Now, had the great man only felt satisfied with these successive victories, all would have gone well ; but prudence is seldom allied with greatness ; he was flushed with conquest, and determined not to leave the field whilst one opponent, however insignificant, remained to be conquered. So, striding up to the dog, who lay apparently asleep, he continued the attack thus :—

“ A pretty thing to have dogs lying about at Midsummer ! And then they wonder at cases of hydrophobia ! Up, you ugly cur ! ” With these words he struck the dog smartly with the point of his cane, as a hint that it was time to awake.

The cane was a very handsome cane, as I have said—a bamboo, with a bright silver top. Three human beings had just felt its weight ; and, if they had not esteemed it an honor to be struck by such a cane, when in the hands of a gentleman, they at least had not ventured openly to declare themselves aggrieved ; but what these human beings did not, the dog did—and that in the most forcible and unequivocal style ; for no sooner was he touched by the

bamboo, than he uttered a short growl—started up—and in an instant had made his teeth meet in the calf of the great man's leg.

Having thus bitten in his lesson, the canine instructor ran up the street wagging his tail, and with a sort of chuckle on his ugly countenance.

“Heavens! I am bleeding!” exclaimed the great man, sinking with fear and agony. “I am bitten to death! The dog is mad, and I shall go mad!”

The dog was *not* mad, and the wound in time was cured; but the great man never forgot the adventure; and this, he would insist, was the

MORAL.

Paupers have more humility than dogs; because the dog, from his imperfect nature, is incapable of appreciating equally the distinctions of civilised society.





FABLE VIII.

THE COQUETTE AND THE COQUETTE-TAMER.

Mabel Gray was most beautiful ; but her beauty was of that sort which we gaze upon admiringly and distrustfully. She was tall, slender, and perfectly proportioned. Her eyes were large, black, and sparkling. Her hair, of the same color, fell in luxuriant tresses on her shoulders. Her eyebrows were strongly marked and arched. Her lips were rosy and mischievous. Her nose was Roman and imperious. Her complexion was dark but clear, and mantling with a delicate bloom. To these personal peculiarities her character corresponded. She was clever, capricious, and tender. Fond of exciting admiration, she

despised any feeling short of absolute love ; and, seemingly desirous of dominion over all, she really wished only for the undivided homage of one. But, as she knew herself capable of a deep and lasting passion, so she demanded nothing less from the one on whom she should bestow her heart ; and, in order to prove him, she resolved not to give the least token of encouragement until his entire love and constancy were beyond doubt. If he could remain true whilst she lavished smiles and attentions on his rivals, then she would, after a time, relent and make up by warmth and sincerity for previous coldness and deceit. Mabel Gray was a coquette—but likely to become something better.

It was not possible for such a girl to live unwooed ; and when I state that she was an orphan with a large fortune at her own disposal, it may be supposed that her lovers were rather numerous.

Amongst those who professed themselves enamored of her charms was Oliver Pearson, a young man of property, education, and prepossessing manners. His person was commanding and his features handsome. He was gifted with a particular readiness and pliancy of intellect, which enabled him to adapt himself to any occasion, and to turn it to advantage. He could be grave or gay, sentimental or satirical, and all with apparently equal case. Oliver Pearson was just the man to cope with a coquette, and, of all coquettes, with Mabel Gray.

She treated him with less favor than others, because she suspected that she beheld him with more. Indeed, she feared to examine herself strictly on this subject lest she should discover too plainly how feigned was her indifference. And what was her reason for playing this poor,

hypocritical part? She was not yet convinced that Pearson was as devoted to her as she considered her merits deserved. He had not humbled himself sufficiently low and sufficiently long. Before she could deign to evince the least sign of love, she must feel that she was loved as deeply as human creature was ever loved in the world before. She committed a great but a common error: inordinate womanly vanity she considered proper maidenly pride.

One morning she sat working, whilst Oliver Pearson sat by her side looking on. The work on which Mabel Gray was employed was very characteristic of her. She was working a silken chain for a lover whom she despised in order to vex a lover whom she admired. Never did she touch that chain unless Oliver Pearson were present. His well-known knock was the signal for her taking it up, and his departure for her putting it down. Its ostensible purpose, as a present, was quite secondary to its real purpose, as an engine of coquetry. Probably she had no intention of ever finishing it; but, if satisfied that Pearson believed she had, would have been contented with the ingenious triumph of piquing one lover and not committing herself with another. Pearson, however, was provokingly cool. He seldom alluded to it, and, when he did, it was usually with a smile, as if he were rather amused than otherwise. Could he have the impudence to think that she preferred him to his rivals? or to suppose that the chain was not intended for the person she said it was? He might find himself mistaken after all!

On the present occasion he had sat for full half an hour, talking about love in the old style, and being answered in the old style, and had not once mentioned the chain,

though she had shown a wonderful industry, and had, worn all the air of being absorbed in an interesting task. At last, taking hold of it carelessly, he said :—

“ So the chain comes on slowly I find. My friend Mordaunt must not be impatient.”

“ Your friend Mordaunt may be impatient if he please, sir,” said Mabel. “ Patient or impatient, he must wait until I choose to give it.”

“ Which will not be long,” said Oliver, smiling, “ when we consider how great a favorite he is of Miss Gray. But I confess that this matter puzzles me ; for, if he be worthy of making a chain for, he is certainly worthy of having it made for him a little quicker. It does not seem altogether a labor of love. I declare,” said he, taking hold of the chain again and looking mischievously at Mabel, “ I declare it seems exactly as if you only worked on this when I am here.”

“ Indeed, sir ! ” said Mabel, coloring. “ I should rather say that you always happen to be here when I am working on it. What has your presence or absence to do with my working ? ”

“ Oh, nothing, of course ! ” said Pearson ; “ yet it struck me as odd that I always find the happy Mordaunt’s chain of the precise length that I left it : doubtless a mere coincidence ! But, my dear Miss Gray,” continued he, “ this jesting conversation must serve as a preliminary to a more serious communication which I have to make. Are you willing to listen ? ”

“ Quite willing ! Let us have your ‘ serious communication ’ by all means,” said Mabel, astonished at this abrupt turn.

Pearson drew his chair nearer. “ Miss Gray,” said he,

“ could poor Mordaunt know how many rivals he contends with, and how many smiles and favors are lavished on others, would he esteem this chain as a love-token, though presented by the fair hands of Mabel Gray herself ?”

“ Mr. Mordaunt,” said Mabel slightly coloring, “ is the best judge of his own thoughts, and will estimate any gift of mine at its proper value. You, sir, at least, have no right to assume the character of Mentor ; and, if I have ever given you encouragement, you must forget the silly whim of the moment.”

“ It is on this very subject that I would speak to you,” said Pearson. “ My sentiments towards you have been declared too long and remain too unchanged to be doubted for one moment. I was dull enough once to imagine that you loved me, and heaven knows with what rapture I believed so ; but soon others were smiled upon—Mabel Gray became the idol of a few triflers—and I gradually found myself treated merely as one of the throng. This I cannot—nay, will not—bear. I have now come to a resolution on the subject, and firmly intend to act upon it.”

“ A very dreadful one ?” said Mabel, smiling. “ Oh ! do let me hear it. Something that will astonish me, now, and break the monotonous love-making of my other admirers.”

“ A simple one,” said Pearson ; “ but one that will set your coldness at defiance. Mabel, I have brought myself, by a long course of mental discipline, to the power of dreaming as I please. I intend to dream every night that you are the most truthful—most affectionate—most constant of your sex ; that you adore me more than any lady ever adored knight in the old romances ; that our days glide on in one delicious stream of uninterrupted love ; and that

our mutual conduct is a pattern worthy of imitation by every couple in the kingdom."

"So," said Mabel, affecting to laugh, "this is your pretty scheme, is it, sir? Given forth with so much parade too, and with so grave a face! You shall see what the reality will be—I will treat you with greater coldness than ever!"

"Do, my dear Miss Gray," said Pearson, throwing himself carelessly back in his chair; "pray do: the contrast will be better; and in the meantime I will console myself with your imaginary kindness."

"This is really quite amusing!" said Mabel. "Perhaps you will go so far as to tell me your dreams, sir, in order that I may see how very, very kind I have been."

"The identical thing I was about to propose," said Pearson. "Yes: I will give you an account of them every morning, and you shall listen. But mind, no interruptions when you think you have been too kind to me! Is it a compact?"

"It is," said Mabel. "There is my hand; and if you will be content with such a phantom mistress, I almost think I will give you leave to dream of me every night for a twelve-month."

Whether Mabel Gray were as much amused as she affected to be I cannot pretend to say, but certain it is that she was much interested; for the next morning she was sitting thoughtfully alone in the breakfast parlor, and looking anxiously towards the door every moment, as if expecting the entrance of a visitor.

At length the door was opened, and Mr. Pearson was announced. Mabel rose in a stately manner to receive him; but Pearson shook her hand heartily, with a joyous countenance seated her in a chair, and immediately drew another close beside her.

“Miss Gray,” said he, “never was love like yours! What devotion have I found at length in that bosom which was once so cold!”

“Sir!” said Mabel angrily.

“In my dream,” said Pearson; “O, of course, I meant in my dream. Methought I sat in an arbor covered with vine and jasmine. Mabel Gray was by my side, and smiling sweetly on me. A delicate repast was before us, and servants handed us flagons of wine. The fruits I love best were offered me by Mabel’s own hands. I was happy beyond expression. Suddenly the seats around the table were filled with men; and, methought too, that amongst the faces I recognised that of Mordaunt. Mabel Gray immediately left me, and attended to these new comers. To some she poured out wine—to others she handed their favorite fruits, talking and laughing with each one in turn, and scarcely bestowing a look on me. In the midst of this festivity a thick smoke arose, which after curling round many times, assumed by degrees the form of a large tiger, ready in one moment to dart on its prey. All were seized with fear and trembling, but none had power to move. And then methought the tiger spoke, and said: ‘Mabel Gray! you have twelve guests. Eleven are devoted, and must die. Make choice, therefore, of one to be saved; and see that you choose as you think—for not one of the others shall survive your decision! Mabel Gray grew deadly pale. Intense anxiety was depicted on the countenances of all. Not a moment was to be lost. She threw herself upon my neck—embraced me tenderly—and, imprinting a burning kiss upon my lips,—”

“A kiss, sir!” said Mabel, suddenly starting up; “a kiss!”

“’Twas in my dream!” said Pearson. “Remember, you

were not to interrupt. But, I have finished ; for with the kiss I awoke ; so whether the tiger devoured the others or not I have really no means of ascertaining."

"A pleasant dream, truly!" said Mabel laughing, and with the bloom on her cheek somewhat heightened in intensity. "It is entertaining, however, and shows the truth of the old adage, that dreams always go by contraries. But, Mr. Pearson, I have lost so much time with your silly story, that I am quite forgetting the chain for poor Mr. Mor-daunt."

Here she busied herself in searching for the neglected memento, and having found it, immediately commenced working upon it in a most industrious and praiseworthy style, until Mr. Oliver Pearson had taken his leave. Then she threw it down, leaned her face on her hand, and in a few moments was buried in meditation.

At the same time the next morning Mr. Pearson was announced ; but his appearance had undergone a complete change. He no longer wore a joyous look—nor did he enter the room briskly—nor draw his chair close to Miss Gray. He seated himself thoughtfully on the sofa, and heaved a profound sigh.

"Mr. Pearson," said Mabel Gray, "you seem melancholy. Have I been unkind—in your dreams?"

"To be treated coldly night and day by the only being I ever loved is too much to bear!" said Pearson. "Miss Gray, I have tasked myself beyond my powers. I imagined that I could force myself to dream that you loved me—but last night proved the deception. Not content with rejecting me, you actually laughed at my despair. Methought that—but I dare not trust myself to relate my dream. Suffice it to say, that my doom is sealed, and I

have nothing now to hope for. To-morrow I start for the Continent."

"To-morrow!" said Mabel, turning pale. "Leave us—do you say—to-morrow?"

"Yes," said Pearson: "why should I delay? You have pronounced my sentence of banishment—and I obey your will."

"Mr. Pearson," said Mabel; "you should not—nay, this is foolish! But I own I pity you, and to show it, come here, and I will tell you a dream I had last night."

Pearson drew his chair close by her side.

"I thought," said Mabel, smiling, "that I was standing at an altar, attired as a bride. The portraits of all my admirers were passed before me, so that I might freely choose; and, as soon as I had done so, the original was to present himself before me."

"Well," said Pearson, almost breathless with suspense; "and you chose whom?"

"Listen," said Mabel: "the portraits moved slowly along, and I anxiously awaited the appearance of one—the resemblance of him who alone had possession of my heart. At length it came, and I uttered the name—but alas, the original came not!"

"And the name," said Pearson eagerly, "the name was—"

"—Oliver Pearson," said Mabel, looking down and blushing.

"The original is here before you," said Pearson, rapturously taking her hand. "Mabel, do dreams always go by contraries?"

"Not always," said Mabel, sinking into his arms.

"You do love me then?" said Pearson—"and I am not treated with contempt?"

“Let this confirm it,” said Mabel, taking the doubtful chain from her bosom, and hanging it round his neck.

“And was this always intended for me?” inquired Pearson, smiling.

“At least,” said Mabel, “it was intended for no one else.”

MORAL.

A coquette cannot render her dupes more unhappy and contemptible than she renders herself; and as they suffer from too great belief in her perfection, so does she suffer from the same.



FABLE IX.

THE GENTLEMAN WHO HAD SEEN BETTER DAYS.

IT is bad to have an empty pocket ; but worse if accompanied by a shabby dress ; for then the pocket will surely remain empty. Miserable is the lot of one whose necessity betrays itself by outward and visible signs ! He is doomed to see the civility of the world and the gloss of his broad-cloth diminish in equal proportion ; to find white seams cause black looks ; and at last, to walk forth despised and thread-bare ! Calculate not, O romantic tyro, on merits that appeal to the mind : think of those that appeal to the eye ! A superfine Saxony coat is a stitched letter of introduction, better to be trusted than any satin-wove

imposition ever penned. Genius well dressed may, in time, be well lodged and well served : genius out at elbows will never do more than get the elbows patched.

Leaning pensively on a post, in one of the fashionable London squares, stood a gentleman who had seen better days.

This gentleman exhibited a well-made, well-worn, exceedingly-brown, black frock-coat. The collar, the elbows, the cuffs, were shining and greasy ; the button-holes were large and gaping, with frayed, undefined edges ; the silken lining of the skirts was faded, torn, and otherwise imperfect. Still all the buttons were present, the buckram had not quite lost its stiffness, and the entire garment had a decent, brushed appearance. It was, in fact, a coat that, when new, had been a good coat ; and, though now looking rather old, was evidently capable of looking much older. As for a waistcoat, the quality of that article, or indeed its existence at all, was rendered a matter of pure conjecture in consequence of the coat being buttoned closely. The trousers were of gambroon, and in color grey ; which grey had once been darker, but had approached gradually to an azure tint by repeated washing : they were strapped tightly down to a pair of extensive and palpably-patched bluchers. About his neck, the gentleman who had seen better days wore a long stock, whose tattered ends, though not ornamental, were useful in hiding dirty linen. His head was surmounted by a gossamer hat, which, if somewhat napless and out of shape, at least answered the hat's legitimate purpose of warding off the sun and rain. He carried, dangling in his right hand, one yellowish Berlin glove, cleverly disposed so as to look like two. He betrayed no sign of wristbands.

The gentleman who had seen better days stood leaning on a post; and as he stood, he muttered the following soliloquy :

“ Well, here I am rather down in the world, and no mistake ! What the devil shall I do next ? If that foolish rich widow had not slipped through my fingers, how differently should I have been situated ! A man of my talent should not be standing here doing nothing—but what *is* to be done ? ”

Here he struck his one glove against the fingers of his left hand in a dreamy, meditative manner. He thought over intently his chances and prospects in life. He resolved alternately to become an actor, a scientific lecturer, and a teacher of languages. Suddenly the great truth, which had not yet illumined him, burst upon his mind : *all depended on the state of his dress*. Was he, or was he not, too far gone for decent society ? If so, none of these professions could he hope to start in, and (supposing he did not cut his throat) he must certainly betake himself to something low, if not illegal. But how could he test this delicate point of decay ? How could he know at once, without possibility of error, whether the world in general regarded him as a gentleman or a ragamuffin ?

Whilst deliberating thus, the better-days gentleman looked up from the pathway, where his gaze had for some time been fixed, and looked out on the roadway of the square : the difficulty was solved at once.

A hundred yards or so distant was a crossing cleanly swept and superintended by a man who stood, broom in hand, on one side, to solicit toll from passers-over. Here was an opportunity to test his pretensions immediately, and discover accurately whether he might now consider him-

self a gentleman or a ragamuffin. If he passed over this crossing, and the sweeper followed him—swept the way before him—held out his hat—and hoped he'd remember the sweeper, why then, of course, there could be no doubt—he was a gentleman most decidedly: but if he passed over the crossing, and the sweeper remained on one side, inactive and seemingly unconscious of his transit—then, as decidedly, he was a ragamuffin: all hope to the contrary, after *that* hint, would be vain and ridiculous.

The better-days gentleman watched the progress of two or three prosperous gentlemen across, before he could himself summon courage enough to make the important trial. At last, pulling down his coat, settling his hat jauntily, and displaying his one glove ostentatiously, he advanced, with swaggering step and beating heart, to the spot. He entered on the crossing.

The street-sweeper leaned on his broom, earnestly engaged in conversation with an apple-woman.

The better-days gentleman walked very slowly, hemmed loudly, and audibly rattled three halfpence.

The street-sweeper remained in conversation with the apple-woman.

The better-days gentleman stopped short, turned fully round, and coughed twice, with his hand placed significantly in his pocket.

The street-sweeper broke off the conversation with the apple-woman, to attend to a little, fat, vulgar fellow who passed him and entered on the crossing. He followed him—he swept the way before him—he held out his hat—and hoped he'd remember the sweeper: the little, fat, vulgar fellow gave him nothing.

The gloomiest fears of our unfortunate hero were con-

firmed. The street-sweeper had pointedly neglected him, and bestowed his attention on those whom he thought more likely to reward his trouble. All was over—and the only choice now was beggary, crime, or death. He decided on the last, and rushed wildly towards Waterloo Bridge.

As he neared that structure, however, he began more coolly to consider, whether, indeed, the choice *were* only beggary, crime, or death. He was undeniably shabby; and therefore shut out from any respectable employment; but was there no employment, not exactly respectable perhaps, but still legal and lucrative, where his shabbiness would not plead against him—or even rather plead in his favor? It was the rule, doubtless, that if the pocket be empty, and the dress likewise be shabby, the pocket will remain empty. But every rule has exceptions, and a wise man would certainly discover an exception to this rule.

Suddenly his countenance lighted up with pleasure: he had discovered the exception to the rule. He rubbed his hands and chuckled, and walked away from Waterloo Bridge.

The next evening, he was holding forth to a large audience in a small room on the benefits of physical-force Chartism. His thread-bare coat told immensely—for he made it a point in his lecture, and traced it logically to the destroying influence of aristocracy. As time went on, however, and the two-pences at the door accumulated, he got a capital coat—so he dropped that part of the discourse. Often and often as he sat over his bottle of good wine, and feelingly and eloquently spoke on the wrongs and miseries of the industrious classes, would he bless the

happy thought that made him turn political agitator, and prevented him from throwing himself into the Thames.

MORAL.

Whilst fools are calling on razors, pistols, and cold water, to put an end to them and their misfortunes together, clever fellows are calling on invention and judgment to put an end to their misfortunes only.





FABLE X.

THE SELF-DENYING PLEASURE-SEEKER.

At the close of a sultry day in August, when the sunlight was slowly fading from the sky, and yielding to the mild splendor of the full harvest moon ; when the refreshing coolness and delicious calmness of the evening invited all who had sound limbs to walk the earth, and all who had sound lungs to breathe the air ; at this time, and in a spot surrounded by the most beautiful scenery in England, a young man lighted his lamp, closely shut his window, drew the curtain, and, opening a book, sat down at the table to read.

This young man did not consider himself mad—neither was he considered so by others. Let me, then, account for these mad proceedings.

Some three months before, he had been conveyed to the cottage where he now resided in so wretched a state of health that life could hardly be said to inspire him. By quiet, fresh air, and simple fare, he had been restored nearly to perfect convalescence ; but languor and dejection still remained—the residue of the utter mental and bodily prostration which had so lately passed away.

Walter Everett, the invalid, was by profession a Thinker, and had brought on his illness by the exercise of his profession. He had committed the double sin of overworking the brain, and underworking every other bodily organ, and the penance he suffered was severe in proportion. Reading and meditation carried to excess are as destructive, and quite as foolish, as other modes of dissipation.

On this particular evening, for the first time since his illness, he resolved to study as of old. The brightly-burning lamp—the shining white page—again were before him, and all his former feeling of subdued enthusiasm came back with the familiar appearances. The shaken nerves, the dim eyes, were forgotten ; and the study which had made them so was remembered only for the benefits it could yield.

But was there no one near to mark this rash self-will, and gently to remonstrate ? Lucy, who had sympathised with him in sickness and recovery—who had attended on and cheered him like a ministering angel—was near. She no sooner witnessed the closing of the window, the lighting of the lamp, and the opening of the book, than she stole

softly behind his chair, and bringing her pretty face over his shoulder, looked on the page with a playful, scornful air: "What is this, Walter?" said she; "philosophy? nonsense! Shut up your philosophy: we want none this evening."

"And why not this evening, dear Lucy?" asked Walter.

"Because I am determined that you shall not bring on a return of your illness," replied Lucy. "You have not studied now for six months—and you must begin this evening, forsooth! I'll not allow it."

"You are peremptory, Lucy!" said Walter with a smile.

"Peremptory!" exclaimed Lucy; "yes, it is enough to make any one peremptory. Tell me," continued she demurely, "have you not often declared that the great object of existence to a rational being is the discovery of the means of producing pleasure and the means of producing pain—the adoption of the first, and the rejection of the last; moreover, that a pleasure which is evidently inferior to another pleasure, or which is necessarily mixed up with, or followed by, a greater pain, should be avoided, and that only enjoyed which is in its nature of the highest and purest. Have you not declared all this—and more than this: a great deal more than I can either remember or understand?"

"Granted!" replied Walter, laughing. "Proceed, most philosophical madam!"

"Then, most unphilosophical sir," exclaimed Lucy, "I charge you with acting against your own doctrine. You have done so habitually, and, undeterred by experience, you wish to do so now."

“Ha, Lucy!” exclaimed Walter. “That is a serious charge indeed! Explain, my dear girl, explain!”

“I will,” said Lucy; “and undertake to convert you before I finish my discourse. A pleasure is not to be enjoyed, you say, which is evidently inferior to another pleasure, or which is necessarily mixed up with, or followed by, a greater pain. Now, what caused your illness, pray? Why, your violation of both these maxims. You secluded yourself eternally to read, as if reading were the highest pleasure in the world; and you read with such infatuated eagerness as to ruin your health. Was *this* conduct worthy of a rational being?”

“I plead guilty to the second count of your indictment,” said Walter; “but not to the first. I *did* read to excess, I own; but reading itself is certainly, to use your own words, a pleasure in its nature of the highest and purest.”

“Wait a little!” said Lucy, “I have not half done with you yet. I maintain that you injured your mental more than your bodily health, and have actually rendered yourself incapable of distinguishing between the different degrees of pleasure. You have read until you can relish nothing but reading. Your highest pleasure has become—the consideration of the means to arrive at pleasure. You have chased a desired thing so long, that you prefer the chase to the possession of the object chased. I accuse you of being a mere pleasure-seeker—a self-denying pleasure-seeker—who, with what he seeks within his grasp, seizes it not at once, but vainly schemes how to seize it in the cleverest way—or how to seize something else more distant, and therefore more attractive. You do not take the best, you know, but must first

ascertain that it is the best existing. Whilst common mortals are enjoying, you are reasoning about enjoyment."

"Go on, Lucy!" said Walter, smiling—but faintly.

Lucy continued:—"You have worn out your eyes, bent your shoulders, and confused your brain, by thinking, and the study of others' thinking. And for what? To be confuted by an untaught girl—even by your own poor Lucy! Ah, my dear philosopher, be advised! Do what I tell you—and you will never do wrong!"

"And what is that, Lucy?" inquired Walter. "Pronounce, my pretty instructress—for pupil I must call you no longer."

"Thus stands the case," said Lucy deliberately: "you have been laid up ill in this cottage for three months, and are now much recovered. The pleasure which I recommend to you, then, is—the enjoyment of this charming evening. It is a pleasure great in itself, and one that will be followed by no atoning pain. You should walk out, if circumstances allowed it; but this I do not recommend, because you are weak, and the injury caused by walking might be greater than the benefit."

"Logically put!" exclaimed Walter. "Say on, wisest of thy sex!"

"Well," continued Lucy, "what is the inference? The evening air being good for you, and you being unable to go out at the door to meet it, the rational course is that it should come in at the window to meet you. In other words, you must be careless and happy, instead of meditative and miserable. Here are two chairs by the window. You shall sit in one, and I will sit in the other; the casement shall be opened, and the book shall be shut; The lamp shall be put out, and the moonlight shall be let

in. Instead of looking on wearying letters, you shall look on trees, and grass, and flowers ; and you shall talk love to me, and not think philosophy to yourself. Is it agreed, Walter ?”

“No, no, Lucy,” exclaimed Walter : “you have painted the picture very temptingly—but I cannot realize it. We will not sit in the chairs by the window ; the casement shall not be opened ; the lamp shall not be put out ; I will not look on trees, and grass, and flowers ; and, hardest yet, I will not talk of love.”

“What do you bet that all these things will not come to pass ?” said Lucy, with an arch look.

“Bet !” exclaimed Walter ; “I am *sure* they will not !”

“But what do you bet ?” repeated Lucy pertinaciously.

“Oh, anything !” said Walter, “anything ! and I will give as long odds as you like. Against this embroidered note-book of yours, I will stake—let me see, what shall it be ?—a first-rate, double-action, Erard harp ; will that do ? It is a most magnanimous bet—considering that I am quite determined to win.”

“Done !” said Lucy ; and “Done !” said Walter.

The word had scarcely passed his lips, when Lucy, with a sudden and violent expiration, extinguished the lamp ; with a turn of her finger she closed the book ; and when he started from his seat, angry and astonished at this conduct, she threw her arms round his neck, and pulled him gently towards the window.

Here was the Gordian knot most ridiculously and ingloriously cut at once. It was impudent ! it was unbearable ! Walter struggled to release himself, and uttered various unpleasing exclamations of rage and defiance. But he could not hurt those tender arms ; and a silvery

laugh was so catching, and a charming and dearly-loved girl so irresistible, that he fairly gave in—yielded himself to his fate—and joined in the laugh with right good will. Lucy placed him in one chair by the window; then she drew the curtain, opened the casement, and sat herself down in the other chair. The moonlight streamed in, and displayed the trees, and grass, and flowers without.

Whether Walter talked love to Lucy, I know not; but I suspect that the wager was won in every particular, as Lucy certainly retained her note-book, and was shortly afterwards presented with a first-rate, double-action, Erard harp.

MORAL.

When pleasure hovers about your dwelling, open your casement in welcome; for it is most shy and capricious, and never fails to resent any sign of inhospitality.





FABLE XI.

THE GLOVED PHILANTHROPIST.

THE Honorable Augustus Morley was a great doer of small well-doings ; but in his own estimation, and the estimation of others generally, he passed for an enlightened and disinterested philanthropist. He subscribed to public charities, presided at public meetings, and attended public dinners ; all which facts being duly reported in the public newspapers, the Honorable Augustus Morley and the world were on excellent terms with each other.

He was an advocate for education—for household suf-

frage—for free trade. He was a Liberal—to a certain extent. He considered all men brothers—only some are elder and some younger brothers. Justice should reign over human affairs—in accordance with the present state of society. The upper classes should not trample too much on the lower classes—because it is not right, and not altogether safe. The rich should be contented—and the poor should be contented too. All should be virtuous—as far as their interest will permit.

Professing, and acting upon these generous and benevolent sentiments, what wonder that the Honorable Augustus Morley was a popular favorite! His aristocratic friends, indeed, called him a *leveller*, a *destructive*, and other hard names of the like nature; but these few cavillers were quite overborne by that all-powerful body called the public, who declared that a man who talked as *he* talked, and gave away money as *he* gave away money, must be a creature such as we do not see every day; a sort of improvement on the centaur—half angel and half man.

One fine May morning the Honorable Augustus Morley and his friend Mr. Drummond were walking together in the western suburbs of London. Their discourse was on the beauty of virtue.

“When I see the misery and the vice that prevail around me,” said the philanthropist, sighing, “I sometimes lose heart and exclaim, ‘what can the efforts of one do?’ To be sure I spend a great part of my income with the hope of benefiting my fellow creatures; but money will not accomplish everything, and ignorance and obstinacy present formidable obstacles to advancement.”

“How far would you wish advancement to proceed?” inquired Drummond.

“How far!” exclaimed Morley: “as far as is proper. One is born a lord—another is born a commoner; some are destined to work, and others to be worked for; some, too, work with the head, and others with the hand. I would wish to see as much knowledge, and happiness, and virtue, as is compatible with this inevitable state of things.”

“And no more?” said Drummond, smiling.

“No more is possible,” said Morley. “I am not visionary enough to expect any future Utopian state of society. Let us make the best of that we live in. There is ample opportunity for the display of all that is good in man.”

“And very considerable opportunity for the display of all that is bad,” said Drummond.

“Certainly,” replied Morley: “there would be no merit in virtue if temptation to vice did not exist. It is the struggle against temptation that tests principle.”

They had now arrived at a spot where one of those striking improvements for which the present day is so remarkable had lately been effected. Several mean houses, formerly inhabited by small dealers and the families of working people, had been removed, and their places occupied by handsome buildings which were in the course of erection, and intended for shops. One was to be a gin-palace, another a pawnbroker's, another an establishment for the sale of quack medicines, and another a tobacconist's and billiard-room. This change, of course, gave the neighbourhood a much more respectable appearance.

Mr. Drummond resumed his discourse with the philanthropist.

“See,” said he, pointing to the bricklayers who were at work on a scaffold: “see those men. How wide a difference between their condition and yours! Yet you tell me that a feeling of fraternity can exist between the upper and the lower classes. *Good-will* may exist—but not the warm desire to aid and to sympathize with each other which you seem to dream of.”

“And why not?” said Morley.

“Merely because they *are* the upper and the lower classes,” answered Drummond. “No: people of the same class may incline towards each other—but not those of different classes. The fear of condescending too far on the one side, and of presuming too far on the other, prevents effectually any exhibition of perfect sympathy.”

“All which I deny,” said Morley. “A man of birth and fortune can never truly degrade himself by doing what any good man should do; and the humbler classes know this, and depend on our assistance. An aristocrat, in my opinion, never appears to greater advantage than when descending for a time from his elevation.”

“And would you practise what you preach?” said Drummond, with a smile.

“Assuredly I would,” replied Morley. “For instance, you have pointed to the bricklayers on the scaffold there, and asked me if I could feel and evince perfect sympathy for them. I answer—yes. Perhaps many persons of my rank could not do so—but I despise the silly prejudices of station.”

“Then you would behave towards those bricklayers with as little hauteur as if you were one of themselves?” said Drummond, looking rather incredulous.

“Why not?” said Morley. “It is their destiny to

cement bricks together: it is mine to live at my ease. We each perform our duty, and should consider ourselves as brethren who are differently placed in this world, but who are not to feel estranged from each other on that account. Only let education spread, and all this will be seen clearly—the manners of the people will become refined—and a general good understanding will prevail. Envy on the part of the poor, and contempt on the part of the rich, will cease, as irritating and irrational.”

“When this comfortable creed is carried out and practised,” said Drummond, “I shall expect to see *you* practise it too—but not till then.”

“My dear friend,” said Morley, “remember, I am in advance of my time. I am known as a philanthropist, and leader in the cause of reasonable amelioration. I have a character to keep up, and it would never do if I shrank from the practice of my own theory. The gradations amongst mankind are necessary and highly beneficial; but any display of pride by the upper classes is as ridiculous as it would be with the lower classes. No,” continued the Honorable Augustus Morley, swelling under the double influence of philanthropy and philosophy: “not one of those poor fellows, so usefully engaged in laying bricks, could act towards me with greater zeal for my welfare than I would act towards him.”

Just as he uttered this sentiment, a laborer was passing along the scaffold: a rope broke—a board gave way—and the laborer was precipitated to the ground. Drummond ran hastily to his assistance, followed by Morley.

“How sudden! how dreadful!” exclaimed the philanthropist. “Is he much hurt?”

“Get a board, or something to lay him on,” said Drummond to the man’s fellow-laborers, who had gathered around : “he must be taken to the hospital.”

“I subscribe to St. George’s,” said Morley.

The board was procured, and they placed on it the body of the laborer, who was quite insensible, if dead. Then each of his comrades took a corner board on his shoulder, and stood ready to carry it, but there were only three to support the board—and a shoulder was required for the other corner.

Drummond led the Honorable Augustus Morley aside.

“Here is an opportunity to prove your principles,” said he. “Help to bear this your unfortunate brother to the hospital, and I will say that you are not only a theoretical but a practical philanthropist.”

“Why, really——” faltered Morley, rather disturbed, “this is too——no, gad! I can’t do *that*: anything in reason!”

“But you have a character to keep up,” urged Drummond. “Remember, ‘a man of birth and fortune can never truly degrade himself by doing what any good man should do.’”

“But my dress!” exclaimed Morley. “And how can I hold a dirty board with these white kid gloves?”

“Take them off,” said Drummond, laconically.

“Well, if I must—but this is really very odd!” exclaimed the philanthropist, looking as if he thought it very unpleasant too.

“Don’t know how we’re to get away poor Tom, sir,” said one of the men, touching his hat and addressing Drummond. “We’re only three, you see, and we want another hand.”

"My friend will assist you directly," said Drummond. "He is only taking off his gloves."

But those gloves were a long time in coming off. They were tight, certainly—and they had to be unbuttoned at the wrists—and very difficult they were to unbutton; so it happened that before the Honorable Augustus Morley could get off his white kid gloves, a vulgar fellow in a flannel jacket, a brown paper cap, and with no gloves at all, came running up, and at once commenced taking an active part in the proceedings.

"What's the matter?" cried he. "Anybody hurt? Want another hand? I'm your man!"

So saying, he placed the corner of the board on his shoulder, and prepared to depart without further ceremony.

"My good fellow," said Morley, "we are much obliged for your aid. Here is half-a-crown."

"No, no, master," said the man in the flannel jacket: "no money now: thank you, just the same. I'll carry our friend here for love, and if I'm ever hurt myself, I hope somebody will do as much for me."

With these words the ungloved philanthropist and the three bricklayers moved off, bearing with them their unfortunate brother.

It is a remarkable fact that, as soon as they had proceeded to some little distance, the Honorable Augustus Morley took off his white kid gloves—and that with all the ease possible—and, rolling them into a hard ball, threw them with the most mortified air to the very bottom of a deep pit hard by. Mr. Drummond said not a word.

In the course of the next fortnight the Honorable Augustus Morley expended three hundred pounds in

charity—founded an entirely new society—attended six meetings, and four public dinners ; but his countenance did not resume its usual self-satisfied expression for nearly a month afterwards.

MORAL.

More brotherly deeds would be done in the world, if people were only less fearful of—soiling their white kid gloves.





FABLE XII.

THE LOVEFUL DISCIPLINE.

Four months had flown swiftly away since Edward Somerton married Rose Bland. One summer evening, towards sunset, as they sat together at a window opening on to a garden, enjoying the welcome coolness and talking over various matters, with that interest in each other which people generally evince four months after marriage, Rose, for the first time, began to pout. Edward had, she said, flirted shamefully with Mrs. Harding on the preceding evening. He had spoken to her in a low tone several times, and had been heard publicly to declare that Harding was a fortunate fellow. If this were the way he meant to go on, she should be wretched, and no longer place any confidence in his affection.

“My pretty dear,” said Edward, placing his arm around the waist of his wife, and accompanying this action by another trifling performance, “don’t be jealous. Believe me there is no cause. On one of the occasions when I addressed Mrs. Harding in so low a tone, I remarked that the room was very warm ; and on another, if I remember rightly, I observed that the last new novel was rather dull : so, you will perceive, our conversation was really of a most innocent description. And, Rose, because I said Harding was a fortunate fellow, it is not to be inferred that I must endeavor to render him an unfortunate fellow.”

This mild answer failed to turn away the wrath of Rose. She coquettishly refused to be convinced, became every instant more and more violent and unreasonable, and finally retired precipitately from the room, with her handkerchief applied to her eyes.

Edward quietly put up his feet on the chair she had left vacant, and leaned back in meditation.

Here was the decisive moment which would most likely determine whether they were to dwell together for the future happily or miserably. Rose was a dear girl—a sweet girl ; but she had black eyes, and they are dangerous. She had been an only daughter, too, and perhaps a little spoiled ; but with fewer faults might she not have been less charming ? It is worth studying how to live lovingly with such a creature, especially when you know that she mars, by her capriciousness, her own happiness as much as yours.

Edward felt that the charge of his wife was totally unfounded, and he half suspected that she believed so herself, but had resolved to be, or seem, out of humor without any particular cause. One thing was evident—that she would not hear reason. Something else must

therefore be tried, in order to allay any future storm—for this was probably the first of a series. Edward resolved to try music.

He was an amateur of some pretension, and he set himself immediately to call over in his memory the melodies most likely to calm the passions and exert a soothing effect on the temper. He made choice of *three*, which he arranged in a graduated scale, to be used according to the urgency of the occasion: gentle, more gentle, and most gentle, as the outbreak was, or became, violent, more violent, or most violent. The scale contained only three degrees. As the heat rose, this conjugal thermometer fell; but below the third and lowest degree all was zero and undefined mystery. Patience acted the part of, mercury reversed.

The melodies were the following, and were arranged in the following order: "In my cottage near a wood," "Sul margine d'un rio," and "Home, sweet home!" They were all of a pleasing, touching character; the last purely domestic, and under the circumstances, conveying a delicate satire likely to do good. He had hitherto played these popular airs on the German flute; but he proposed now to execute them in a graceful, apparently unpremeditated, whistle. Not such a whistle as may be heard in the streets proceeding from the lips of vulgar and coarse-minded butcher-boys, but a superior sort of thing, such as no gentleman need be ashamed of. In fact, the original, wild production cultivated and improved, as the crab is changed into the pippin.

His plan thus settled, Edward felt his mind easy, and he awaited the re-appearance of Mrs. Somerton with a gratifying consciousness of being ready for whatever might occur.

In due time came coffee. The injured lady came too,

and with a placid countenance, betraying no lingering evidence of its late unamiable expression. Neither husband nor wife made any allusion to their misunderstanding, and they passed a delightful evening made up of conversation, the pianoforte, and chess.

But the next morning—the very next morning, Rose favored her dear Edward with number two of the series. She wanted him to walk out with her, and he declared that, unfortunately, he should be too busy to go out all day. This was quite sufficient raw material for a girl of spirit to work upon.

“I’m sure you don’t want to go, Edward,” said she, pouting in exact imitation of fit number one. “At least, you don’t want to go with *me*.”

Edward plunged both hands into the pockets of his dressing-gown—threw himself indolently on a sofa—gazed abstractedly at a bronze bust of Shakspeare on the mantel-piece—and began whistling in a low tone a plaintive melody: it was “In my cottage near a wood.”

“If it were any one but your *wife*,” continued Mrs. Somerton with pointed emphasis, “you would be ready enough to come; but the *wives* are always neglected!”

Mr. Somerton continued whistling.

“I beg, Mr. Somerton,” exclaimed Mrs. Somerton, with a withering look, “that you will not whistle in that very disagreeable manner whilst I am speaking. If I am not worthy of your love, I trust I am worthy of common attention.”

Edward plunged his hands deeper into his pockets—removed his eyes from the bust of Shakspeare—and fixed them in intense regard on a bust of Milton. He paused suddenly in the air he was whistling, and commenced another: it was “Sul margine d’un rio.”

Mrs. Somerton retired hastily, with her pretty face buried in a white cambric pocket-handkerchief.

For five whole days after this scene all was halcyon weather. Doves might have beheld and envied. Honey was still to be found in the moon, and no impolitic reference to either of the two foolish quarrels gave any, the slightest, dash of bitter.

But—on the *sixth* day, there appeared clouds. Edward had been into town, and had promised to bring a pair of new bracelets for Rose. He arrived home punctually at dinner-time, but without the bracelets—he had forgotten them. I put it to you whether this was not enough to try the temper of a saint? They were going the next evening to a large party, and Rose had intended to inspect the important ornaments this evening, and take Edward's opinion, so that there might be time to exchange them if not approved of. Now she could not do so—and all from his horrid forgetfulness! She must either go in stupid, old-fashioned things, or put on new ones in a hurry, good or bad, just as they happened to be. It was most annoying—that it was!

Edward made many apologies. He was sincerely sorry to have disappointed her, and even offered to return to town after dinner and repair his neglect. Oh, no! she would not hear of his taking so much trouble for *her*. What did he care whether *she* were disappointed or not? His forgetfulness showed how much he thought of her.

Edward again essayed the soothing system; for he loved her, and was conscious that he had given her cause for some slight chagrin. However, she became so perverse that but one course was left him to pursue: he left off talking, and took to whistling.

I tremble for the future peace of Rose whilst I relate

that he considered himself justified in descending at once to the second degree of the scale. He commenced, *andante ma non troppo*, "Sul margine d'un rio."

"To leave me in such a situation!" exclaimed the ill-used wife, in a voice interrupted by sobs, "when I had so set my heart on those bracelets! It is very, very unkind, Edward!"

Edward appeared wrapped in meditation and music. He whistled with great taste and feeling, accenting the first note of each bar as it should be accented. But, upon another still more cutting observation from Mrs. Somerton, he stopped short—looked sternly at her—and began "Sweet home!"

Heavens! what was to follow? He had reached the last degree, and all else was at random. Should this fail, the case was indeed hopeless. Shadowy demons hovered around, holding forth, temptingly, deeds of separation. The bright gold wedding-ring on the lady's finger grew dull and brassy.

Edward Somerton stood in the centre of the room, with his arms folded, gazing with a steady gaze into the very soul of his wife, who, under the strange fascination, could not turn away her head. With a clear and untremulous whistle he recited the whole of that beautiful Sicilian melody from the first note to the last. Then, revolving slowly on his heel, without saying a word he left the room, shutting the door punctiliously after him. Mrs. Somerton sank overpowered on the sofa.

Rose, though pretty, was not silly. She saw clearly that she had made a mistake, and, like a sensible girl, she resolved not to go on with it merely because she had begun it. Bad temper, it seemed, would only serve to

make her ridiculous instead of interesting—and that was not altogether the effect desired.

In half an hour the husband and wife met at the dinner-table. Mrs. Somerton sat, smilingly, at its head, and was very attentive in helping Mr. Somerton to the choicest morsels. He was in unusually high spirits, and a more happy small party could scarcely be met with.

From that day (which was ten years ago) to the present time, Mrs. Somerton has never found fault without cause. Once or twice, indeed, she has gone so far as to look serious about nothing; but the frown left her countenance at once when Edward began to whistle, in a low tone, and as if unconsciously, the first few bars of "In my cottage near a wood."

MORAL.

Petulance is a contagious disorder of so peculiarly sympathetic a nature that, if not communicated to others, it soon dies away in the person affected. A gentle and cooling course of treatment is best for the patient, and most likely to preserve the physician from taking the malady.





FABLE XIII.

THE ABIDING VEIL OF MERIT.

It is difficult enough to rise from obscurity to celebrity, whatever may be the amount of talent which claims notice. The unwillingness is powerful with the public generally to recognise any new candidate for their favor; and with a particular class of the public, usually called "your friends," the unwillingness is so powerful as to yield only to the force of imitation. When all the rest of the world has found out and acknowledged that there is something in you, *they* suddenly do the same, and are moreover struck by a total forgetfulness of ever having failed in that respect. They *always said* that you were destined

to do great deeds, and gave you good advice—which they are happy to see that you have followed. They remember how absent you were in company—and what a habit you had of looking on the ground—and how long you wore your hair—and how you liked music—and how you hated roast mutton—and all these things were signs of genius, and they knew it. So, from being almost your enemies, your friends are more than ever your friends, and bore you perhaps as much by their zeal as they once piqued you by their indifference.

But though the public generally, and your friends particularly, are averse to acknowledge your claims to consideration, there is one especial class of the community which strives the hardest against conviction, and is the last to give way. These are people who have known you in your earliest youth; who have seen you grow up beneath their eyes; who have witnessed you change your frock for a jacket, and that again for a long-tailed coat; who have marked your progress in cricket, from the time when you went in last and were bowled out the first ball, to that glorious period when you scored your twenty runs and saw out nearly the whole of your side; who have patted you approvingly on the head when, at peg-in-the-ring, you split your playmate's top in two, and made the peg fly for three hundred yards, at least; who have smiled as you exhibited your enormous bag of marbles, and required you to define the relative proportions of allies, stonies, and commonies; who, in short, have sympathized with you all through childhood up to hobby-di-hoyhood—from the ostentatious sucking of lollipops to the stealthy smoking of your first cigar.

But when, at this ominous age, you turn your attention

to manly pursuits, those who once sympathized with you, sympathize no longer. They are perfectly prepared to admit your genius for cricket, peg-in-the-ring, and marbles; but that you should ever be able to baffle a disease, conduct a cause, preach a sermon, write a book, or manage a business, is quite another thing, and altogether beyond their comprehension. They have always been accustomed to think of you as a boy, and they rather insist that you should always remain a boy—not to confuse their thoughts. The conviction is forced upon them, indeed, that you are a great boy; but a great boy is not a man—much less a great man. They wink at the surtout; they tolerate the whiskers; but for the owner of these manly appendages to imagine himself capable of obtaining a place and consideration amongst men, really makes them a little angry. They cannot conceive that people will trust you with life or property, or condescend to be instructed by you: not that you want talent—but you are so young and inexperienced. In a few years, indeed, you may be able to do something; but at present (they gently insinuate) you are wrong to attempt it. Industry and humility are recommended, and meanwhile (you are told) they will not forget you. In fact, by the time they have thoroughly digested the truth, that you are no longer a boy, they will be willing to aid you in your new condition as a man.

This is the class which will do the least for you; and it is the very class which, in your ignorance, you believe will do the most. As you learn the world's lesson, however, you find that though the public is sceptical as to any merit you may possess, your friends are still more so, and the friends of your childhood the most sceptical of all. As a maxim, and to state the case definitely, of all people

in creation expect the least from *people who have known you in your pincloth.*

Short-sighted and prosaic are those who look on the pincloth only as a covering worn by children for the prudent guarding of holiday garments. The memory of the abomination pursues its victim long after the actual presence has ceased, and as that proved a veil of all personal merit, so does this of all mental. No : if you wish for success, appeal to the universal people, and ultimately you will obtain justice ; but, unless you do so, you will never be more than a "promising young man," with *people who have known you in your pincloth.*

Henry Maitland was the only son of a worthy couple who resided in a small English town. At the age of sixteen he was bound to a druggist, and after dispensing medicines for a time, he proceeded to London in order that he might study regularly for the medical profession. Here, in spite of occasional porter-drinking, tobacco-smoking, knocker-pulling, billiard-playing, and other student-like eccentricities, he managed to lay up a good store of knowledge. Instead of reading, as most of his comrades did, for the facts only, he went a little farther and entered the region of theory. He mounted from effect to cause, and was as often borne by unborrowed as borrowed wings : whilst he was outwardly a mere jovial, careless, clever student, he was in reality well versed in his profession and a profound and original thinker.

Now came the period when he left London and returned to his native town. Great was the wonder at the change which had taken place in his appearance and manners. He had grown stouter—and his hair was darker—and his address was self-possessed and easy, and not embarrassed

as it used to be. Presently, due notice was given that Henry Maitland was a member of the medical profession, and was perfectly ready to bleed, blister, or otherwise torture, any person who might require to be so treated. The notice was given again and again—but no patients presented themselves. People either did not fall ill—or got well again by themselves—or were cured by other practitioners, for in no single instance did Henry Maitland contribute to the health of the town. The town had *known him in his pincloth.*

“It is our duty of course, my dear, to push Henry,” said Mrs. Maitland to Mr. Maitland, “but, la! I don’t wonder at folks not feeling inclined to employ a young man like him. One will run any hazard, you know, for the sake of one’s own child, and to set a good example, or I’m not quite sure I should feel over-inclined myself. Why, it seems only yesterday that he was *a little fellow in a pincloth.*”

“About calling in this young Maitland,” said the Reverend Peter Pew to his housekeeper; “I really don’t know what to say. Maitland is a well-meaning man, I believe, though some of his opinions are highly reprehensible and dangerous, and the son, I hear, is clever and a tolerable Latin scholar. To be sure, I am sadly troubled with indigestion, and have fallen off lamentably in my appetite; but I should not choose to have my stomach tampered with by a tyro. Mrs. Leech, a glass of your excellent cherry-brandy! Ah, my dear madam, you were a good physician when this young Æsculapius was *an urchin playing about in his pincloth.*”

“Maitland is a capital fellow and a capital surgeon, I’ve no doubt,” said Mr. Archibald Self to his friend Mr. Soft;

but I don't see why I should volunteer to prove him. Because he was my school-fellow, he thinks, now I've a house of my own, that I ought to patronise him—but I don't see how that follows. Ah! he was a merry dog at school! I remember once he was whipped for tying a lighted cracker to old Birchemwell's tail. Then he was a prime hand at all our games: I remember once he pushed me into a bonfire. Well, I hope he may get on, I'm sure—for I've known him ever since he was a *dirty little blackguard in a pincloth!*"

"So, brother," said Mr. Scalpel, the old-established surgeon, to his fellow-practitioner Mr. Lint; "so, we have a new rival; and I warrant you he means to make us shake in our shoes. We may throw our physic to the dogs, at once, and retire to enjoy our *otium cum dignitate*. Young Maitland, sir, young Maitland, has come to ruin us both, and give this highly-favored town all the benefit of his transcendent genius and knowledge. Why, he hasn't been in London long enough to learn anything of his profession; and I dare say, during the little while he *was* there, he spent more time in the lobbies of the theatres than the wards of the hospitals. I'll wager he studied Walter Scott a great deal harder than ever he studied Celsus, and was apter at dissecting a devilled kidney, than a human subject. Then he's full of new-fangled notions, I hear, and swears by phrenology, and nonsense of that sort. I tell you what, my good sir, the young men now-a-days have no more modesty and respect for their superiors than would go on the point of a lancet! Who is this Henry Maitland? Why a youth that you and I, Lint, remember a *little child in a pincloth.*"

"I'm hanged if this isn't too bad!" said Mr. Timothy

Radd to his assistant, Giles. "Here's that puffed-up, aristocratic humbug, Maitland, been here this morning bothering me about his son the surgeon. He thinks, because he buys a pound of tea at my shop once a year, that he's to take up my time, I suppose! Why didn't he put his son to some good trade, instead of bringing him up to starve and act the gentleman? Ah! as great as young Mister Maitland thinks himself now, *I* remember the time when I used to whip him out of my sugar-casks. He sports a slap-up Taglioni coat now: *I* remember the time when he wore a *brown holland pincloth!*"

"Mr. Henry Maitland is a very nice young man," said Miss Witherly to her bosom friend, Miss Oldish; "but, in my lone, unprotected situation, I fear it would not be proper to let him visit me. *You* know, my dear Lavinia, how reports get abroad. There's that envious creature, Miss Scann, has been saying everywhere that I favor, indelicately favor, the advances of young Scamply. Miss Wallflower, too, (I have it from good authority) has offered to take her oath that I am forty. Really, my dear Lavinia, the malice of my own sex is too much for my poor nerves! I'm afraid—quite afraid—to call in Mr. Maitland; though, indeed, I don't know whether I should like to trust him with the management of my strange, delicate constitution. The young man is clever, I dare say—but he *is* young. I assure you, Lavinia, I am old enough to remember him *a pretty little curly-headed boy in a pincloth.*"

There was a vacancy for a surgeon to the Poor-law Union. The duties were heavy, and the salary was thirty pounds per annum; but Henry Maitland thought it worth contending for. He canvassed most industriously

and, as he hoped, successfully, and when the time arrived for going up to the poll he was in high spirits. During the first hour he was ahead of his rivals, but after that he gradually sank, and finally settled in the lowest place of all. At the close of the poll the numbers were as follow :—

Jackson	742
Thomson	711
Dickson	503
Maitland	326

“ Ah, sir,” said an independent voter to his friend, another independent voter, “ it was foolish of young Maitland to try—very foolish ! He couldn’t expect to stand against the old’uns—let alone Dickson, which I’ve heard is a mighty clever chap. Harry Maitland ! Lord, sir, it’s only the other day he was running about a *mischievous young vagabond in a pincloth.*”

Mr. Maitland shook his head, and Mrs. Maitland sighed greatly, as they contemplated the discouraging results which had hitherto attended all attempts to procure Henry a practice. Henry himself said little, and was continually locked up in his room ; until, at the end of some months, he demanded a formal audience of his father. It lasted for two hours ; and the next morning Henry was on his way to London. He had written a book, embodying some of his medical notions, and now set out on a pilgrimage to seek a publisher. If this project failed, he resolved to emigrate to America, and try his fortune amongst the free and enlightened republicans.

He arrived in London. His first application was to the most extensive medical publisher in the metropolis

and, to the unutterable surprise and delight of Henry, it was successful. He had become so accustomed to disappointment, that he expected it as a matter of course, and, though he listened, he rather doubted the evidence of his senses.

"Sir," said the bookseller to the author, "I like your work. It is original in conception and clever in treatment. I cannot give you much for it, as you have yet made no name for yourself; but I will give you as much as I can, and I'm greatly mistaken if you remain obscure any longer." *The bookseller had never known him in his pincloth.*

"In conclusion," said a celebrated review to its readers, "we recommend this book strongly, because of all books, in the present state of medical science, it is of the sort most wanting. Its author, we believe, destined to obtain eminence in his profession, and in the meantime we charge him not to let his pen lie unemployed." *The reviewer had never known him in his pincloth.*

Maitland soon owned a house in a fashionable metropolitan district, with a brass plate on the door, and a livery servant in the hall. He was a consulting surgeon, and, what is more, a consulted surgeon. His name was famous, and Maitland's advice was infallible.

"Oh, Maitland!" said everybody to everybody; "a great man—a very great man! Quite at the top of his profession! Carriages at his door all day long. Everybody consults him!" *Everybody had not known him in his pincloth.*

"Papa," said Maitland's first-born Willie one morning, "I'm getting a great boy now: mayn't I leave off my pincloth for good?"

Maitland smiled at the artless question of the child, who suspected not how much was implied by that familiar word. He took Willie on his knee—drew his chair close to his charming wife—and with a countenance half in merriment and half in sadness delivered the following

MORAL :

The physical veil is but symbolical of the mental ; and long after the material covering has passed away, the immaterial essence will remain. The friends of your childhood are prone, till your hair turn grey, to consider you still but *a boy in a pincloth*.





FABLE XIV.

THE TOSS-UP.

IN the tap-room of the Black Bull, seated at a table on which foamed a newly-drawn pot of porter, were Tom Doyle and Frank Evans.

They were youths approaching manhood ; of nearly the same age and the same worldly station ; but in aspect most different. Friends were they of a three weeks' friendship ; and they sat now at that tap-room table talking over their affairs in a confidential, friendly manner.

Tom Doyle was known by that unceremonious appellation to a large, but doubtfully-respectable, circle of acquaintance. He had passed his whole life in London, and the greater part in the streets of London. He had

received such an education as the streets of London supply, but very little other. The shifts of poverty had given him cunning; slight, but perpetual, skirmishes with the law of the land had given him a taste for law-breaking; cold, heat, hunger, thirst, contempt, ill-usage, and disease, had given him fortitude to bear whatever should happen. He had an old-young look, and seemed an unnatural combination of the boy and the man: the careless follies of immaturity conjoined with the calculating vices of maturity.

Frank Evans had been brought up away from towns. Fresh air, green fields, spreading trees, clear streams, were things familiar to him. He had not been accustomed to walk continually in crowds, and thread his passage through lines of eager faces. Money-making was less obtrusively carried on, and the great struggle of one human being with another for existence was not so palpable. He was healthful, rather simple, not very industrious, of undecided character. Totally ignorant of what is called "the world," he was about equally liable to be turned to good or evil. Hitherto he had been chiefly subjected to beneficial influences; but a three weeks' intimacy with Tom Doyle had not been without its effect.

The intimacy was brought about thus:—

Doyle was one morning standing on London-bridge with his hands inserted in his pockets, and whistling as he contemplated the departure of the Margate steamer from the wharf below. Whilst so engaged another spectator placed himself by his side, and gazed on the proceeding with an earnest curiosity that contrasted remarkably with his own unenjoying, languid glance. This

spectator was Frank Evans. A conversation ensued, by which Doyle learned from the communicative stranger that he had come to London only a few days before—that he had run away from his native village in consequence of a quarrel with his parents—and that he was now staying with an uncle at Bermondsey, who was exerting himself to make up matters.

From this day Doyle and Evans often met. The London youth undertook with great kindness to instruct his country friend in some of the ways of the metropolis, and the latter undertook to furnish the money, as far as his own resources and his uncle's bounty would allow. But now an epoch had arrived in their intercourse. Doyle wished Evans to join the coterie of Ned Farrance, an enterprising individual who did much business of an illegal, but productive, character. He the more strongly urged the proceeding, as he had himself resolved, after some scruples, to enter on the business himself. To this proposition Evans objected, in the first place, that he did not like it abstractedly; and in the second place, that his uncle had offered to procure him the situation of light-porter at a merchant's counting-house; which might lead to a seat in the counting-house itself, and that to opulence and consideration. They agreed to discuss the matter quietly over a pot of porter in the tap-room of the Black Bull.

"Why Frank," said Doyle, "I'm ashamed of you—strike me lucky if I an't! What's the odds if there is a little danger or so with Ned?—it's a blessed sight better than being a muff of a porter in an infernal old cheating counting-house."

"Come, Tom, no bad language," said Evans. "You

may be right, but I don't feel so sure of it. If I refuse to take this situation, my uncle will turn me out of doors—that I know."

"And what of that?" said Doyle. "Other people has doors I s'pose. I'd pretty soon turn myself out of his doors, if it was me."

"Well, Tom," said Evans, "I'll tell you what I'll do to settle it one way or the other. We might talk here all night and I shouldn't make up my mind. I'll toss you for it: heads, I go to the merchant—tails, I go to Ned! Lend me a halfpenny!"

"I lend you!" exclaimed Doyle. "A likely thing I can lend you! I lost my last halfpenny at skittles, two hours ago?"

"And I paid my last halfpenny for this pot of porter," said Evans; "and my uncle has sworn to give me no more unless I'm obedient. Dash it, I shall be obliged to go to Ned for want of a toss-up to give the counting-house a chance!"

Here he fumbled in successive pockets with the view of placing his destitution beyond doubt. He found each empty, until, in the last of all—the left waistcoat pocket—in the extreme left corner, his finger encountered something having the feel of a coin. He drew it forth, and displayed an old, battered, verdigris-covered farthing. It had remained there unnoticed—but now it was to decide on a life-time.

"Ah, ah!" exclaimed Evans, joyfully, "here is what shall tell us. Now, see fair play! Remember, head is for the merchant, and tail is for Ned—and here goes!"

The coin spun in the air and descended on the table—it was head.

"The merchant for ever!" exclaimed Evans.

"Toss again and hold your noise!" said Doyle, sullenly. The coin spun in the air and descended on the table—it was tail.

"Ned for ever!" exclaimed Doyle.

"Now for the last toss!" said Evans.

His heart beat fast—the room seemed to swim round with him—and his knees trembled. His previous reckless calmness had disappeared, and he was wound up to an intense pitch of anxiety. He did not allow himself to wish either way, or if so it amounted to but half a wish. He tossed up the farthing for the last time.

The coin spun in the air and descended on the table—it was head.

"Damnation!" muttered Doyle, through his teeth.

Evans spoke not a word. He was very pale, and his eyes were fixed on the ground.

"But hang it, man," said Doyle, "you don't mean to say you call the thing settled, because the cursed old farthing came heads instead of tails?—come, we'll talk it over."

"No, Doyle," said Evans: "I am fixed. I swear solemnly that if the result had been contrary, I would have acted on it with equal rigidness. Our fates would then have been one and the same—as it is, we must see each other no more. A dirty brass farthing has decided my course of life!"

And, at the door of the Black Bull that evening, Tom Doyle and Frank Evans shook hands—parted—and went in different directions. They never met again.

Tom Doyle took to petty larceny. He proceeded from that to burglary; and one night, having imbibed rather too much, he quarrelled with a comrade, and struck him so heavily on the head that his comrade never moved afterwards. Tom Doyle was hanged in the Old Bailey at

eight o'clock on a misty morning, to the great amusement of a select company of both sexes.

Frank Evans became a light-porter—afterwards a clerk—afterwards a partner. His industry was exemplary; his honor was unimpeachable; and paper bearing the signature of Stirling and Evans was taken with as much confidence as that issued by the Bank of England.

Great is the reward of virtue, and striking is the punishment of vice! Tom Doyle lies dead and unprayed for—and Mr. Francis Evans is alive, and rides in his coach. Yet if, on that memorable evening at the Black Bull, Mr. Francis Evans had been a little more persuadable, or had not found the farthing, or the farthing had turned up tail, he might have been hanged like Tom Doyle, and might now lie dead and unprayed for, instead of being alive and riding in his coach.

MORAL.

Life is a brass farthing; and, in the toss-up between Fate and each human being, high birth and low birth, riches and poverty, wisdom and folly, learning and ignorance, virtue and vice, are but other names for *head and tail*.





FABLE XV.

THE MAN OF HONOR.

THE cloth was drawn, the wine and dessert were put on, and Frederick Willis, seated at the head of his table, looked on as merry a set of fellows as ever were gathered round mahogany.

The master of the feast was twenty-two years of age, and possessed twice as many thousand pounds as he numbered years. To be young is pleasant enough—but to be both young and rich is extreme happiness. The father of Frederick Willis not only gave his son life, but bequeathed him money enough to enjoy life. If it be unlawful to pray for the soul of such a father, it is a great deficiency

in the Protestant religion, and a sad denial to grateful heirs. A very rational mode of gratitude indeed it is to bask in your sunny destiny, and spiritedly spend the money; but an occasional libation to the donor in heaven is graceful and gentlemanly. It can do you no harm—and who knows what good it may do you? Your rich uncle may be pleased.

Frederick Willis had but lately begun his career. So far he had proceeded with moderation and good sense; but a danger threatens him this evening. On his right hand is seated Captain Fitz Osborne, a newly made acquaintance, and one not very creditable.

Captain Fitz Osborne was a tall and stout man. His appearance was comically ferocious. Nature had intended him for a fool only—but he had succeeded, by much study and pains, in superadding the bully. He had a loud voice, a swaggering gait, an imperious eye, and a large and well-dyed pair of black moustaches, which he had a habit of continually twirling with his thumb and fore-finger. He was a soldier by profession, and a gambler as an amateur. He could not live on his pay, and he thought dexterity in play as easy and honorable a way of increasing his income as any other. The result proved his judgment correct. His purse was always well stored, and he was received without scruple into the best society.

Just about this time, however, suspicions were whispered about, in a very low tone indeed, that the gallant Captain was more indebted to his finesse than to his dexterity or good fortune for his success, and that in fact he was little better than a black-leg. As these suspicions were whispered in so low a tone, the Captain, of course, was not obliged to hear them; but though he betrayed no

cognizance of such disagreeable reports, he was too well aware of their circulation, and felt that the time had come for a grand *coup de main*, and retirement from play.

He marked out Frederick Willis as the victim. Forty thousand pounds were here in the hands of a very inexperienced keeper, and he hoped that it would be no difficult matter to transfer this snug fortune to the custody of himself, who well knew its value. He contrived to get introduced to young Willis, and soon after he contrived to lose to him no less a sum than three thousand pounds. It was following dinner, and much champagne, at the Captain's own lodgings, that this artful loss took place, and Fitz Osborne could scarcely forbear laughing as he saw Willis depart in a delirium of joy at this his first successful stroke in gaming. The Captain was invited by Willis in return. Two or three friends, he said, would meet him, but this should not prevent him from giving him his revenge. Fitz Osborne assented to this arrangement cheerfully. He made up his mind to lose again, but to a small extent, so as not to excite attention in those present; then, with another quiet evening at his own lodgings, he calculated on finishing the business. It was essential to be prompt; for though Willis, he trusted, had not yet heard the reports to his prejudice, there was every danger that he would do so before long.

And now the second evening of this well-arranged series was in progress. The cloth was drawn, the wine and dessert were put on, and after-dinner had commenced.

Jest, laughter, and song followed. At last appeared coffee; and Frederick, knocking on a plate with the handle of a fruit-knife, by way of obtaining silence, said:

"Gentlemen, if you please, we will adjourn to the drawing-room, where you will find card-tables, chess-tables, and all other sorts of tables. My friend the Captain is so enamored of the sound of a dice-box, that he is resolved to hear its music for half an hour or so in company with me—though I assure you the other evening the tune must have been anything but pleasant to him. So *allons*, and each to his vocation."

A shout of approval was the answer. The host and guests, deserting the dining-room, in a few moments were seated at cards, or whatever other amusement they preferred. Fitz Osborne and Willis took up their position at a small table by themselves.

There were two things that caused the Captain some regret: firstly, he had taken rather too much wine—and secondly, Willis had not taken quite enough. Still affairs went on prosperously. He lost, and Willis won, as he had intended. But he could not account for a quiet, sarcastic sort of smile, which he detected after some time on the countenance of his antagonist, and which seemed very unlike the unrestrained expression of triumph he had evinced when they last played together. Whilst he was throwing and cogitating Frederick suddenly addressed him:

"How much have I won, Captain?" asked he.

"Oh, my dear fellow, a trifle!" replied Fitz Osborne. "Two hundred or thereabouts; but I mean to win it back, I can tell you."

"I play no more," exclaimed Willis, throwing himself back in his chair, and folding his arms.

"Oh, as you please—as you please, certainly," said

Fitz Osborne. "But why baulk your good fortune, when you have it all your own way?"

"I believe I won three thousand pounds of you on Wednesday evening?" said Frederick, not attending to the Captain's disinterested inquiry.

"Yes, my dear friend, about that," said Fitz Osborne, looking rather disturbed. "But what means all this?"

"There is the money," said Frederick, presenting three bank-notes. "The two hundred pounds which I have just won, I decline to receive."

"What does this mean, sir?" exclaimed the Captain, in a tone which betrayed the struggle between dismay and anger.

"It means, sir, that I have discovered your clever little plot," replied Frederick, smiling contemptuously. "The only thing required for success was, that I should be as great a fool as you thought me. So you lost purposely; and no doubt, when you had excited me enough, I was to pay at least a thousand per cent. for the loan. Sir, I had not been seated with you five minutes this evening, when I discovered plainly that you were cheating me."

Captain Fitz Osborne rose slowly from his chair, twirled his left, and then his right moustache, looked fiercely and defyingly at the bystanders, and, turning to Willis, exclaimed in a loud voice: "You shall repent this, sir. I am a man of honor, and, whilst I have an arm, no man shall question that honor with impunity. You shall hear from me, sir."

"I am no duellist," said Willis.

"What, sir, are you a coward as well as a slanderer?"

exclaimed Fitz Osborne, strutting up to Willis and scowling fearfully. "Do you refuse to meet me, sir?"

"I refuse either to shoot you, or be shot by you," said Willis; "though, indeed, after descending to be a gambler, I might well go a little lower, and become a duellist. Still robbery is better than murder; and whilst I swear to retrace the steps that led to the one, I also swear to take no steps that may lead to the other. A man of honor, indeed!" exclaimed Willis, losing his tone of calmness, his cheek flushing, and his eye flashing: "You are a swindler, without honor, or mind to comprehend what honor truly is. I know you now, sir,—and the world shall know you."

With these words, and before the bystanders could interfere or suspect his intention, he threw himself on his burly antagonist, and in an instant had borne him to the ground. Fitz Osborne made a desperate attempt to swallow something—but his hand was arrested—torn open by main force—and Frederick Willis, starting to his feet, held up before the gaze of all, a loaded die.

Captain Fitz Osborne may now be met with at Boulogne. He wears a somewhat military costume, though he is no longer in the army. He attends all the billiard-rooms and ball-rooms, and is said to be on the point of marriage with an heiress from Bloomsbury-square, who could not resist his large black moustaches, knowledge of fashionable society, and strict observance of the law of honor.

MORAL.

Rogues and fools guard their honor by steel-traps and spring-guns : men of character and intellect trust to the lofty barrier of their good deeds.





FABLE XVI.

THE HARD HEART MOVED TO PITY.

It was a beautiful July evening, and Mr. Josiah Johnson resolved to take his wine after dinner in the summer-house at the end of the garden, where, whilst he sipped, he might see the London coaches pass, and muse on the metropolis from which he had retired.

This worthy individual had been settled in the country for a space of ten years. His former life had been intensely devoted to trade, in which he was so successful that he had realised a comfortable independence. When he was no longer in the turmoil, however, and had totally abjured commerce, he began to discover that solitude was wearisome. He could find no pleasure in communing

with himself. He pined for the accustomed life—the respectable employment of buying cheap and selling dear—of endeavouring to overreach, and not to be overreached.

He had never married. Business had not allowed him time to look for a wife; and now, at fifty-five, although he had leisure he had not inclination. The habits of old-bachelorhood were too firmly established to be disturbed. The want of a companion is better than the presence of a companion with whom we cannot agree; and Mr. Johnson wisely determined not to run the risk. Even money could not tempt him here; and nothing more need be said to show that his resolution was unchangeable.

Under these circumstances it becomes necessary for a man to take up some taste or pursuit to save himself from extreme ennui. Mr. Johnson felt this. He fixed on gastronomy. Eating and drinking, the meditations thereon, and the preparations therefor, now absorbed his entire thoughts. He was no transcendentalist however. He contented himself with the first principles, as becomes a middle-aged gentleman who commences the study of a science. Ude was to him a sealed book; Kitchiner he spoke of respectfully; Mrs. Glasse was his favorite.

But every pleasure, in our fallen state, has its accompanying pain. Mr. Johnson could not indulge this innocent predilection without paying the penalty. The gout—the horrid gout—had already made him aware of its existence, and he lived in dread of a full visitation. He did not allow his dread, however, to influence his actions. Nothing but the actual presence of the enemy could produce that effect.

On this particular evening he was in a most happy mood. The dinner had been well cooked; and, with a person of gastronomic propensities, the proper or improper

management of this matter brings on good or bad temper for the rest of the day. Now, as he sat in his summer-house, with a bottle of port before him, he thought how Providence had blest him in life—how honest industry was sure to be rewarded by a competence—how contemptible was poverty, and how honorable was wealth. He sat with his feet upon the window-sill, to advertise that the place was his own; and in that easy attitude looked forth on the road.

He had arrived at about his sixth glass when a beggar stopped beneath the window, and in piteous accents implored charity. He was an old man, apparently about seventy, clothed in miserably tattered garments, and with a countenance evincing the possession of education: the dejection there was that of one who had formerly known cause for cheerfulness.

It is a pleasing state of civilisation, certainly, in which our fathers and grandfathers beg on the highway. Age is now only revered as a symbol of riches; and a wretch who is old and poor too must look for no sympathy. We treat unmonied men as we treat horses—we kill them when they are past work. The knacker's yard receives the one, and the pauper-house the other.

The white-haired mendicant told Mr. Johnson a long story about his misfortunes—how he had once been well to do in the world, but had been ruined by becoming security for a friend—how his wife had died, and their two children—and how he had since sunk lower and lower, until at last he was reduced to utter indigence.

Mr. Johnson listened, without offering any interruption to the whole history. He lounged in his very luxurious attitude, and sipped his port in tranquil enjoyment. The miseries of this foolish old fellow gave the wine a relish,

and served the purpose of olives. Nothing could better illustrate the wisdom of getting money, and the folly of not keeping it when you have got it. He was a sort of imprudent Helot, exhibiting himself for the benefit of all prudent citizens. A most entertaining and instructive spectacle—and one that need cost you nothing!

“So you became security for a friend!” said Mr. Johnson, laughing jocularly, and graciously unbending, as a man may be allowed to do after a certain quantity of port.

“Yes, sir,” replied the beggar: “for a friend whom I had known twenty years. I always thought him of good principles—but I was deceived.”

“Ha, ha, ha!” exclaimed Mr. Johnson; “so you were ruined by too firm a belief in virtue! Why, man, your friend was virtuous just as long as he had no interest in being otherwise. Once render it to his interest, and you may be pretty sure how he will turn out.”

“Sir,” said the beggar, “I always made it my rule in life to consider every man honest until he proved himself a rogue.”

“Did you?” said Mr. Johnson, with a sneer; “then *I* didn’t! I went on the opposite tack—and look at the difference! Here I am with money—I’ll not say how much—a house over my head, good clothes on my back, and a glass of wine to make me jolly: *you* are a penniless, houseless, ragged, old vagabond, who would be glad to get a drink of sour small beer. *That’s* a difference, isn’t it? You’re wiser than I am though, in one particular—you take so much exercise. Ah, if I walked a little more, how much better an appetite I should have for dinner! But, now I think of it, you’re not wise at all—for you’ve no dinner to eat. Ha, ha, ha! I have you there too, old Tattered-and-torn!”

The color glowed on the cheek of the aged mendicant ; but it faded away again when he reflected that a pauper is supposed to have no passions.

“ Sir,” said he, “ you have given a vivid description of your state and of mine. That you are rich is very evident—that I am poor is certain. I hope, sir, that you will avail yourself of your riches, and alleviate, in some small degree, my poverty.”

The countenance of Mr. Johnson became stern on the utterance of these words. He felt, probably, that he had condescended quite enough, and that it was time to assert the dignity of his station. A gentleman in a merry mood may amuse himself by bandying words with a ragamuffin ; but when the ragamuffin grows impertinent, he must be made to know what he is.

“ I'll not give you a farthing,” exclaimed Mr. Johnson ; “ not one farthing ! A fine thing, indeed, if men who have toiled for their fortunes were obliged to support every idle fellow who preferred doing nothing ! Here 's the harvest coming on—try and get work. You 're not too old to work, I dare say.”

“ And out of all the money you have acquired, then,” said the beggar, “ you will spare me nothing ?”

“ Not a farthing,” said Mr. Johnson. “ I have told you before, and I tell you again. And I tell you a little more too : if you don't take yourself off at once, it will be the worse for you.”

Now, here was a man of money, revelling in all the enjoyments he was capable of tasting : on the other hand : a fellow-mortal, deficient in this world's goods, endeavors, but endeavors vainly, to excite his pity. Suffering urgently appeals to him—but he feels no inclination to relieve it. Before he can feel the inclination, the appeal of suffering

must give him pain—but that of the old beggar gives him pleasure. Yet, this hard-hearted, hard-headed, rich man is about to feel pity at the appeal of suffering.

Whilst the last harsh word was passing his lips and rage suffused his face, a sudden pang shot through his left foot ; another, and another succeeded : the limb seemed as if pincers were tearing it. He started up, seized a bell-rope that communicated with the house, and sank on a chair overcome by pain.

Assistance arrived, and remedies were applied. The anguish was intolerable ; but the softening, the sacred feeling of pity had been excited—and excited by the only possible means.

The rich man felt the utmost pity for *his own* suffering, and did all in his power to relieve *himself*.

MORAL.

Pity, in some natures, is so badly cultivated that the whole produce is not too much for home consumption.





FABLE XVII.

THE OLD MAN, THE YOUNG MAN, AND THE BOY.

NEAR the mouth of a large river in the west of England is a ferry about a mile across.

An old man arrived at the ferry-house one bleak day in the month of October, and knocked loudly for the ferryman. He wished to be conveyed over as quickly as possible.

This old man was a great landed proprietor in the neighbourhood. By all he was feared or hated—by none loved or respected. He had no family to look with a

kindly eye on his doings. He was a bachelor ; wifeless, childless, friendless. Age, whilst it had whitened his hair and wrinkled his face, always stern and forbidding, had but increased the selfishness and cruelty of his ever vicious mind. Woe to the poacher caught sinning—woe to the tenant in arrear—woe to respectability-shocking vagrants—woe to all over whom he possessed power ! He was a magistrate ; and, in his hands, the law gained nothing in loveliness.

To this landed aristocrat, on his summons, appeared the ferryman.

He was a young man. From his earliest years he had lived in that ferry-house where his father had lived before him. It was a lonely part of the country, and passengers were not very numerous. The boat was often idly moored ; and this time the young ferryman employed in reading of the world which he had never seen—of nobles, mobs, millionnaires, paupers—of manufacturing towns, where men are the creatures and slaves of Steam—of London, where vice and virtue, wealth and poverty, knowledge and ignorance, happiness and misery, are mixed up in one preposterous and morbid mass. All this he read of, and much thought of ; and, having nobody to undeceive him, he came to very strange conclusions concerning the state of the world, and the existing notions of right and wrong. In particular he acquired a habit of considering the tendency of every action to add to, or take away from, the sum of human happiness ; and this he judged rigidly, apart from all other considerations whatever. As he believed the tendency of the action, so he approved, or disapproved, of the actor. He was poor, as a philosopher

should be, and had a pretty loving young wife, as a philosopher should have. Thus was his life.

Just as the ferryman and his passenger were about to embark, a little boy ran up in great haste—for he was in danger of being too late. His desire also was to be conveyed over.

The boy was the son of a farmer near at hand. He had a ruddy careless countenance, and frank fearless manners. Meditation had not yet troubled him. He was very happy himself, and, for aught he knew, everybody else was happy too. He had heard of poor people starving for hunger, and rich people dining off gold; but had never seen either, and rather doubted it. He had been told of wicked men, who, if they escaped in this world, were sure to be punished in another; but they had never hurt him. He had a dim idea that illness was something painful; but he had been ill only once, and that long, long ago. He liked books, and story-books most of all. His own private philosophy was that the blessings of life are fruit, bonfires, and cricket; and the evils, hard dumplings, rainy days, and words in five syllables.

The rich proprietor and the farmer's son now stepped into the boat. The boatman set the sails, and they stood over to the opposite shore. The wind was blowing freshly, and the water dashed merrily from the prow.

And now that these three are travelling, let me tell what object has brought each into the ferry-boat.

The boy, the farmer's son, is going to spend a week at the house of a playfellow. He anticipates much delight from the visit. There is a large smooth field, the very thing for cricket or trap-ball, or anything of that sort—

and a capital pond to swim ships in—and a real painted target for bows and arrows—and Dash to go out with them walking. So if the week do not pass pleasantly, it will be rather strange.

The old man, the landed proprietor, is going to dun a tenant who owes him three quarters' rent. The last harvest was very bad, and the tenant was laid up with a fever, and the cattle died, and altogether matters went very crossly—which is the reason why the tenant owes three quarters' rent. His landlord intends now to apply to him in person, and, if this last resource fail, to serve him with an ejectment at once.

The young man, the ferryman, is merely going to the opposite shore and back again. He will demand sixpence from each passenger, and will hasten home to his wife Kate, who is now broiling a beef-steak for dinner.

The boat dashed on. The rich proprietor sat rapt in thought, without speaking; the boatman was watching the sails, rudder in hand; the boy was dipping his hand into the water, wetting the sleeve of his jacket, laughing and talking to the boatman. They had nearly reached the shore.

Suddenly there came a blast of wind, so violent and so unexpected, that before the sheet could possibly be let go, the sail was overstrained, and in an instant the little boat was capsized. Passengers and boatman were thrown into the water and left to struggle for their lives.

The ferryman had been accustomed to the river from infancy, and was an expert swimmer. He floated at his ease: the proprietor and the young farmer sank like stones.

This man was then a judge of life and death. His two passengers had been thrown in opposite directions, far from each other, and they had struggled even farther. He feared that he could save but one—and which should it be ?

Calmly and fairly he tested these two human beings by his creed. The one more deserving of existence was he whose actions added more to, or took less from, the sum of human happiness : all other considerations must be set aside, and this alone must be the claim to preference. The deliberation and the decision were the work of an instant : he swam towards the boy.

He seized him as he rose for the third time to the surface, and, by keeping his head under water for a few moments, rendered him senseless, so that he might not drown them both by his struggles. Then he contrived, by great strength and dexterity, to right the small, light boat, and in this he placed the boy. The unhappy, tyrannical landlord had disappeared for ever.

He perished, the greatest of three. Had he been good, instead of great, or not had a philosopher for a boatman, he might have been saved ; but he was sacrificed by a combination of circumstances.

So, after all, the boy went to see his playfellow ; and the young man went home to his wife Kate ; but the old man did not eject his tenant, and his body was rolled by the river down into the sea.

MORAL.

Youth, newly upon earth, and exquisitely susceptible to impressions either for good or evil, is a thing to hope in ;

but age, eaten into and corrupted by the world's bad influences, is callous and unimprovable. The bud may expand in health and beauty ; but the sooner the rotten, stained, and noisome leaves drop off, the better.





FABLE XVIII.

THE DRUDGE.

IN a little known, and rather disagreeable, London locality called St. Mary Axe flourished the establishment of Nathaniel Crawley. Nathaniel Crawley was "in the general line," and "serious;" or, as some more briefly and less respectfully phrased it, he was a "canting chandler's shop-keeper." He laughed not; he rarely smiled, and that only in a grim, non-jocular style. He often turned up the whites of his eyes. His voice was harsh and drawling, and, as he seldom said anything pleasant to hear, so the matter of speech was not softened by the manner of delivery. He wore a suit of rusty black, tastefully relieved

by the professional white apron. His hair was red, and cut very short, as if he were ashamed of it.

He had married a maiden gentlewoman of thirty-eight, who "sat under" the same minister with himself. She might be described as learned, for she usually spoke grammatically, and so far was superior to her husband. She was plain, but possessed five hundred pounds; and this, judiciously invested in candles, soap, starch, birch-brooms, small-beer, and other articles in which he dealt, brought him in sufficient to make him feel quite satisfied with his bargain. So they lived a very happy married life: that is, they generally thought alike—did by no means hate each other—seldom quarrelled—and never publicly.

Their family consisted of three children, who were brought up virtuously, and in the fear of the Lord. The shop was attended by a steady, pious youth, named Nicodemus. He was a nephew of Mrs. Crawley, and so like her that many mistook him for her son. The entire household was administered to by a drudge-of-all-work, who answered to the name of Jane. She was very young, very pretty, very ignorant. She had just enough knowledge to suspect that her lot in the world was not altogether enviable. She endeavored to lighten it by a few little indulgences, which she considered quite harmless. These were chiefly singing at her work, pink ribbons in her cap, and a chat with the baker's man. But besides these helps to pass time, she was cheered by the great cheerer of life. She was in love; and if stolen interviews be sweet, the interviews with her lover were sweet indeed, for they were stolen with fear and trembling from the time which she had bartered to her mistress for five pounds annually, and which that mistress watched over in mode

like unto that of a cat. Poor Jane ! what right had you to love ?

A vigilant tyrant, however, cannot long be deceived. One morning, Nicodemus, with a malicious smile, told Jane that her mistress wished to speak to her. She accordingly proceeded to the little back-parlor behind the shop, where she found Mr. and Mrs. Crawley seated in state. Mrs. Crawley surveyed her with a look of sour propriety for some short space, and at last commenced thus :—

“ Oh, you wicked, good-for-nothing slut ! These are your goings on, are they ? You let men into the house.”

Jane appeared somewhat confused, but managed, with a tolerable assumption of innocence, to exclaim, “ Men, ma’am ? ”

“ Yes, men, ma’am ! ” replied Mrs. Crawley, sneeringly. “ Answer me this :—Last night, when we were at meeting, didn’t you have a young man here for more than an hour ? ”

“ Oh, ma’am ! ” said Jane ; “ he is my first-cousin, a sailor just come from sea. He is indeed, ma’am ! ”

“ Is that true, Nicodemus ? ” said Mrs. Crawley, addressing that youth, who stood modestly apart.

“ Nay,” answered Nicodemus, stepping forward, “ my conscience compels me to declare that it is far from the truth. The young man has often been here before, and I grew desirous to know his name and calling. He is called Henry Atkins, and is by trade a gardener. Also he is, I fear, of ungodly mind ; and for certain is not the cousin of this young woman—he being, as she affirms, a sailor.”

“ Nicodemus, we’re much obligated for the trouble you’ve took,” said Mr. Crawley, patronizingly.

“ It was my duty,” said Nicodemus. “ I bear no malice to Jane and the young man, though they ridiculed and

despised me. I forgive them most sincerely ; and hope the Lord will in time soften their hearts, and lead them into the ways of righteousness."

" You shall not lose by your upright conduct, Nicodemus," said Mrs. Crawley, affectionately. " And now, girl," exclaimed she, turning to the drudge, " what have you to say for yourself ? "

" Is a poor servant never to see a friend ? " said Jane, crying. " He's a very nice young man, I'm sure, and nobody can say nothing against him. Nicodemus is jealous because I wouldn't listen to his nonsense, and now he thinks to have his spite out."

Nicodemus raised his eyes meekly at this charge, but said nothing.

" You wicked creature ! " exclaimed Mrs. Crawley, " do you mean to insinuate anything to the prejudice of my nephew ? In a month's time, mind, you quit my service. You should go at once—but I don't choose to pay you wages and get no work."

" Will you turn me out of doors only for speaking to a sweetheart ? " exclaimed Jane.

" A sweetheart indeed ! " said her mistress. " I'm shocked at such brazen impudence. Wasn't it our agreement that you were to have no followers ? And then you must tell an untruth too, and afterwards try to take away my nephew's reputation. Oh that such wickedness should be in one so young ! "

" Such soul-destroying sinfulness and perwerseness ! " chimed in Crawley.

" But you will give me a character, I hope, ma'am ? " said Jane, in an imploring tone.

" I will tell the truth, and the whole truth, Jane,"

answered Mrs. Crawley, solemnly. "My sense of duty will not permit me to utter a falsehood. I should expect instant punishment from heaven if I so much as attempted to deceive a fellow-creature."

"Werry proper! good sound doctrine!" exclaimed Crawley, chiming in again.

"And so, Jane," continued Mrs. Crawley, "you will provide yourself by this day month. I wouldn't keep you longer in my house for the world."

"I shall be ruined, ma'am, if you will not give me a character," said Jane, sobbing.

"You should have thought of that, Jane, before you acted so improperly," replied Mrs. Crawley.

At the appointed time Jane left. A fishmonger's wife, a greengrocer's wife, a pawnbroker's widow, and the landlady of the "Rising Sun," successively applied to Mrs. Crawley for her character, and successively departed, cursing a bad servant, and blessing a conscientious mistress. Poor Jane was in despair; and to add to her troubles she quarrelled with her sweetheart, Henry Atkins, who accused her of having given more cause than either she or her late employer chose to avow for the enmity of the latter, and threw out strange hints about Nicodemus.

Shortly afterwards Jane might be seen at night in the Haymarket, showily dressed, and with her cheeks slightly rouged. She gradually looked worse and worse—for she became fonder and fonder of gin. Her sweetheart Henry was exchanged for her fancy man Tom. She was very merry—but not quite happy.

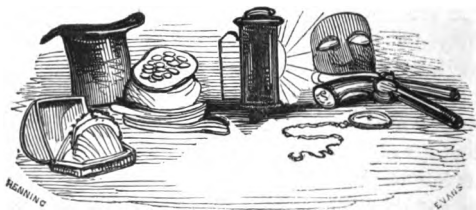
On a dark foggy evening in November the house of Mr. Nathaniel Crawley, in St. Mary Axe, was broken into. The till was emptied, the desk rifled, the plate-chest opened,

and everything valuable in the whole place carried off. No clue to the thieves could be discovered, and the affair remained a perfect mystery ; but it must evidently have been planned by some one familiar with the premises.

It was planned by Jane, and executed by Tom the cracksman. She had her revenge, which she called justice, as they had before had their revenge, which they called justice. They robbed her of her character, and she robbed them of their wealth.

MORAL.

In trampling on others take care that you do not hurt your own foot.





FABLE XIX.

THE GOLDEN MAXIM.

EXPERIENCE is the best teacher—but by no means a gentle one. He lays on the rattan without mercy, and if we do not go in the right way, it is certainly not for want of being well thrashed when we go in the wrong. The worst of it is that we generally gain our wisdom when it is too late, and understand the country we are crossing only when we are just at our journey's end. With the resting-place in view, we begin to regret our mis-spent time, and grow aware how much we have strayed from the proper route. This comes of independence and separate way-faring. We toil along, or rattle along, by ourselves,

or with our families, on foot, on horseback, or in vehicle. The few public conveyances are small and limited in design. But if we only had the good sense to form large caravans under experienced guides, we should be in less danger of erring, and have more opportunity of enjoyment.

Mr. John Richardson was one of the most respected of London citizens. He had arrived young in the metropolis, very foot-sore, and with five-and-ninepence in his pocket. In the course of thirty years he had increased the five-and-ninepence to fifty thousand pounds. This was generally considered clever; but, in truth, the man had no genius in his composition. The lack was more than supplied by the possession of that valuable quality called prudence. He was slow, but sure; dull, but industrious; short-seeing, but sharp-eyed with his ken. He passed through life acquiring few ideas, but many guineas. He began ignorant, and he ended ignorant: he began poor, and he ended rich.

Mr. John Richardson, at the age of sixty, found himself retired from business, a widower, with one son. Alfred, the son, was a spirited young man. He despised trade and tradesmen, and particularly despised the tradesman his father. He owned to a very dim notion of the East-end of London, but paraded his intimate knowledge of the West. His associates were entirely aristocratic. Lord Cheroot, Sir Edward Allnight, and the Honorable Tom Daredevil were his sworn friends. It was rather an expensive friendship certainly, for amongst them they borrowed of him to the extent of a hundred pounds a month or so, not one farthing of which they made even a show of returning. But he had his money's worth in praise.

They assured him that his spirit, his wit, his good sense, were something extraordinary, and for a citizen almost miraculous. To be sure there was a manner, an air, a something only to be acquired by companionship with persons of birth; but he had improved greatly in this respect they said, and would in time be perfect. All this was averred to his face; and behind his back their remarks were, I doubt not, the same—that is, unless Lord Cheroot, Sir Edward Allnight, and the Honorable Tom Daredevil were swindling scoundrels, which, as they belonged to the aristocracy, is not likely.

One evening Mr. John Richardson, that respectable, elderly, well-to-do individual, was taken suddenly ill. He went to bed—and never rose again. Just before his death he called for his son Alfred, and taking his hand affectionately, delivered himself thus in a broken voice:—

“Son Alfred, I am about to die, and before I do so I want to say a few words, as I have always made it a rule to do everything in a business-like manner. I shall leave you more than fifty thousand pounds, all got honestly, and by hard work. There is something else I shall leave you, almost as valuable. Attached by a green ribbon to the parchment on which is written my will, you will find a sealed paper, containing the wisest sentence ever put together. By acting in the spirit of that maxim I made all my money, and by acting in it you may use well the money I made. I’m not much of a philosopher, son Alfred, but I say that all a man need know is contained in that maxim. Do not take it only in its vulgar interpretation: it applies to every situation in life; and if people understood it better, they wouldn’t be such fools.

As you despise or venerate my maxim, so will you fail or prosper."

Soon after pronouncing these words the old gentleman expired.

At the proper time the will was produced and read. Attached to it, sure enough, by a green silk ribbon, was a small sealed paper, on the back of which was written in German text, "**The Golden Maxim.**" The anxiety was intense as the man in authority broke the seal and opened the mysterious paper. With a loud clear voice he gave forth the contents, which were as follows:—

YOU MUST PAY THE BEST PRICE IF YOU WANT THE BEST ARTICLE.

At this strange end to their expectations the auditors were variously affected. Some laughed, some whistled, some were angry; but not one certainly felt the least respect either for the maxim or the eccentric maxim-giver.

Alfred, for whose especial benefit the seal had been broken, did not affect to conceal his contempt. As soon as the company had departed, and he was alone, he soliloquised thus:—

"Well, this is pleasant, curse me! The old fellow must not only bore me with his musty maxim, but render me ridiculous before my friends! As for the fifty thousand pounds, I'm obliged to him there; but I want none of his narrow-minded posthumous advice how to use it and conduct myself in the world. These slow-goers are always so ready with their counsel—and a confounded deal more ready than welcome! I can take care of myself, or I'm mistaken."

The first thing he did to show that he could take care of himself, was to sell the old house and the old furniture,

and take a residence in a more fashionable situation, which he immediately set about furnishing. But here one of his peculiarities came into operation. In spite of being foolishly extravagant, he had a great notion of bargaining ; so he went to a cheap establishment and purchased his furniture ; and proudly did he chuckle when he saw the shining mahogany, the brilliant carpets, the resplendent gilding, and thought how little money he had given in return for these comforts and luxuries. It was not long, however, before the shining mahogany went to pieces, the brilliant carpets faded and wore out, and the resplendent gilding peeled off. "Humph!" exclaimed Alfred, musing ; "dad was right certainly here. As far as mere buying and selling went he knew something, though he was an ignoramus on other points. Yes : I suppose in trade the cheapest things are the dearest. *You must pay the best price if you want the best article.*"

He now gave himself up entirely to the society of his somewhat loose, but well-born, associates. Notoriety was the object of his existence. He wished to rank amongst the eccentric roués of the day, and become celebrated for breaking lamps, beating policemen, driving over old women, purloining knockers, and insulting street passengers ; but either he had less spirit or more sense than the rest, for in drunkenness, folly, brutality, and vice they went greatly beyond him. Whilst their names were known far and wide, and their deeds were fondly imitated, *he* was known only as a third-rate genius, and more an imitator himself than an original worthy of imitation. He retired from the field considerably worse in pocket and constitution. "Alas," said he, "there was more in that fantastic maxim than I suspected. It does not apply

to trade only. I was willing to purchase notoriety, and find, unhappily, that the first quality of that commodity costs more than I can afford. It was foolish to wish to obtain it ; but more foolish to expect to obtain it cheaply. Yes : *you must pay the best price if you want the best article.*"

He had now bidden farewell to his unworthy companions, and resolved to pursue a better path. Love entirely occupied his thoughts. He selected a beautiful, accomplished, and amiable girl, and thought that if he could induce her to become his wife, happiness would be his portion for ever. But she was not easily won. There were points in his conduct which she wished to see altered before she could prefer him to all others. These concessions he was not exactly inclined to make ; and there was Mary Tomlins, a very pretty girl, who was quite ready to have him just as he was. He married Mary Tomlins. Six months after marriage she ran off with Ensign Jenkins. " Ah ! " sighed Alfred, " what an error did I commit. I lost a charming creature from idleness and pride. In proportion to the pain of acquisition so would have been the pleasure of possession. *You must pay the best price if you want the best article.*"

He had arrived at a time of life when love generally yields to ambition. Alfred determined to become great, and great as a philosopher. He would examine into the nature of man and the constitution of society, and endeavor to leave the world wiser and better than he found it. He read—he meditated—he wrote—he published. But the course of his reading and meditation was very prudently and daintily in accordance with popular notions ; whence it happened that the books he wrote and published

were somewhat trite and common-place. He gained no reputation as a philosopher—but he lost none as a man. Truth was not in his compositions—and, consequently, defamation and abuse were not in the criticisms on them. “I see clearly,” said he, “that philosophic fame and the world’s love are incompatible with each other. Every man who greatly benefits his fellow-creatures is hated and despised, whilst living, by the majority of those he serves. The immortality of an innovator is purchased dearly indeed. *You must pay the best price if you want the best article.*”

His hair was by this time beginning to grow grey, and the “old gentlemanly vice” stirred him exceedingly. “I will make money,” exclaimed he. “True, I have already some thousands; but a wise man should consider these merely as seed to produce a plentiful crop. I am not young enough to enter trade regularly—but I will speculate. That is the way to make a fortune in a few years.”

Accordingly he bought shares in Joint Stock Companies. He became a director of the “Dovor and Calais Tunnel Company;” he held largely in the “Steam Balloon Company;” he was greatly concerned in the “Oxy-hydrogen Gas Street Lighting Company.” Bull, bear, scrip, premium, were familiar words. He thought, he dreamed, of nought but speculation—of shares going down and getting up in the market—of paid-up and unpaid-up capital.

But commercial matters, even the most promising, are uncertain. “The Dovor and Calais Tunnel Company,” “The Steam Balloon Company,” “The Oxy-hydrogen Gas Street Lighting Company,” and all the other companies, went successively to the dogs. A few knowing

ones became astonishingly rich ; but Mr. Alfred Richardson was *not* a knowing one, and lost all he had in the world. Some must suffer that others may enjoy : such is the tendency of our civilization.

Mr. Richardson retired to a garret in the neighbourhood of Clerkenwell, to meditate on his fortune-seeking. He came to the conclusion that wealth is most certainly procured by industry and self-denial, and that here, as elsewhere, *you must pay the best price if you want the best article.*

He had managed to preserve from the wreck of his property just enough to exist upon, and he employed his time chiefly in walking about, and viewing with unavailing regret those places where he had formerly exercised influence. But whether this had a bad effect on his spirits, or from whatever cause it might proceed, his health gradually became worse, until at last he was unable to stir from his room. His old and severely-punished sin, however, once more tempted him. He could not prevail on himself to call in a proper medical adviser, which any man but a fool will always do, even if he pawn his only coat for the purpose. Mr. Richardson availed himself of the services of Mr. Abraham Solomons, who assured him, by advertisement in the newspapers, that he was not only the cheapest, but the cleverest, surgeon in London. Mr. Abraham Solomons gave him some hope of recovery ; but, finding that he got no better, he changed his mind, and declared the case hopeless.

“ Mrs. Dickenson,” said our unfortunate hero, “ I am dying. You have been a kind landlady, and shall have all I possess. I am, and have been, a victim to my neglect of, and contempt for, a truly noble axiom. Oh ! Mrs.

Dickenson, take warning by my sad example, shun the treacherous promptings of indolence and vanity, and ever believe that *you must pay the best price if —*”

His voice failed—he fell back on the pillow a corpse. As through life he understood not the GOLDEN MAXIM, so in death he was unable to pronounce it.

MORAL.

Much comes of much, little comes of little, and nothing comes of nothing. Whatever the object of your pursuit, you must give an equivalent ; and, if that object be valuable, your offering must be in proportion : *You must pay the best price if you want the best article.*





FABLE XX.

THE RATIONAL LOVERS.

FRIENDSHIP is a pleasant thing, especially between persons of opposite sexes ; because then it is more like love, which is a great deal pleasanter than friendship. It is often so like love as to be pronounced the same by all but the parties themselves, who go on in their delusion until some disturbing occurrence brings them to their senses, and renders them aware of the true state of the case. That plausible fellow, Plato, has inveigled more couples into matrimony than the busiest match-maker that ever lived.

Stephen Elgrove and Charlotte Fane were on very

friendly terms. He was considered and treated in the family as one of themselves. He called Miss Fane, Charlotte: she called Mr. Elgrove, Stephen. They saw each other frequently, and thought of each other eternally. Each preferred the society of the other to that of any one beside; and, as they were extremely happy together, so they were somewhat unhappy apart. They talked much sentiment, and owned to a growing taste for poetry, music, flowers, pastry, unfermented liquors, and refinement in general. Stephen Elgrove happened always to take a prominent part in the dreams of Charlotte Fane, and, in those of Stephen Elgrove, Charlotte Fane was continually concerned. They discarded, to a great degree, the ordinary method of measuring time, and reckoned from interview to interview. Yet all this they called friendship. Love had gained entire possession of them, and they suspected nothing. They were bound together by the strongest fetters in creation, and yet they considered themselves free and independent. The first test must prove how impossible it was for them to part.

Thus was the situation of affairs, when, one evening, Charlotte went to a ball and danced with a certain Mr. Percy Denham. Mr. Denham professed himself enamored, called on her the next morning, and forthwith commenced a regular siege of her heart.

Charlotte Fane and Stephen Elgrove were enlightened instantaneously and simultaneously. They discovered that they lived only for each other, and that the idea of marriage, unless Charlotte were the bride and Stephen were the bridegroom, was insupportable to either. Mr. Denham was richer—far richer—than Elgrove; and parents are prone to look upon riches as the greatest

of recommendations. Still parents have become more gentle than it was their wont to be in the good old times, and the parents of Charlotte assured her that if she accepted Mr. Denham it would be by her own free choice only. This was enough to make her mind easy: Mr. Denham's chance would have been dear at nothing.

The two rivals were very different, personally and mentally.

Elgrove was of the middle size, somewhat slender in make, and with a pale, thoughtful countenance—expressive, but not strictly handsome. His hair was dark brown, and very luxuriant. His eyes were of the deepest blue, and rather sunken. He was cheerful, but not gay; meditative, but not grave. He attempted to extract only pleasure from life—leaving pain to those who preferred it. He despised all dignity, except the dignity of worth, and looked upon simplicity of manner as very indicative of nobility of mind. Pedantry and parade of all kinds invariably failed with him to produce the effect desired by their exhibitors, and afforded him instead great, but generally quiet, amusement. He carried his independence to a fault, and, in doing what he esteemed right, put himself too much in opposition to the way of the world. It was difficult to understand him; but he understood himself, and was to be understood also by others who would give themselves the trouble.

Percy Denham was the direct reverse of this. He was preposterously tall and thin, with a ruddy, good-humored, good-looking, foolish face, light blue eyes, and short, curly, flaxen hair. His chief delight was hunting, and, next to that, shooting. He was by no means averse to the bottle, and could, on occasion, drink as much wine as

would be the death of any ordinary man, without seeming at all inconvenienced by the dose. He had never dimmed his eyes by reading, nor paled his cheeks by thinking; and, indeed, he expressed a strong contempt for both, as fit only for dull plodders, and quite unnecessary to a gentleman with three thousand a-year. It was his custom to act always on the first impulse, and never allow time for the least deliberation. He had a violent flow of animal spirits, and boisterous, presuming, unwinning manners.

Mr. Denham thought himself far superior, in every respect, to Stephen Elgrove. He considered him a rival unworthy of serious attention, and had no more doubt of supplanting him in the affections of Miss Fane than he had of his own existence. The merits of Mr. Percy Denham, he rather imagined, must prevail against the merits of any other man on earth.

One morning Miss Fane and the two rivals were sitting together. The lady was working a screen, and the gentlemen behaved to her with that tender humility, and to each other with that polished ferocity, proper under the circumstances.

"I have news for you," said Miss Fane smiling; "and agreeable news, too. My cousin, Fanny Willoughby, is coming up from Devonshire to spend a few months with us. She is a charming girl—beautiful, accomplished, and with ten thousand pounds. Now, one of you will fall in love with her, that is certain. Tell me, which will it be?"

"Not I," said Elgrove, with an air of confidence.

"Nor I," said Denham, with an air quite as confident. "I believe it will be you, Mr. Elgrove. You are rather given to flirting."

This was intended to tell with Miss Fane against his

rival ; but, to his consternation, they both smiled at the charge without speaking, and, he could almost swear, exchanged a glance full of meaning.

“ Is it cold to-day, Mr. Denham ? ” inquired Miss Fane.

“ Yes : decidedly cold—that is—no : it is decidedly warm,” replied Mr. Denham, confused by this unimportant, point-blank question, after his scientific manœuvring.

“ I am going out,” said Elgrove ; “ and will bring you word, Charlotte, in the course of the evening. Farewell, Mr. Denham ! I cannot forget Fanny Willoughby, the pretty girl with ten thousand pounds ; but that is not wonderful, you know, as I am ‘ rather given to flirting.’ ”

So saying, and laughing heartily, Elgrove departed.

Denham drew his chair closer to Miss Fane, and, putting on a look of the utmost solemnity, addressed her thus :—

“ Miss Fane—Charlotte—I feel that I ought no longer to delay doing formally what I have already informally done a hundred times. I declare that I love you, and offer my hand in marriage. I hope—I trust—that you have no affection for the person who has just left us ; but I must be kept in suspense no longer. I love you, sweetest, dearest Charlotte ; and beg you will let me know, from your own lips, whether you love me.”

During the whole of this long speech, Charlotte offered no interruption ; but when it was finished, she lifted her eyes from the ground, and, fixing them on those of Mr. Percy Denham, replied as follows :—

“ I am glad, Mr. Denham, that you have at last come to an explanation, because it saves a great deal of time, and prevents further misunderstanding. You offer me marriage, and that from the best possible cause—for you

love me. I cannot accept the offer—for I do not love you. Mutual love should be the only bond of union; and, believing so, I intend to bestow my hand upon one who loves me, and whom also I love. I am candid, Mr. Denham—too candid perhaps; but it seems to me that this is more friendly—more truly delicate—than the least deceit or disguise.”

“Certainly, Miss Fane, certainly!” said Denham, struggling with vexation and anger. “You are very—remarkably kind, and—as you say—delicate. And pray, Miss Fane, pray may I ask who is the happy man?”

“‘The person who has just left us,’ as you politely designated him, sir, in your speech,” replied Charlotte. “We have been attached for a long time; but neither suspected how firmly, until you made your appearance and roused us to the reality.”

“Then I am to understand that I served as a sort of—of go-between; is that the fact?” exclaimed Mr. Percy Denham, with rising excitement.

“You brought us to a knowledge of the true state of our hearts, certainly,” said Charlotte; “and, in so doing, served us against your wish. But be not angry. As a friend I hope to esteem you for many years to come—but beyond that it is not in my power to feel.”

“Very well, Miss Fane; very well!” exclaimed Mr. Denham. “I most humbly take my leave. It would have been better perhaps for you to have accepted me—but it is very well!”

And with these words Mr. Percy Denham departed.

He went straight to the rooms of his victorious rival, resolved to call him to account. He was bursting with a desire to revenge his defeat somehow, and this seemed the

most legitimate mode. It is not usual to challenge the lady who has rejected you, or he might have been angry enough to do that ; but against your rival all the world allows you to pull a trigger. He walked at his utmost speed, that there might be less danger of his thinking, and succeeded in arriving at Elgrove's door with his wrath rather increased than abated.

He found Elgrove reading, and drinking coffee. He had put on a loose dressing-gown, and appeared very studious, and much at his ease.

"Mr. Denham!" exclaimed he, as the visitor entered. "I am delighted to see you. Pray be seated."

"I thank you, sir," replied Denham, grimly ; "but it is unnecessary. I have a few words to say to you, Mr. Elgrove."

"With all my heart," said Elgrove. "As many, or as few, as you please ; but take a seat, man—take a seat!"

"Well, sir, I will humor you," said Denham, sitting down ; "but my communication is brief, though intelligible. Sir, you have acted like a scoundrel!"

"Indeed!" exclaimed Elgrove, stirring his coffee and sipping it. "That is brief, certainly—though not very intelligible! Be so obliging as to explain."

"You have played a false part between Miss Fane and myself," said Denham, vehemently. "You have prejudiced her against me—you have deceived her, sir! She has just now told me that she can never love me, and that she loves you. There has been some underhand doing here, sir!"

"So, because she loves me and does not love you," said Elgrove, "there has been some underhand doing, and I have played a false part! Logical! most logical! Can

you not conceive the possibility of Miss Fane loving me and not loving you, without falsehood or underhand doing on the part of any one? If you cannot, you must be conceited indeed!"

"But why not inform me that you had made up matters?" said Denham, who seemed cooling in spite of himself. "Why leave me, for days and weeks, in a fool's paradise?"

"There, again, your charge against Miss Fane and myself fails," said Elgrove. "Matters were 'made up,' as you call it, only an hour or two before you were informed that they were. I left you alone with Miss Fane just now in hopes that you might come to an éclaircissement."

"This is very unsatisfactory, sir!" exclaimed Denham, who began to fear that he should be cheated out of his revenge after all.

"My dear sir," said Elgrove, "I shall be happy to give you any better satisfaction that you can propose; but it strikes me that, if we get angry about this love-affair, we shall only make ourselves a pair of ninnies. Come, pour out a cup of coffee, and let us discuss the matter quietly. You take milk, I believe?"

"I do not choose to drink coffee, sir," exclaimed Denham, pettishly. He was undecided whether to fall into a tearing rage, or own himself in the wrong, as he half felt that he was; but, for the present, he deferred doing either.

"Pooh, pooh! take a cup, Denham, and don't be obstinate," said Elgrove. "A cup of coffee will not compromise you, I suppose? The sugar is at your elbow."

Denham growled out something—but he evidently could

not resist Elgrove's manner. He mixed a cup of coffee with a very bad grace.

"That is right!" exclaimed Elgrove. "Now we can converse at our ease; and, as a preliminary, let me ask you this question: is it your opinion that the human mind is governed by the laws which govern creation generally?"

"I—I have really never considered the subject," replied Denham, with some confusion.

"Do you suppose that it is in our power to love and hate as we please?" said Elgrove. "You have never considered the subject, you say; and yet you blame Miss Fane for loving me instead of you. As well might you blame a flake of snow for falling on my shoulder instead of yours."

"This is strange language, sir!" exclaimed Denham.

"And no less true than strange," said Elgrove. "Yet, without minding such dull matters as reason and common sense, you come here full tilt to commit murder, at least! I swear that as I behold you sitting now—with a rueful countenance, half angry, half repenting—your coffee-cup in your hand—and your hat crushed under your chair—I can hold my gravity no longer. It is too ridiculous, upon my word! I must laugh—I must indeed, if I get shot through the head for it!"

Here Elgrove indulged in such an explosion of mirth, that the room rang again. Denham started to his feet, enraged to the last degree; but the merriment of Elgrove was so hearty and continued so long, that the power of sympathy was irresistible. The ridicule of his own situation struck him all at once, and so forcibly, that he could no more have prevented his lungs from joining in

the laugh, than he could have prevented his heart from beating.

"Give me your hand, Elgrove!" he exclaimed. "You have conquered me—and for the second time. I have acted exceedingly like an ass; but I confess it—and that is surely a symptom of coming good sense."

"Bravo, Denham, bravo!" said Elgrove, shaking him cordially by the hand. "Now we understand each other, and look much more pleasantly than we should standing twelve paces apart, pistol in hand, at six o'clock in the morning. You shall be at my wedding; and, more than that, you shall fall in love with Fanny Willoughby."

"No, no!" exclaimed Denham, smiling: "I give up Charlotte Fane to you, as she prefers you; but I must always continue to prefer her to every other girl in the world."

He attended the wedding—met Fanny Willoughby—and fell in love with her. She is now Mrs. Denham; and he has been heard to declare that, though he once entertained a sort of affection for Charlotte Fane, he never knew what love truly was until he saw Fanny Willoughby.

MORAL.

Love is the most rebellious, ambitious, little reprobate on earth; for, whilst he refuses to be bound by any laws opposed to his own will, he strives his utmost to make all the world obey the laws laid down by himself. He is very prodigal of advice, and listens only to his own advice.

He laughs at attempts to teach him, and attempts to teach every human being. Resenting the slightest control, he aspires to control despotically and universally.



THE END.

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