This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world’s books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that’s often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book’s long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ **Make non-commercial use of the files** We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ **Refrain from automated querying** Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google’s system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ **Maintain attribution** The Google “watermark” you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ **Keep it legal** Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can’t offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book’s appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google’s mission is to organize the world’s information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world’s books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at [http://books.google.com/](http://books.google.com/)
FOOLY.

A New Novel.

BY

MRS. NEWTON SEARS,

AUTHOR OF "KISMET," "CLEANSING FIRES," &c.

3 Vols. One Guinea.

REMINGTON & Co., 5, ARUNDEL STREET, STRAND, W.C.
WORKERS IN THE DAWN.

A Novel.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

BY

GEORGE R. GIS SING.

VOL. II.

London:
REMINGTON AND CO.,
5, ARUNDEL STREET, STRAND, W.C.
1880.

[All Rights Reserved.]
## CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A Hand to the Plough</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ways and Means</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many-Coloured Life...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage à-la-Mode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guardian and Ward</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Story of a Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Shadow of Death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Working Man's Club</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher and Taught</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Foregone Conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love or Pity?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christmas In-doors and Out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Town Idyl</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shadows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amenities of Fashionable Life and Faith</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WORKERS IN THE DAWN.

CHAPTER I.

A HAND TO THE PLOUGH.

With a heart full of the noblest phantasies, the most lofty aspirations; purified of the last trace of that popular egotism which makes the self-conscious striving for one's own salvation antecedent to every other aim of life; beating high with an all-embracing affection for earth and the children of earth, bred of a natural ardour of disposition and nurtured upon the sweet and mighty thoughts of all great men; with a heart yearning for action of some kind, weary of a life bounded within the lines of self-study and introspection, desirous of nothing more than to efface the recollection of self in complete devotion to the needs of those million sufferers whose voices had long cried to her with ever-growing pathos, Helen Norman had set foot once more upon the shores of England. Commencing upon that day a new page in her
diary, she headed it with the lines of Long-fellow, as an appropriate motto:

Let us then be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labour and to wait.

The first few days were spent in walks alone, which she planned each morning by reference to a map of London, choosing in preference those districts which she knew by reputation as mean and poverty-stricken. As yet she had never seen poverty in its worst shapes, and she now for the first time became acquainted with the appearance of a London slum. With a thin veil drawn close over her face, often with a step quickened by involuntary horror, or even fear, she walked in turn through the worst parts of Soho, through Seven Dials, and the thoroughfares which spread themselves around that reeking centre, through Drury Lane and Clare Market, through all the unutterable vileness which is to be found on the other side of the river, then through everything most heart-breaking that the wide extent of the East End has to show. In this way she learnt from actual experience what she had hitherto only been able to see in fancy, and it is but slight reproach to the powers of her imagination to say that never in her most fearful visions had she attained to a just appreciation of the reality. As she walked hurriedly along she would now and
then behold sights which made the hot tears of pity or of indignation start to her eyes; but for the most part the ardour of a righteous wrath, to think that such things could be permitted to exist, dried up the fountain of tears, and only left her strengthening herself in firm resolve that what one determined heart and mind could effect towards the alleviation of all this hellish misery, that should be her aim as long as her life lasted.

Before setting to her task she deemed it necessary to procure her guardian's assent to what she was about to do, and, for the purpose of acquainting him with the designs, requested a quarter of an hour's conversation with him in the library. This opportunity being obtained, she laid before him all her aims and aspirations in clear, direct language, every word of which seemed to burn and glow, as fresh from the anvil of her thought; and then requested his permission to enter upon this mode of life. Mr. Gresham manifested no surprise, it was part of his philosophy never to be surprised at anything, but he allowed several minutes to elapse before making any reply.

"And how do you purpose setting about such a work, Helen?" he asked, at length, gazing at her with a half-suppressed ironical smile, which, however, could not hold its place upon his lips before the earnest, open
gaze of his ward. "I suppose you must have some definite plan for—for getting rid of your money?"

"I beg that you will not think that I am going to be recklessly extravagant, on pretence of charity," said Helen, in reply to the last phrase. "I shall indeed give money when I see it is needed, but I have already convinced myself that money can by no means be the principal instrument of one who sincerely wishes to benefit these poor people. On this point I have my own ideas."

"But would it not be better, if you are determined to trouble yourself so much about these tatterdemalions, to give your relief in the form of subscriptions to well-known charities, which have much better opportunities of doing good than any single individual can have?"

"Doubtless they have better opportunities," returned Helen, "but what I have already seen convinces me that they do not use them. The efforts of bodies are commendable and excellent—in their proper places. But for the work I see before me, individual effort is alone fitted; of that I am convinced."

"But, my dear child," said Mr. Gresham, with a smile of indulgent pity, "you surely have not got the idea into your head that you are going alone the rounds of these pestilence-breeding slums? Have you the remotest
notion of the kind of beings by whom they are inhabited?"

"Only too exact a notion. I have spent the last few days in penetrating the worst districts. I know precisely the nature of my task."

Mr. Gresham looked into his ward's face, where exquisite beauty was heightened by a flash of generous ardour, and he felt, though he yet would not confess it, that here was a nature for which in his classification of man-kind he had left no place.

"But you altogether lack experience in such affairs," he urged, compelled, in spite of himself, to assume a tone of serious argument very unusual in him. "You will be robbed and pillaged wherever you go."

"For my lack of experience I must try to find a remedy. It is my present intention to apply to some clergyman in one of these neighbourhoods, and to offer him my services in the capacity I have chosen for myself, asking him to afford me the benefit of the experience he must naturally have obtained in the fulfilment of his duties."

"Then you will become what they call a Bible-reader."

"I shall not willingly class myself under that head," replied Helen, "but if I am convinced that good might in some instances be done by reading the Bible aloud, I shall have no hesitation in doing so."
Mr. Gresham smiled, with an expression of humorous despair, and began to pace the room.

"May I hope to have your consent, Mr. Gresham, to what I propose?" asked Helen, when some minutes had thus elapsed.

"If you proceed as you suggest," said her guardian, "and act strictly under the advice of some clergyman, whom, bye-the-by, I must see and have a little talk with, I shall make no further objection, for I am perfectly convinced that a very brief trial will give you a wholesome distaste for these abominations. Would you like to know my opinion of the people you are going to endeavour to benefit?"

"I should, if you please, sir," replied Helen, calmly.

"Very well. In my opinion, then, they are not to be classed with human beings, but rather with the brutes. Persistent self-brutalisation, through many generations, by all the processes of odious vice which the brain of man has ever invented, has brought them to a condition worse, far worse, than that of the dogs or horses that do their bidding. It is my firm belief that their degeneration is actually and literally physical; that the fine organs of virtue in which we possess all that we have of the intellectual and refined, have absolutely perished from their frames; that you might as well endeavour to teach a pig to understand Euclid as to teach
one of these gaol-birds to know and feel what is meant by honesty, virtue, kindness, intellectuality. That they have become such is, I say, the result of their own vices. Unless you can take all the children, one by one, as they are born in these kennels, and remove them to some part of the New World where they shall grow up under the best influences of every kind, so, by degrees, letting the old generations rot away in their foulness, and then, when they are all dead, set fire to the districts they inhabited, totally rebuild them, and fetch back to their renovated homes the young men and women who have grown to maturity, healthy, clean, and educated—unless you can do all that, you need never hope, Helen, to better the condition of the poor of London.”

“That, I fear,” replied Helen, with a sweet smile, “would be beyond my power; and yet I will venture to persevere in the belief that I can better the condition of at least a few. This belief depends upon the view I have formed of their condition, and it is this: Without denying that their vices may have had very much to do with the misery they suffer under, I firmly believe that this misery is in the greatest degree the result of the criminal indifference and the actual cruelty and oppression of the higher ranks of society, those ranks out of which come the leaders of popular fashion and the actual governors of
the country. And even those vices are in a very great measure the result of this indifference and oppression; for does it seem credible that not until this very year have the governors of England made any effort to provide adequate education, even of the simplest kind, for the poor of this country? I should not tell the truth if I denied that these wretched creatures excite horror and disgust in me as often as they excite pity, but I am glad to say that my reason outweighs my mere emotions, and the allowances it makes for them forbid me to regard them with absolute contempt. I will grant that they often seem mere beasts, but I cannot, I will not believe that this is more than seeming. The greatest men that the world has known have ever retained to the last a vivid faith in humanity. If ever I feel disposed to fall into doubt and despair I shall seek consolation in their words, and I doubt not I shall find it.”

“Very well, Helen,” replied Mr. Gresham, with a slight shrug, “far be it from me to act the domestic tyrant. Only acquaint me with your exact plans.”

“I will not fail to do so as soon as they are formed,” returned Helen. And so the interview concluded.

After a few more days spent in investigation, in which she had no aid, Helen obtained the names of three clergymen to whom she
determined to write, offering her services in their respective parishes for charitable and educational purposes. Two of these were Church of England clergymen, the third was a Dissenter. To the first she wrote as follows:—

"Portland Place,
"30th July, 1870.

"Sir,

"Having considerable leisure and some little means at my disposal, it is my desire to employ both in an effort to improve the condition, physical, moral, and intellectual, of at least a few among the multitudes of poverty-stricken people that inhabit the worst districts of London. But as I am quite without experience in such work, and have no adequate knowledge of London, I should be glad if I could place myself under the direction of some clergyman whose acquaintance with such scenes of misery is extensive, and who would be glad of an earnest volunteer to give him some little assistance in his charitable endeavours. It is in consequence of this wish that I venture to address myself to you.

"I must, however, refer to one point which is of essential importance to me. Though my age is but little more than nineteen, I have for some years devoted myself to serious study, one of the results of which has been that I am no longer able to conscientiously
consider myself a member of any of the Christian Churches. Nothing is farther from my thoughts than a desire to press upon you the reasons which have led me to this attitude. I must merely say that for the present it is unalterable, and I could not undertake to devote attention to arguments intended for my conversion. Under these circumstances you will think it strange that I make these offers to a clergyman. My reason is, that as I am myself, I trust, quite free from bigotry in my beliefs, I can also hope that a minister of the Church will bear with what he may consider my errors, and not allow them to stand in the way of any usefulness of which I may be capable. I need hardly say that I should confine my attention solely to the bodily and mental condition of the poor, seeing that I believe it is their bodies and minds that most pressingly call for attention.

"I trust, sir, that the earnestness of my motives may prove an excuse for my freedom in thus addressing you, and beg to remain,

"Yours respectfully,

"HELEN NORMAN."

Alas for the naïveté which could lead a high-minded girl to despatch such a letter to a minister of the Church of England! Two days after sending this to the clergymán who stood first on the list, she received in reply the following note:—
"Madam,

"I am in receipt of your letter of the 30th July, but I may not say that I regret not to accept your offered services. Should I do so, I should be a traitor to the Church and to my God, introducing into my flock a wolf in sheep's clothing, who would devour their souls as surely as Satan will devour the souls of all who, resting on their pride of intellect, reject the authority of Holy Scripture and are guilty of the sin against the Holy Ghost.

"I may add, however, that as money offered for good purposes does not lose in utility from the fact that the giver is devoid of that grace of God which passeth all understanding, and may possibly plead before the throne of the Almighty for the soul of such giver, if you shall be willing to allow me to add your name to the enclosed subscription list for the restoring St. ——'s Church, I shall with pleasure receive your subscription, and have it acknowledged, with other names, in the daily papers.

"In conclusion, I trust you may soon be brought to see the error of your ways, and to wash away in the blood of the Lamb their sins which, I am sure, must be as scarlet. I regret that the extent to which my leisure is occupied does not allow me time to engage in the work of your conversion.

"Yours, in hope and trust,

"———"
This letter caused Helen not a little mirth, and, on being communicated to Mr. Gresham, brought to his face one of those sarcastic smiles which were the best expression of his ordinary mood of mind. He read the present effusion with gusto. It so thoroughly confirmed his view with regard to a very large portion of mankind.

Undaunted, Helen despatched the same letter to the second name upon her list, but, after waiting more than a week, she received no reply whatever. The Dissenting clergyman still remained; and to him at length she wrote. She received, almost by return of post, a note, requesting that she would appoint an hour at which he might have the honour of waiting upon her. Having immediately replied, Helen awaited the stranger’s arrival with some interest.

At the appointed hour she repaired to the library, where she was shortly apprised, by a card, of the arrival of Mr. Edgar Walton Heatherley, who was accordingly introduced.

Helen had exerted her imagination considerably in endeavours todepicture Mr. Heatherley’s personal appearance, and, strange to say, the original did not rudely overturn her preconceived notions. She liked the man as soon as she saw him. He was evidently young, and his countenance slightly florid in complexion, with but a moderate growth of rather reddish whiskers and mous-
tache, had an open, pleasing, intelligent air, though its lines were not regular enough to constitute a handsome face. Its expression bespoke, moreover, considerable firmness. The eye was honest and cheerful, proclaiming immediately the total absence of all cant, hypocrisy, or bigotry. He was decidedly tall and almost athletic in frame, holding himself as upright as a soldier. It was apparent at the first glance that Mr. Heatherley was no town growth, but had drunk in health and spirits during his earlier years from the fresh breezes of meadow, wood and hill. He was a man whose character could at once be determined from his face and form. Inspiring confidence himself, he had the hearty manners of one who was wont to thoroughly confide in his acquaintances. Here there was no trace of the execrable theory of believing every man a rogue till he be proved honest. Rather was it written in plain characters upon his open brow, that he never suspected without overpowering cause, and, even if deceived seventy times seven, would not cease to cling to his gospel of eternal trust and hope.

Helen advanced to meet him with her wonted open smile. They were friends from the first glance. After exchanging the ordinary greeting, they resumed seats, and Helen introduced the subject of the conversation.

"My letter will have acquainted you with almost all that I wish to say," she began.
"Your reply contained nothing beyond the request for an interview. May I suppose that you look favourably upon my proposition?"

"The character of your letter, Miss Norman," returned the other, speaking in very firm and rather quick tones, "from the first inclined me to do so. But I am now not so sure as I was."

"Indeed? Why not?"

"I am but little acquainted with the West End of London," replied Mr. Heatherley, "and I did not know Portland Place at all. I fear that residence in the midst of such refinement is hardly a good preparation for work among our East End courts and alleys. Have you any idea, Miss Norman, of the character of the task for which you volunteer?"

"A very exact idea, I believe, Mr. Heatherley."

"You have seen the worst part of the East End?"

"I believe so."

"And you think you possess the courage to face their horrors day after day?"

"I am sure of it, sir."

Mr. Heatherley examined the girl's face for an instant, dropped his eyes, bit his lower lip and mused.

"You will excuse my cross-examination, Miss Norman. Whatever I undertake it is with my whole heart. If I thought this were
an idle fancy of a wealthy young lady, possessed of rather too much leisure, I should grieve that I had wasted time over it."

"I like your frankness, Mr. Heatherley," replied Helen, smilingly. "As far as I know my own character, I think I may say that I, also, whatever I undertake, do it with my whole heart. My energy has as yet had no fields for exercise but those of learning, it is true; yet I have there learned some confidence in my own powers of perseverance."

"So far, so good," said the clergyman, who had keenly watched Helen's countenance as she spoke. "But I believe you told me you were a minor, Miss Norman. Have you parents living, may I ask?"

"Neither parents nor any near relatives. I am living with my guardian, Mr. Gresham."

"And have you informed Mr. Gresham of your intention to undertake this work?"

"I have, and have obtained his consent, with the proviso that he should see and become acquainted with the clergyman under whose direction I placed myself."

"Good," replied Mr. Heatherley sententiously; then sunk into reflection.

"You have not yet touched upon the second portion of my letter," said Helen, at length, looking with some timidity into the clergyman's face. The latter raised his eyes, and they gazed at each other for several seconds, neither faltering.
"Am I right in concluding from the tenor of your letter," asked the clergyman, "that you have no intention of propagating your special views among the poor people you visit?"

"You are, Mr. Heatherley."

"Would you oblige me by stating exactly in what light you regard the matter of religious teaching?"

"I will do so as well as I can. My own religion teaches me to confine my thoughts to the present world, and it appears to me that one of the most pressing needs under which the world suffers is that of attention to the bodily and mental state of the poorest classes. For my own part, I regard the necessity of their having enough food, and being able to read and write, as much more urgent than the necessity of their being taught religious dogmas, which, in my belief, would exercise a scarcely appreciable influence upon their lives. You, Mr. Heatherley, are, of course, of a different opinion in this matter. You exert yourself to the uttermost to make them religious; and, whilst you may do good in this, you certainly do no active harm. For the comprehension of my creeds, considerable culture is necessary, and it would be madness to attempt to make poor ignorant working-people understand them. Under these circumstances it appears to me that I cannot do better than devote my attention to
clothing, feeding and in some degree teaching them; to the former two on the score of compassion, to the latter because it is the only true way of rendering the results of charity enduring."

"Very well, Miss Norman. At least your position is intelligible. Such being the case, I suppose it would be impossible for you to join any of the charitable associations founded on a religious basis?"

"If you think it possible, I had rather—at present, at all events—work alone."

"You have plans, doubtless? You have thought out methods of procedure?"

"I have thought much on the subject, but shall require much advice from you."

"Well," returned the clergyman, after a slight pause, "it would perhaps be the best way for us to walk over my neighbourhood together."

"Certainly. When might I come to you?"

"Could we say to-morrow at ten?" asked Mr. Heatherley, in his decisive manner.

"I shall be punctual," replied Helen, at once. "And now, if you will excuse me, I will inform Mr. Gresham that you are at liberty to see him."

They shook hands, Mr. Heatherley smiling pleasantly, as Helen repeated—"To-morrow at ten." She then disappeared, and the next moment Mr. Gresham entered the room.
Had Mr. Gresham been a sincere man, even to himself, he would have inwardly confessed that the applicability of his law of universal doubt had now found a second exception. In the depths of his heart he knew that Helen Norman was truth incarnate; and now on first beholding Mr. Heatherley he felt instinctively that here was a man in whom he could absolutely trust. But the yoke of old habit was too strong for him, and he commenced the conversation with that ironical smile which betokened distrust of all things human or divine.

"You must understand, Mr. Heatherley," he began, "that I have given my consent to this freak of Miss Norman's simply because I wish her to be cured as quickly as possible of certain girlish fancies that have taken possession of her lately. She has just returned from a two years' stay in Germany, and she appears to have come back a trifle eccentric. Vigorous treatment, I imagine, is the best for this ailment. Let her by all means disgust herself with a peep into these eastern dens of yours. I only hope she won't bring us some infectious disease here, that's all."

"Miss Norman has not long exhibited these philanthropic tendencies, sir?"

"Pooh!—of course not. Only let her have a few days' experience. She will perhaps throw away a little money, but that
is fortunately of no great consequence. We shall have her back cured, and then an end of it."

"Are you sure you gauge this young lady's character quite correctly?" asked the clergyman, who had hitherto regarded Mr. Gresham's face with an observant eye.

"Do you imagine the contrary, Mr. Heatherley?"

"I do, sir."

"From anything in particular she has said to you?"

"From her countenance and the tenor of her discourse. I fancy the trial will last longer than you imagine, Mr Gresham."

"Well, well; we shall see," said the artist, with careless good-humour. "I confess to but little faith in enthusiasm of any kind."

"And yet, sir, it has been the most powerful operative force in the world's history," returned the clergyman, in his decisive manner.

"That, of course, is a matter of argument," said the artist, turning slightly away. "But having seen you, Mr. Heatherley," he pursued, "I have fulfilled my object, which was merely to be sure that my ward had placed herself in the care of a responsible man. Possibly you could find time to see me again, say this day week? We shall then see more clearly the course that events are likely to take."
"I shall have pleasure in doing so," returned the clergyman.

Whereupon they parted, Mr. Gresham ascending to his studio, whistling a subdued air, and smiling the while; Mr. Heatherley turning his face eastward, musing much with serious countenance.
CHAPTER II.

WAYS AND MEANS.

Mr. Heatherley lived in a pair of agreeable rooms on the ground-floor in a street a short distance from the City Road. Here Helen Norman arrived on the following morning, after some little difficulty in discovering the address, and was admitted by a most unusually neat servant girl, the sight of whom impressed her with the feeling that this neatness was directly or indirectly due to Mr. Heatherley's presence in the house. On entering the parlour she found the clergyman seated at the table, side by side with a very shock-headed youngster of some twelve years old, who appeared to have been reading aloud from an open book before him.

"Well, that will do for this morning, James," said Mr. Heatherley, after rising and requesting his visitor to be seated. "Rather better than usual, I think. Look over bonus, niger, and tristis again for Monday's lesson. Good-bye."

The lad collected his books together and went off at a sort of trot, turning towards Helen, as he went out, a bright though rather ugly face.
"A little pupil of mine," said the clergyman, by way of explanation. "His parents are unable to give him more than a very poor education, and as he is a sharp little chap I have got into the way of teaching him a little at odd times. On Saturday he doesn't go to school, so we have our lessons rather later than usual. I am glad we have a fine morning, Miss Norman. I almost think we had better take our walk first of all, then return and discuss your plans with the work fresh in our minds. Do you approve?"

As he spoke, he arranged a few books which he took from the table in their places in a well-filled book-case. Helen replied to his proposition with a cheerful assent, watching him the while.

"Latin, I suppose, you have not attempted to subdue?" he asked, turning a curious face towards his visitor.

"I can read Virgil and Horace with tolerable ease," replied Helen. "But I am afraid my knowledge of the niceties of the language is very imperfect."

"And Greek?" said Mr. Heatherley, without affecting surprise.

"Of Greek I have a very trifling knowledge."

"Young ladies usually devote more attention to modern than to ancient languages, I believe," said the clergyman.

"And I am no exception to the rule," replied Helen.
"You know Italian?"
"Pretty well."
"Ha! I envy you. I have a desperate desire to read Dante in the original—but time, time, time!"
"You would very quickly learn sufficient of the language for that," said Helen, smiling slightly.
"You think so? Ah, well, I must make an attempt one of these days. In the meantime we have our work before us, Miss Norman. You are ready?"
"Quite."
"Good. Then we will set out."
As they issued into the street, Mr. Heatherley consulted a small note-book, in which appeared to be jotted memoranda concerning the poor he visited daily. Conversing agreeably as he walked—always in the same pithy, energetic language, showing considerable information, both as regards books and men, and always such a healthy freedom from mere conventionality that Helen felt herself more and more at home with him—he led his companion by degrees into dark, dirty, narrow streets, where low-browed arches frowned on either side, leading off into courts and alleys of indescribable foulness, and over-running with a population as horrible to view as their own abodes.
"Now," said the clergyman, as they paused for a moment to gaze down a court
not more than three feet wide, the entrance into which was down a flight of broken stone steps, and at the other end of which was just visible another low archway precisely like the entrance to a kennel, "I should neither advise nor permit you, Miss Norman, to venture into places such as that. The worst of these courts are the haunts of such unutterable brutality and wickedness that it is often dangerous for hardy men to venture into them. For a woman to do so would be folly. It would be quite impossible for her to do good there at all adequate to the risk she ran. I trust that you will confine your visits to these wider streets. God knows there is enough wickedness everywhere in this neighbourhood, but you are not so remote from assistance in the open streets. And here we come to our first place of call. If you will follow me I will enter here."

They stood before a second-hand clothes shop, the front of which was quite open to the street, where an old woman and a young girl sat on the floor amidst heaps of ragged clothing, stitching remnants together to form saleable articles. They looked up as the clergyman entered, and the old woman nodded a palsy-stricken head, the total baldness of which gave her a hideous appearance, and began to mutter unintelligibly between her bare gums.

"What does your grandmother say,
Kitty?” asked Mr. Heatherley of the young girl.

The latter bent her ear close to the old woman’s mouth before replying.

“She says she’s better to-day. She’s been a wearin’ the flannel you giv’ her for her rheumatics, and she thinks as how it done her good.”

“That’s right. I’m glad to hear it. Is your mother in, Kitty?”

“She’s gone to the station,” replied the girl.

“What now? More trouble between her and your father?”

“Father come ’ome this mornin’ drunker than ever,” said the girl, in a matter of fact way, continuing her stitching as she spoke. “Mother got up, and they begun to ’ave words; an’ then father ’it her on the ’ead with his boot-heel, as he’d just took horff. And mother’s ’ead bleeded—my! how it did bleed! An’ so she’s gone to the station for another summons, you see.”

Mr. Heatherley glanced at Helen to see the effect of this city-idyl upon her. She was rather paler than usual, but listened attentively to what was said.

“And where’s your father?” pursued the clergyman.

“Well, father got mad like, you see, at some words as mother used to him about ’Arry as used to lodge ’ere. She said as ’ow
he'd have been a better 'usbin to her than father ever was. So father got mad like, an' he said as he'd go and murder 'Arry this mornin'. An' he's gone to do it."

The calm naïveté with which the girl uttered these last words chilled Helen's very blood. The clergyman, more accustomed to such remarks, reassured her with a look, and proceeded with the conversation.

"Any new lodgers yet, Kitty?"

"Yes, there's one—a young woman in the third floor back. Leatswise so mother tell'd me. I ain't seen her."

"What does she do?"

"Don't do nothink, mother said."

"How does she pay for her lodging then?"

"Don't know."

"I suppose she's out now?"

"No; she ain't comed out this mornin' yet, cos I's been here sen' seven o'clock."

"Is she ill?"

"Very like."

"Could we go up to see her?"

"Why not? Don't suppose as you'll steal nothink, Mr. 'Eatherley!"

Leave thus graciously granted, Mr. Heatherley led the way through the shop into a pitch-dark passage, where he was obliged to strike a match, a box of which he fortunately carried in his pocket, before he could venture to lead Helen up the mouldy staircase. The walls, Helen observed, had once been papered,
but they now so reeked with damp that only an old strip or two still hung loose to indicate where the paper had been. She could feel the stairs often bend beneath her feet, so rotten were they. On reaching the third floor they tapped at the back-room door, and received permission to enter, delivered in a shrill, childish voice.

In a garret, empty but for a small iron bedstead and a wooden stool, sat, upon the latter article, a child, whose age the visitors at first put down for some twelve years. She was dressed in rags which scarcely concealed her nakedness, and on her lap lay an infant sleeping. The elder child's face was thick with grime, the only places where the original colour of the skin could be discovered being narrow streaks from the corners of the eyes, a sufficient indication that she cried long and frequently. She seemed frightened at the entrance of the strangers, and quickly stood up, gathering the infant carefully in her arms.

Mr. Heatherley instinctively yielded place to Helen. She seemed the more suitable person to commence the conversation.

"They told us down-stairs," said Helen, "that there was a lodger here who was in want of employment. Is it you, my poor child?"

"Yes, mum. I's got no 'ployment. I on'ly wish I 'ad."
“But are you quite alone here?”
“Yes, mum.”
“Have you no father or mother?”
“Both doin’ six weeks, mum.”
Helen looked interrogatively at Mr. Heatherley, who whispered that she meant to say her parents were both in prison for six weeks.
“But how do you feed your little sister? Is it sister or brother?”
“It’s my child, mum,” said the little creature, with perfect simplicity, without a trace of shame.
“What! your child!”
“Yes, mum,” returned the other, surprised at the astonishment her remark had excited.
“But—but how old are you?” asked Helen, blushing as she spoke.
“Turned fifteen, mum.”
Here Mr. Heatherley came forward.
“If you will speak to this poor child for a few minutes, Miss Norman,” he said, “I will return directly. There is another lodger below I should like to see.”
He left the room, and Helen, after a brief pause, continued her questions.
“Are—are you married?” she asked.
“No, mum, not yet,” returned the child.
“Does the father of your child support you now?”
“No, mum, not yet.”
“Who is he? What does he do?”
"He's a butcher-boy, mum."

"Does he mean to marry you?"

"Some day, mum. When he gets fifteen shillin' a week, that is."

"How much does he get now?"

"Nine an' six, mum."

"But how are you going to live for the present?" asked Helen, bending down to stroke the miserable little baby's face, at which a look of pleasure and pride lit up the young mother's countenance.

"He's big for his age, an' he grows every day, mum, he does," she remarked.

Helen could scarcely restrain the tears from rushing to her eyes.

"How are you living now?" she repeated.

"I've got four shillin's as mother give me the night afore she was locked up, mum, an' that'll last me a few days. And when that's gone, I—I—oh, I really don't know what I'll do, mum!"

Here, for the first time, her fortitude broke down, and she wept bitterly. The baby set up a piercing shriek out of sympathy, and Helen's tears at length refused to be held back. At this moment Mr. Heatherley again entered the room.

"Are you quite well?" asked Helen, hastily brushing away her tears with a handkerchief.

"Yes, mum, thanke, mum."

"Take this, then, for the present," she
said, pressing two half-crowns into the child’s dirty palm, “and buy better food. Would you like me to come and see you again in a day or two to see how the little baby gets on?”

“O yes, mum; I should, please, mum!” exclaimed the child, a radiant look upon her dirty face which Helen felt to be a heavenly reward for her little kindness.

“I will do so then. And I will tell the people below to find some clothes to fit you, as soon as possible, and some for the baby, too. Have you no wash-hand basin?”

“No, mum.”

“Where do you wash, then?”

“The tap in the wash’us, mum.”

“If I send you a jug and basin you will promise me to use it twice a day till I come again?”

“I’d be glad to, mum.”

“Very well. Good-bye for the present, then.”

And, bending once more to pat the baby’s cheek, she left the room, followed by Mr. Heatherley. On reaching the shop she soon made arrangements with regard to the clothing and the utensils, after which they bade the old woman and her grand-daughter good-bye, and issued again into the street.

“I must warn you, Miss Norman,” said the clergyman, as they walked on, “against being too easily caught by affecting stories.
I believe this is a really deserving case, but you will often be seriously imposed upon. I should advise you never to give much money at once. In any cases where you think more extensive relief desirable we will always appoint a meeting at the chapel with the people. It is often easier to arrive at a correct judgment of the poor when they are away from their ordinary horrible surroundings."

After this they paid many visits, passing from one haunt of abominations to another, from one scene of heart-rending sufferings to another, till the morning had worn away. Everywhere Helen admired Mr. Heatherley’s kindness and readiness of speech, his thorough acquaintance with the circumstances of those he visited, his broad charity when faults seemed to call for reprobation, his entire devotion to the work of alleviating wretchedness. When she began to feel weary and weak in consequence of the long walk and the excessive pressure upon her sympathies wherever they went, she admired and envied, too, the robustness of frame which rendered such a morning as this but child’s play to her guide.

On their return to Mr. Heatherley’s, they found a light lunch ready laid for them. Helen did not disguise her need of rest and refreshment, and frankly accepted the clergyman’s friendly attentions. For a time she was very silent, her thoughts busy with the
morning's experiences, and with the devising of plans for future efforts. The clergyman was the first to commence the conversation.

"When we remember our Poor Laws, our hospitals, all our great efforts of public charity and private benevolence, one who had not visited these poor neighbourhoods could scarcely believe that such misery existed."

"It is an all-sufficing proof," returned Helen, "that neither the public nor the private charity is well conducted. And yet it is, perhaps, unjust to speak so of the latter. In the midst of a social chaos, such as ours, individual effort must necessarily be poor in results. Is it not a disgrace to our civilisation, Mr. Heatherley, that such exertions as ours should be needful?"

"It used to be a favourite mental exercise with me," replied the clergyman, smiling, "to originate schemes of future Utopias. But I fear I now see only too clearly the futility of all such dreams. The powers of Government are slight, Miss Norman, when weighed in the balance against human passions."

"Then you cannot hope for a state of society in which disgraceful poverty, such as that we have witnessed this morning, will no longer exist, in which the will to earn a respectable livelihood shall be equivalent to success?"

"My hopes are unbounded," replied Mr.
Heatherley, rather sadly, "but my expectations, when confined to this life, are of the most modest character."

The phrase "this life" jarred terribly on Helen's ears. Enthusiastic as she was for the future of humanity, she could scarcely restrain a hasty answer; but good taste withheld her from rudely shocking the clergyman's ears.

"Well," she replied, with a smile and a slight sigh, "it is this life in which I am principally interested, and doubtless you would laugh at me if I expressed to you all my expectations regarding it. When in Germany I thought and read much on social matters, and in the end formed my own theories as to the future constitution of society. But as such hopes have by no means reference to any immediate future, I may say that my stand-point is one with your own, Mr. Heatherley, in all practical matters. Whilst I know that even at this moment history is bringing about such changes for us as we cannot dream of, I am content in the meantime to do my little utmost towards rendering the transition somewhat easier. I have not much patience with those who look so much to the future, and stop their ears against the groans of the present. I tell you this, Mr. Heatherley, that you may understand more clearly the source of my eagerness to be a worker, that you may feel more
convinced that my conduct is something beyond mere caprice, as you expressed it yesterday."

The clergyman watched Helen calmly as she spoke, and then sank once more into thought. He seemed to be endeavouring to get at the bottom of her character, and the task appeared to be a troublesome one.

"You have studied in Germany, Miss Norman?" he asked at length.

"For about two years; I only returned a little more than a fortnight ago. I think," she continued, after a short silence, "that I ought to give you some slight information with regard to myself; I am sure you think me somewhat bizarre; perhaps you even condemn me for being too forward."

"You interest me much, Miss Norman," replied Mr. Heatherley, in his frank way, "but, as yet, I have seen nothing in your conduct to warrant condemnation."

"The truth is," pursued Helen, "I have always lived a rather solitary life, my only companions being people very much older than myself. My father was a clergyman; he died nearly four years ago. I have never been to a school in the ordinary way, but have studied privately with tutors and professors. For several years before my father's death I lived with him in the south of France. We hardly mixed with society, and as rarely anyone except some relations visited us."
In Germany, too, I made very few acquaintances, and those were grave, thoughtful people. These influences may, in some degree, explain to you my habit of mind."

"Was your father a clergyman of the English Church?"

Helen replied affirmatively, and there was again silence.

"There is also another matter," resumed Helen, "not without importance at present. My father left me at his death considerable wealth, and, though I am still a ward, my guardian allows me great freedom in disposing of this. I mention this, not for its own sake, but because I am bent upon carrying out one or two rather extensive schemes. I could not be satisfied with merely relieving a few individual cases of distress; when my means enable me, I trust, to do much more."

"Would you let me hear a few of your plans?"

"Naturally they are at present mere outlines," pursued Helen, her eyes glowing with pleasure, and her tones becoming more rapid as she unfolded her thoughts. "I shall depend very greatly upon your suggestions in the practical details. First of all, then, I shall visit these haunts of poverty day after day, and do my best to become acquainted with the most pressing needs, and to learn the best ways of meeting them. I shall endeavour to gain the personal confidence of
these poor people, so that they will freely impart to me their difficulties, and allow me to help them in the most effectual way. Then, as I am firmly convinced that no radical change for the better can take place in these people's condition till they are educated, I shall endeavour to establish a free evening school for girls, principally for those who are engaged in earning their living, and who have never had the opportunity of being taught anything. Then, again, it has seemed to me that some good provision might be made for those suffering from illness. You tell me that the public hospitals are by no means sufficient to deal with these wants, so I would suggest something of this kind. Suppose I were to establish a good dispensary in the centre of this district, and to find one or two earnest physicians, who would be willing to attend there for certain hours every day—of course receiving adequate compensation for their work—the poor who wished to avail themselves of the dispensary could then apply either to you or to me, and we, if we thought fit, would give them tickets entitling them to gratuitous advice and medicine. The physicians would report to me any especially noticeable cases, and I should then be able to provide needful things which would be beyond the people's own power to purchase. Do you think this a practicable scheme, Mr. Heatherley?

"With care I think it might be made so,"
replied the clergyman, after a moment's thought, his tone and countenance showing that he derived much pleasure from these suggestions.

"I fear I shall burden you with work," went on Helen, "if you are good enough to undertake to assist me. But, above all, I wish everything to be done with the utmost quietness. Publicity of my efforts would be the very last thing I should desire; for, of course, they will be nothing more than efforts for a long time. But I should like to lose no time in putting my theories into practice. Doubtless you could at once name several girls who could be induced to attend an evening class?"

"I think I could," replied Mr. Heatherley, cautiously; "but the hour would necessarily have to be late. I should think eight o'clock would be the earliest practicable. Your pupils would, for the most part, be engaged in work-rooms, and they rarely regain their liberty before half-past seven."

"Oh, I would arrange for any hour, of course. And do you think I could find a physician to undertake the dispensary work?"

"I do not myself know of one," replied the clergyman, reflecting. "Probably we should be obliged to have recourse to advertisement. In the nature of things it would not be a very difficult matter."

"Then I may conclude that you approve these two plans?"
"I do, heartily; and will help you with my utmost power, Miss Norman."

"Thank you, thank you," returned Helen, fervently. "Oh," she continued, "I have many more plans, some even more extensive still, but at present they are too immature; I must gain experience. But, in the meantime, promise me, Mr. Heatherley, that you will never let a deserving case of poverty go unrelieved as long as I have the means of charity. Charity! I hate the word! It is justice to these poor sufferers to share my wealth with them! What right have I to such a superfluity?"

The conversation lasted for some half hour longer, during which many plans were discussed and some details of work arranged. When at length Helen rose to go, Mr. Heatherley, on shaking hands with her, said, solemnly—

"Miss Norman, though you deny the authority of Christ, you nevertheless are eager in His service."

It was with a joyous heart that the noble girl returned home. The same evening she wrote to her friend, Dr. Gürelin, a long account of her plans in a letter where every word throbbed, as it were, with fine enthusiasm. When she retired late at night it was only to spend many long wakeful hours, rendered restless by impatient longing for the new day.
CHAPTER III.

MANY-COLOURED LIFE.

These were happy days for Arthur Golding, destined, indeed, to be the happiest of his life. Whilst he was hard at work all day with crayon or brush, studying theoretical works till far into the night, or rising with the sun to convert the theory into practice—whilst his thoughts between sleep and sleep, and all the happy visions which circled around his mind during the hours of repose, had their origin in but one idea, that the result of all this delightful labour would before long declare itself to the world in the shape of fame and fortune—he little knew that this labour must be its own reward, or look for none at all; that the happiness he yearned for was now absolutely existent, that the future held for him no single day that would not appear gloomy by the side of these glowing hours.

Similarly Helen Norman was progressing day by day in the struggle upwards and onwards, but in her case there was more consciousness of effort, and less of advance. Though she seemed to have chosen between two paths, resigning the constant care of her
own intellect in favour of weary, and often seemingly ungrateful, labour in the cause of others, there was in reality no one of her thousand acts of sweetness, charity, and perseverance but reacted with tenfold effect upon her own nature, rendering her day by day more patient and enduring, as well as bolder, in the campaign against the mistakes and the vices of society upon which she had entered. For her, too, in all likelihood, this was the happiest period of her life, though she was as little conscious of the fact as Arthur. In these days, when the energy of young enthusiasm wrought up her strength to the performance of any severe or disgusting toil, when as yet she could see nothing but the bright results of her efforts, and firmly believed that every new day would add to this brightness, she did indeed experience true happiness. When Mr. Heatherley met her from time to time in the course of her daily visits, and saw her lovely features aglow with the fire of boundless benevolence, and that active virtue, which is so very different a thing from the mere passive virtue upon which her sex, for the most part, prides itself, he could not but marvel in his mind that any impulse other than that of religion could give the spur to such wonderful exertions.

On the other hand, the more Helen saw of the clergyman the more she respected him.
If he marvelled at the inspiration which Helen derived from her natural religion, the latter, in her turn, could not but admire Mr. Heatherley's abounding charity. For, with a generous divergence from the letter of his creed, the latter held that the merit of good works was not solely dependent upon the faith of their performer; there was such a thing, he maintained, as unconsciously fulfilling the Gospel; and, far from esteeming error damnable, he looked upon it as deserving the most tender pity and consideration. So, from the first, Helen Norman, with her noble and generous freethinking, had been to Mr. Heatherley an object of wonder, at times almost of reverence. Was it not a truth that the ways of God are not the ways of men, and could he for a moment believe that the eternal law of justice would permit the co-existence in one bosom of such heavenly purity of intention with heresy in doctrine nothing less than blasphemous? Surely this was but one phase in the life of a soul struggling towards the truth.

Despite all this, Helen was frequently made to feel those other points, besides mere intellectual attitude, upon which there was no contact between them. Whereas her own nature was richly poetical—esteeeming poetry the perfection of the noble faculty of speech, as the highest outward expression of that law of perpetual striving which alone she
worshipped—Mr. Heatherley's, she soon learnt, was only in a very moderate degree appreciative of anything apart from the hard details of social life. They agreed in believing that, for the present, their scene of duty was the earth, their work amidst the misery with which it abounded; but whilst Helen idealised everything she looked upon, he viewed all things alike in the light of common day; where she saw higher significances, he saw merely facts. Such was indeed the necessary result of their difference in religious views. The man who convinces himself that he has ever at his elbow the key to the mystery of the universe, whose profession it is to make manifest to the world that he has this key, and to apply it for everyone's behoof, who conceives that the great laws of duty have long ago been written down in black and white for the use of man, and are not capable of discovery otherwise; such a man cannot but regard the world in a more or less prosaic light, compared with the point of view of one who recognises no patent key as in existence, for whom the mystery of life and death begins and ends with a vast doubt, whose every thought is the fruit of, and leads to, boundless conjecture, and who is compelled at length to confess with the poet, that

Beauty is truth, truth beauty, that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.
Some such thoughts as these had occupied Helen’s mind on her way homeward one afternoon early in August, when in body she was fatigued almost past endurance, though her reflecting powers were no less vivid than ordinary. On her arrival in Portland Place, instead of mounting to her room she repaired forthwith to the library, which she knew was always empty at this hour, after giving orders that a cup of tea should be brought to her there. Throwing off her hat, she allowed herself to sink into the luxury of an easy chair, and was continuing her reflections, when the door opened suddenly and Maud entered, equipped for riding.

“You here!” she exclaimed to Helen. “I was that moment imagining you in some frightful cellar, or else garrett, scattering your gold like a beneficent fairy to a whole family of destitute drunkards. But really, Helen, you are as pale as a ghost. You are working yourself to death, depend upon it. If I were an Irishwoman, I would add that you will acknowledge I am right when you actually are dead. I just came in to have a look at my pistols. I think you haven’t seen them yet?”

With that she proceeded to open one of the drawers in the centre-table, of which she took the key from her pocket, and to take from it two small American revolvers, holding one in each hand, and regarding them with
the peculiar ironical smile which she had learnt from her father.

"They're both loaded," she said, calmly.

"Do you say they are yours, Maud?" asked Helen, in surprise.

"Yes; I bought them in the Strand, last Monday."

"But whatever for?"

"What for? Why, you know I am on the point of being married."

"And what is the connection between the two circumstances?" asked Helen.

Maud shrugged her shoulders, once more examined the pistols carefully, replaced them in the drawer, and locked them up.

"One can never foresee what may happen," she said at length. "Supposing robbers broke into one's room at night. There are a thousand contingencies rendering the possession of such little defenders very desirable."

Helen was silent and thoughtful. At this moment a servant brought in her tea.

"Bring me a cup, too, will you, Mary?" said Maud. Then, turning to her friend, "It will strengthen me to endure my ride."

"Where is your ride to be to-day?" asked Helen.

"Where, my dear child? Why, in the Row, of course. Where else can a civilised person ride, I should like to know. Waghorn calls for me at four."

"Do you enjoy your ride in the Row?"
“Enjoy it? My dear Helen, you grow more naïve every day. Is it meant to be enjoyed, think you? Do you suppose that any soul ever does enjoy it?”

“It is somewhat difficult to account for their persisting in the practice if it brings them no enjoyment,” returned Helen.

“Duty, Helen, duty. Do not suppose that you philanthropists monopolise that article. We go to the Row to show ourselves, and purely from a sense of duty. Society requires it of us. Who would venture to question the dictates of society?”

“But I suppose the dictates of society are sometimes one with those of pleasure?”

“Give me a single instance in which they are,” returned Maud, “and I'll—allow you to congratulate me on my wedding-day. Which, bye-the-by, I herewith seriously forbid you to do, Helen Norman.”

“You mean it?”

“I mean it.”

“May I ask why?”

“Because I esteem you too highly, my dear girl, to allow you to make a hypocrite of yourself out of deference to these same social rules of which we have been speaking.”

There was silence for some time, which Helen was the first to break.

“You could hardly regard the concert last night as disagreeable,” she said. “Mr. Gresham told me that it was admirable.”
“Never trust papa,” returned Maud, “especially when he praises anything or anybody. He does so purely out of deference to your optimistic views; for, you must know, papa is a trifle afraid of you. I assure you the concert was fatiguing to the last degree.”

“Do you ever enjoy anything, Maud?”

“Yes, Helen.”

“What, may I ask?”

“Why, talking with you. It seems to do me good to mingle my insipid ideas with your vigorous, healthy thoughts. It refreshes me to come into contact with your genuine nature, after feeding my littleness upon the affected admiration of fools. You see I can be severe in a downright manner when I chose, Helen, and upon myself, too.”

Helen did not reply, but enjoyed her tea with gravity.

“Do you know, Helen,” pursued the talkative young lady, “I have only seen one person in my life very much like you. Can you guess who it is?”

“I fear not.”

“You will be surprised. I mean Mr. Golding.”

Helen looked up with a surprised smile.

“What are the points of resemblance?” she asked.

“Many. You are both grave habitually, and enthusiastic upon occasion. You are
both furious advocates of what you will permit me to call the *canaille*, their rights and wrongs. You have both a manner of smiling quite peculiar, and which, to atone for the other expression, I may perhaps be permitted to call angelic. Also you are both, in conclusion, extraordinarily good-looking."

"How can you know all this of Mr. Golding?" asked Helen, smiling.

"Oh, I frequently have a little conversation with him in the studio of a morning. I find him rather interesting."

"Upon what subjects has he waxed enthusiastic to you?"

"Principally upon the merits of an old gentleman with whom, it seems, he has lived for many years, but whose name is a trifle uncouth, and I forget it. Oh, I know! Tollady—Mr. Tollady. To hear Mr. Golding speak of him, he must be an angel, before whom even you, Helen, must veil your wings. He impoverishes himself by giving to the poor, and has been known to walk home shoeless at night that a beggar's feet might be shod."

Helen listened with an expression of the most lively interest upon her features, but made no remark.

"But I shall cease my connection with Mr. Golding," pursued Maud.

"Why?"

"His enthusiasm is contagious. If I
talked to him for an hour every day during a week he would scatter my calm philosophy to the winds."

Helen made no reply.

"It is very unfortunate," said Maud, "that his position is so ambiguous."

"In what sense ambiguous?" asked Helen.

"Why, you know, he is not, to begin with, what the world calls a gentleman."

"Indeed! Has he been rude to you?"

"Far from it."

"What has he done, then, to forfeit the title of a gentleman?"

"He never owned it, Helen. He must have been as poor as a church mouse all his life, and Heaven forbid that he should disclose how he got his living always."

"Are you speaking seriously, Maud?"

"Quite seriously, Helen, as the mouthpiece of the world, which you know is the character I love to adopt."

"But as the mouthpiece of your own thoughts?"

"Why, what is your opinion?"

"I never saw him act, or heard him speak otherwise than as a gentleman, on the two occasions I had for speaking to him."

"Well, when I speak of his ambiguous position, I mean to say one is not quite sure whether one ought to talk to him as an equal or not."
"That I consider an unworthy doubt, Maud."

"You have no scruples in the matter?"

"I confess that I have not. If I wish to do so, I shall speak with as much freedom to Mr. Golding as to Mr. Gresham."

"You consider him an equal?"

"In many respects, my superior," replied Helen, unconsciously straightening herself, as was her habit when desirous of speaking with special force. "As an artist he has shown that he possesses genius, and that is a property I bow to wherever I meet it."

"The genius Mr. Golding owns is, unfortunately, not always so useful as its namesakes of the "Arabian Nights." Genius is highly agreeable company in the world's estimation as long as it is able to keep a carriage; but genius in rags is the most objectionable of mendicants."

"And can you rank yourself, Maud, on the side of a world with principles such as these?"

"Don't say can; the proper word is must. Depend upon it, the world is too strong for an individual will to combat. It will conquer, sooner or later. The difference between you and me, Helen, is, that whilst you are determined to fight out the struggle to the bitter end, I, rather more sensible, I flatter myself, calculate the chances to begin with, and give in at once."
"Well," said Helen, with a sigh, "if I am fated to be beaten, I still think it will be a consolation to me to remember that I struggled. But why do you always practise this insincerity with me, Maud? I know quite well you think far other than you speak."

"You know that?"

"I am sure of it."

"Well, well. Then you know more of me, Helen, than I do of myself. But here is John. You are very late, sir."

These words were addressed to Mr. John Waghorn, who just then entered the library, looking, if possible, even more respectable in his riding clothes than he had done in evening dress.

There was, however, to-day, a certain sallowness in his cheeks, and a slight heaviness about the eyes, which, in any less respectable man, would have awakened a strong suspicion that he had been "making a night of it" the evening before, and had but very lately risen from bed. In Mr. John Waghorn's case this supposition was, of course, inadmissible. Doubtless the "seedy" look could be attributed to undue strain in business matters.

"May not we have the pleasure of Miss Norman's company?" he asked, in an accent of much politeness.

"Thank you," returned Helen, with a not
altogether successful effort to conceal the dislike she had of the speaker; "I never ride."

"Pity, that," remarked Mr. Waghorn. "The Row is a loser by your absence."

"I thought you had already learnt that Miss Norman does not care for compliments," put in Maud. "Besides, all your esprit in that direction should be reserved for me. Are you ready?"

"I wait your pleasure," returned Mr. Waghorn, turning to Maud with a smile of remarkable insipidity, very different from the bold look of genuine admiration with which his eyes had rested upon Helen.

They walked together to the front door, where their horses awaited them, and rode away in silence, with a distance of ten feet between them. Strangers viewing them as they passed took them for man and wife.

Helen, when left alone, took up her hat with a sigh, and ascended to her room. As she passed the studio she saw the curtain drawn aside from the door, which stood wide open.

"Maud!" cried Mr. Gresham's voice from within.

"It is I, Mr. Gresham," said Helen, entering the room. "Maud has this moment gone for her ride."

"Ha!" returned the artist, in an abstracted tone. Then added, with an affec-
tation of indifference, "Did you see Wag-
horn?"

"For a moment."

"He—he wasn't quite well, was he?"

"I didn't hear him say so," replied Helen;
"but I thought he appeared to have a head-
ache."

Mr. Gresham was standing at his easel,
palette and brushes in hand, and between
his words he hummed a tune carelessly.
Suddenly he faced Helen.

"I suppose I shall have to give you away
next?" he said, smiling in his old manner.

"I think there is no present prospect of
that," returned Helen, with a slight laugh.

"What sort of a man will it be, Helen,
when the time does come?—anything like
Waghorn?"

He added the last words after a scarcely
perceptible pause, and in a slightly lower-
tone.

"I cannot say that I have ever thought
on the point," returned his ward, calmly. "I
should not be surprised if I never did."

"Shouldn't you? But I should. Do you
think your beauty should serve no better
purpose than to be cast away in drunkards'
dens and reeking hospital wards? When
do you mean to tire of your silly whim,
Helen?"

The girl looked with surprise into his face.
She had never heard him speak with so much
energy, with so little of his habitual irony of tone.

But he seemed to be himself immediately conscious of this, and coloured slightly as he relapsed into indifference.

"Haven't you had enough of it yet, Helen?"

"It would be a sad thing for me, sir," she replied, "if I were already weary of the work of my life."

Mr. Gresham shrugged his shoulders and smiled, continuing to add touches to the picture before him. His ward turned to go, but he recalled her.

"Will you allow me to paint your portrait some day, Helen?" he asked, still keeping his eyes fixed upon the picture.

"To exhibit at the Academy, like Maud's?" she asked in reply, with a touch of irony.

"Psha!" exclaimed the artist. "To hang up in the drawing-room, or, better still, over the mantel-piece, here in the studio."

"I fear I could not spare the time to sit," returned Helen. Changing the subject, she added immediately, "I think you know the gentleman with whom Mr. Golding lives, do you not?"

"Know him?" said the artist, in surprise. "What about him?"

"Maud made some remarks with regard to
him to-day which excited my interest. Do you know whether he is a very charitable man?"

"I think I have heard something to that effect from Golding; but I fancy he is not possessed of too ample means for the bestowal of charity. It must be in a very small way."

"And therefore the more creditable to him," said Helen. "You would have no objection to my making myself known to him, with a view to his acquainting me with any particularly deserving case of want which he may not be able to relieve himself?"

"I suppose if I were to refuse my consent you would do so without it?" said the artist, keenly examining Helen from under his heavy eyebrows.

"Certainly not," replied his ward. "I trust I shall always have a proper respect for your wishes, Mr. Gresham, as I should for those of my father, were he living."

Her guardian's face softened wonderfully as she spoke these words. He continued to regard her, as she stood with downcast eyes.

"Helen," he said, in a lower tone, "you must not take everything I say too much au sérieux. I should not like always to be judged by my words."

"And yet," returned the girl, simply, "it
is generally by that criterion that we judge
and are judged."

And nodding a pleasant adieu she left the
studio, closing the door behind her, whilst
Mr. Gresham, with an expression upon his
countenance somewhat strange to it, went on
with his painting.

Helen had scarcely had time to doff her
walking dress and assume that in which she
ordinarily sat down to study, when a knock
at her door disturbed her, and a servant in-
formed her that she was inquired for by
two ladies, who had declined to send their
names on the plea that they were perfect
strangers.

She descended to the drawing-room in
some surprise, and, on entering, saw two
ladies, one about her own age, one middle-
aged, who rose to meet her. They were
both very richly dressed, but rather too
showily, and their countenances were wonder-
fully meaningless.

"Oh!" exclaimed the younger lady, before
Helen had time to speak. "Oh! you really
must excuse our unceremonious call, you
know. But we have heard so very much of
you, Miss Norman, that we really couldn't
resist the quite too delightful chance of see-
ing you, you know. Could we, Mrs. Hopper,
now?"

"No, indeed, Miss Norman," put in Mrs.
Hopper. "We are only too glad to find you
at home. We really hope that you will excuse our freedom, really.”

"Oh, yes, Miss Norman!" exclaimed the voluble young lady. "We have heard so much, so very much of your too beautiful charity, you know. And oh! Miss Norman, what church do you attend?"

"May I ask what your purpose is in asking the question?" said Helen, who had at first been somewhat disconcerted by the enthusiasm of the pair, but soon recovered her calmness, and felt considerably indignant at their intrusion.

"Oh, Miss Norman!" exclaimed the young lady. "We do so want to know, if you would tell us, you know. Of course you are high, Miss Norman?"

"I am afraid I do not quite understand you," said Helen, doing her best to show her distaste for this conversation.

"Miss Pitcher means, Miss Norman," explained the elder lady, "that you are, of course, devoted entirely to the High Church service?"

"Really, ladies," said Helen, distantly, "I fail to see how my religious opinions can interest you. May I request that you will state the object of your visit?"

The elderly lady seemed somewhat abashed by the speaker’s calm dignity of manner, but the younger returned to the attack, not at all discouraged.
"Oh, Miss Norman, we ask, you know, because we are so awfully anxious to get you to attend our Church, St. Abinadab's, you know. You could be so very useful there, you know, Miss Norman; a person of your too charitable disposition! There is so much work to be done in the Sunday schools, and with regard to the bazaars, and the tea-meetings, and—and so awfully many things, you know. And we have got such a delightful new incumbent, such a quite too dear man, Miss Norman. It is such a pity he is married, and has thirteen children! And his name's Mr. Whipple, Miss Norman. Oh, I'm sure you would so like him!"

"Miss Pitcher is quite right," interposed Mrs. Hopper, the young lady being out of breath. "It would be such a great blessing if we could secure your services for St. Abinadab's. We have heard so much of your indefatigable charity. And I'm sure you would so like poor Mr. Whipple."

Helen started slightly as she heard the name of the new incumbent of St. Abinadab's. She could scarcely doubt that it was the Mr. Whipple with whom she was acquainted. She was about to speak when Miss Pitcher cut her short.

"Oh, yes! Poor Mr. Whipple, Miss Norman. You can't think how he has been persecuted by that quite too dreadful man, his former bishop! And all because he was so devotedly
high, Miss Norman, and altogether refused to become either broad or low! Is it not shocking? But I am so thankful that friends have obtained St. Abinadab's for him. Oh, what sermons! and oh! what singing, Miss Norman!"

"Mrs. Hopper," said Helen, as soon as a pause came, turning to the elder lady, "if I rightly understand that is your name—I must really request that you will tell me whether you had any serious object in visiting me. If not, I must tell you that I do not feel justified in wasting more of my time in hearing of matters which do not at all interest me."

"Oh, yes, Miss Norman," said the elder lady, shrinking a little before Helen eyes, "yes, we had a very serious object in view. It is this, Miss Norman. Finding that our new incumbent, Mr. Whiffle, suffers severely at times from rheumatism in the right leg—poor man!—we have decided to raise a subscription to purchase him a very handsome leg-rest; and—and, we have really heard so very much of your extreme charity, Miss Norman, that—that we have ventured to call upon you in the hope that you would add your name to the subscription list."

As she spoke Mrs. Hopper drew out of her pocket a small note-book, which she opened at a page headed, "The Rev. Mr. Whiffle's leg-rest," and handed it to Helen together with a pencil.
"Oh, yes, Miss Norman!" exclaimed the younger lady, "and for something quite handsome, you know. Something worthy of you!"

Indignation burned fiercely in Helen's breast. Stepping to the bell-cord, she pulled it sharply, whilst she spoke in decided tones.

"I see," she said, "that we scarcely agree in our opinions as to what a serious object is. That which you are pleased to call such, I can only term, with no desire to offend you, frivolous and impertinent. I wish you good afternoon, ladies, and hope that you may before long find a more worthy occupation for your abundant leisure. Kindly let these ladies out, James," she added, as the footman knocked and entered.

Not even Miss Pitcher's audacity was proof against this. The two departed with blank countenances, and without uttering a word. As soon as she was alone, Helen gave way to irresistible laughter, and ran up to her room again.

On the following day, Arthur Golding, entering Mr. Tollady's shop at two different times, met on the door-step two very different people, both of whom, however, excited surprise in him and one a somewhat different emotion also.

The first of these occasions was about noon. As he was returning from making a few purchases of colours, he met, just issuing from
the shop, a gentleman whom he immediately recognised as Mr. John Waghorn. At the same moment he recalled to mind how it was that, on meeting Mr. Waghorn in Mr. Graham’s dining-room, he had been so strongly impressed with the feeling of having seen him before. He now felt sure that it was here he must have seen him, indeed, thought he remembered the very occasion. In the present instance Mr. Waghorn’s eyes fell upon Arthur for a moment, but were immediately removed. He either did not recognise the young man, or did not wish to appear to do so.

On entering the shop, Arthur found it empty, and, on stepping into the parlour at the back, found the old man sitting with his head leaning forward and his face hidden in his hands. He had not heard Arthur’s approach, and raised his head with a start when the latter spoke.

"Are you ill, Mr. Tollady?" asked Arthur, in an anxious voice.

"No, no, Arthur," replied the printer, in rather tremulous tones, which he strove to make firm. "No; I was only thinking."

"Of no pleasant subject, I fear," returned Arthur, sitting by the other’s side, and looking concernedly into his face.

Mr. Tollady seemed to reflect for a moment, but then his face cleared up, and he smiled in the old benevolent way.

"Perhaps I am not quite as well as I might
be, Arthur," he said. "Never mind, we will have a walk into the country on Sunday, if it's fine. That will set me up."

"Who was that who just left the shop as I entered?" asked Arthur, not content with this dismissal of the subject.

"Someone I had a little business with, Arthur," replied the old man, calmly.

Arthur knew the tone in which these words were spoken, and respected Mr. Tollady's wish to avoid further explanation. But he went up to his work with an uneasy mind.

The second meeting occurred about five o'clock in the evening, when he was returning from an errand in connection with the printing office, for he still insisted on finding time to do much of this work. Just as he had met Mr. Waghorn, he now encountered a tall, veiled lady, whose identity his heart at once revealed to him by a sudden leap. Even had he not discerned her features faintly through the veil, he would have known this lady to be Miss Norman. The form, the bearing, the walk could belong to no other.

She recognised him, bowed, said—"Good-evening, Mr. Golding," and passed on. It seemed as though she had held a whole conversation with him, so sweet and lingering in his ears was the voice which uttered the commonplace words.

Mr. Tollady was in the shop, and wearing an expression of countenance far other than that he had worn in the morning.
"Why, whatever was Miss Norman doing here?" cried Arthur, as he bounded into the shop.

"She has been here nearly half an hour," replied Mr. Tollady, smiling.

"And I was away!" exclaimed Arthur, in a tone of disappointment. Then, observing the old man's clear eye fixed searchingly upon him, he affected to laugh.

"Whatever was her business? Is it rude to ask?" he said.

"Not at all," replied Mr. Tollady. "She has made me the happiest man in London, bless her kind heart! You remember, Arthur, how bitterly I was regretting only this morning that I was unable to help poor Sarah Thomson, whose husband died last week?"

"Yes."

"Well; even whilst I was brooding over the poor woman's lot and making myself quite miserable, who should come in but an angel with the very succour that was wanted! Upon my word, I shall believe henceforth in angels, Arthur."

"I don't quite understand you," said the young man, amused at Mr. Tollady's unusual enthusiasm. "Have you known Miss Norman long?"

"Not till half an hour ago. Then sh came and introduced herself, saying that you —silly boy!—had been telling tales about my
poor efforts to help a few needy people, and begging to be allowed to contribute from her purse if ever I should know of a worthy person. I at once told her Mrs. Thomson's story, and—see the result!"

He held up a five-pound note, with almost childish glee.

"Yes!" he exclaimed. "And more to follow if it be necessary. And sewing for the poor thing to employ herself with, too! Yes, Arthur, I shall believe henceforth in angels. Her very voice has done me good. If there were but more like her!"

For a moment an unworthy feeling arose in Arthur's mind—he felt half ashamed that Helen should have seen the poor place in which he lived. It was only for a moment; the next, he had crushed the base thought, as he would have done a poisonous insect beneath his foot. He felt that, for the future, the shop would seem brighter and more cheerful, glorified as it was by the reminiscence of her presence. What if it were a poor place? Would not Helen think all the better of him that he had conceived the idea of making himself an artist under such discouraging circumstances? It was but the third time he had set eyes upon Miss Norman, and yet he felt it a matter of inexpressible importance that she should think well of him. The idea that she might not think of him at all did not enter his head; his feelings were not suffi-
ciently developed for that. At present the mere thought that she had been beneath this roof invested the whole house with a vague sanctity, as with a perfume. With a daydream of lovely forms and faces dazzling before his eyes, he mounted the stairs, and once more set eagerly to his work.
CHAPTER IV.

MARRIAGE À-LA-MODE.

Another week has elapsed, and it is the eve of Maud Gresham’s wedding-day. Before, however, paying a visit to Portland Place, to see how Maud conducts herself on the last evening of her maiden life, let us visit the rooms of a certain student of divinity, situated in the humbler neighbourhood of University Street.

This student has, it is true, only a very indirect connection with the forthcoming marriage; but, for all that, the consideration of his movements on the evening in question may not prove altogether inappropriate.

The student was no other than Mr. Augustus Whipple. Pending his attainment of the age at which the law permitted him to be ordained to the service of the Church, Mr. Whipple still continued to hold the position of an occasional student at King’s College; but his attendance at the lectures was very occasional indeed.

When Mr. Whipple, senior, removed from Bloomford to become incumbent of St. Abinadab’s he naturally made the proposition that his eldest son should live with the family, for
the sake of economy, if for no other reason; and this proposition Augustus, also quite naturally, declined to consider. He found himself extremely comfortable in lodgings, and had no desire to alter his mode of life. On the whole, it may be considered as somewhat to Augustus' credit that he declined to transfer himself, with all his companions and his habits of life, to the house wherein dwelt his mother and his young brothers and sisters.

Mr. Augustus Whipple's sitting-room was a tolerably comfortable one, of the ordinary lodging-house type, situated upon the first floor, and from the windows could be caught, on the right hand, a glimpse of University College; on the left, a peep at the busy traffic of Tottenham Court Road; whilst the Hospital loomed darkly over the way. The occupant of this room has altered considerably since we caught a glimpse of him a little more than two years ago. In those days, with all the will to be a thorough-paced rascal, neither his age nor his knowledge of life was sufficiently advanced for that; with just a tinge of recently acquired profligacy, he was, on the whole, what nature made him—a fool.

But he has learned much since then. Bitter experience has taught him how easy it is to be duped by those a little older, a little shrewder, a little more wicked than oneself,
and mature reflection has convinced him that it is just as easy to live on others as to permit others to live on you, and far more agreeable to boot. Any little compunction in a course of villainy, which might once have clung to him, has now been entirely shaken off, together with the outward and visible symptoms of his folly. For Augustus is not a fool now—at all events not in his own conceit. He is shrewd, long-sighted, devoid of feeling; he has a quick hand and a clear brain for cards or dice, and a mind stored with unquestionable lore on the recondite subject of horse-racing. If Augustus were to keep accounts and to reckon how much he makes in a year, nett, out of these various pursuits, the total would represent a very respectable sum. But he is not reckless, far from it. Is he not still an occasional student at King's College, and does he not ever keep in view the day on which he will become eligible to receive a "cure of souls?"

Even in personal appearance Augustus has altered of late considerably. Curious to tell, his hair, whiskers, and moustache, instead of being what nature made them, an emphatic red, have taken to themselves a hue of glossy brown, a deep, rich tint, which ladies might envy. Then his face has by no means that empty, would-be-wicked expression which it wore when he sucked the top of his cane on the way home from Bloomford
with Helen and Maud. With the very least stretch of the imagination, it could even be pronounced handsome, for though nothing less than intellectual in mould, the lines are fairly regular, and the nose has even an aristocratic bend. The habitual expression it wears, too, is one of thoughtfulness, which produces an effect altogether independent of the subject of thought.

Augustus was just turned twenty-one, and had grown of late several inches, so that he now stood not much less than six feet. His dress, it is almost superfluous to state, was in the latest fashion, exhibiting not considerable care and conveying an impression of wealth. On the whole, Mr. Whiffle was unmistakably an attractive young man to anyone with whom he might choose to display only the amiable side. It had taken him some little time to learn all this, it is true, but his progress in *savoir vivre* had been very wonderful when contrasted with his progress in letters. At present he was still studying the former ardently. Mr. Whiffle, senior's, position at the aristocratic church of St. Abinadab's had thrown open to him a circle of society very superior, in worldly possessions at least, to any he had hitherto moved in; and though on but indifferent terms with his father, Augustus had no scruple in using the latter's prestige to procure an entry into the same circle. He felt
it was necessary for him to obtain the acquaintance of a few wealthy families, and as he always presented himself under the character of the divinity student, he was remarkably well received.

At half-past seven, then, on the present evening, Augustus was sitting at his open window, smoking a cigar. Meantime his eyes found employment in watching the streams of girls who at this hour pour out of the work-rooms in which the neighbourhood abounds, on their weary way home.

The occupation was a congenial one. Not unfrequently he would see one pass with whom he had, or desired to have, some kind of acquaintance, and at such times a loud cough or a low whistle on his part would attract the girl's attention, when he would smile graciously, or wave his delicate hand. Augustus had evidently a good taste in such matters, for the girls whom he appeared to know were invariably the prettiest that passed.

Once he went through the usual pantomime, and, in addition, took a little piece of paper from his waistcoat pocket, rolled it up, and let it fall, as if through carelessness, on to the pavement. The next moment it was picked up by the person for whom it was meant, and Augustus smiled contentedly.

He was interrupted in the midst of these delights by hearing a double knock at the
front door below, and on bending forward out of the window he recognised an acquaintance who now and then called for him. Hastily putting one or two things in order in the room, he closed the window and was ready to receive his visitor.

The latter is already known to the reader as Mr. John Waghorn. Though his dress was, as usual, extremely genteel, and his hair arranged with the ordinary care, for some reason or other he had by no means a respectable look this evening. It seemed as though he had the power of altering his face to suit the occasion. At present he looked what he really was, brutish, sensual, ugly.

"Game for a night of it, my boy, eh?" he asked, as he flung himself carelessly into an arm-chair.

"Don't mind," returned Augustus. "Are you?"

"Yes; for the last time."

"What do you mean?" asked Augustus. "Going to give up wine and women, and turn moral in your old age? Bye-the-by, how old are you, Waghorn?"

"Turned six and thirty," replied the other, lighting a cigar. "Think of that."

"Sound in wind, too. You won't begin to knock up for another ten years. Let's look at your teeth old boy."

Mr. Waghorn seemed to resent the refined joke.
"Teeth be damn'd!" he exclaimed. "Sound or not, I've come to the end of my tether. I mean to have a frisk to-night, and for the last time, I tell you."
"For God's sake, why?"
"For a very good reason. I'm going to be married to-morrow."
"What!" cried Augustus, in amazement.
"Fact!" said Mr. Waghorn.
"And who the devil has been fool enough to have you, Waghorn?" asked Augustus, with friendly frankness.
"That's nothing to do with the matter," returned the other. "You don't know her."
"How do you know I don't? What's her name?"
"Well, if it interests you particularly, her name's Maud Gresham."
"Maud Gresham! The devil! Daughter of an artist?"
"Do you know her?"
"As well as I know you!" exclaimed Augustus, with trifling exaggeration. "Well I'm damn'd! Uncommon fine girl, and heaps of tin, I believe. I say, old fellow, I must be best man!"
"Impossible! My brother's volunteered for that. Must have a respectable fellow, you know."
"Thanks for the compliment," returned Augustus, laughing. "After all, the affair
would be a good deal too tedious. But, I say, Waghorn, you'll invite me to dinner before long? How long shall you be away?"

"Couple of months, perhaps."

" Continent?"

"Suppose so. What a damned slow life it will be!" exclaimed Mr. Waghorn, with agreeable anticipation of the delights of the honeymoon.

"Do the other fellows at the Eau de Vie know?"

The institution thus referred to was a club which both our friends much frequented, the proper name of which was the Young Men's Conversational Club, but which, in relation to the beverage principally consumed there, was chiefly known by the habitués as the Eau de Vie, sometimes shortened, with a punning reference, to D. V.

"Don't think so," replied Mr. Waghorn, in reply to the question.

"Mean to tell them, eh?"

"Why yes, I think so. May as well let the boys have a joke."

"Waghorn married!" exclaimed Augustus, leaning back with a roar of laughter; after which, by way of being facetious, he imprecated curses upon himself for several minutes.

As soon as it began to grow dark, the two issued forth to fulfil their purpose of making
a night of it. We shall not endeavour to follow their nocturnal wanderings, in the course of which they picked up several congenial acquaintances equally bent on spending a jovial evening; but let it suffice to say that a popular music-hall, an indecent exhibition, numberless restaurants, the green-room of a second-rate theatre, and a notorious casino enjoyed in turn the honour of a visit from these choice spirits.

In the last-named resort several equally choice spirits of the opposite sex were selected to join the company, and eventually they all repaired to some supper-rooms of unsavoury reputation, where they disported themselves till closing time, the performance of a *pas seul* by one of the ladies on the centre of the table being a prominent feature of the merriment.

On leaving the house the attractions of their female companions drew in different directions the majority of the choice spirits, and Mr. Waghorn and Augustus repaired alone to the Young Men's Conversational Club, otherwise known as the Eau de Vie. Here the sweet of the night was but just commencing.

Around a number of small tables some twenty or thirty young men were engaged at cards, each supplied with his glass of the eponymous beverage, the odour of which was perceptible even in the street.
Owing to Mr. Whiffle's care, the great event to take place upon the morrow soon became generally known. It created a furor. One young man, more than half drunk, sprang on to a table and proposed the health of the bride and bridegroom, suggesting in conclusion that every member of the club should turn out on the following morning to conduct Mr. Waghorn from his residence to the church, a proposal which was vigorously cheered, but received a polite refusal from the prospective bridegroom, delivered in the form of a speech from behind the drinking-bar, whither Mr. Waghorn had betaken himself to avoid his companions' too boisterous congratulations.

The greater part of the conversation ensuing upon the proclamation of this piece of intelligence was of that description which the newspapers call "unsuited for publication." Mr. Waghorn was evidently a highly popular member of the club, and, moreover, owing to his advantage in years over the majority of the members, a constant source of jokes of the most approved "Eau de Vie" flavour—which was high.

When the excitement had cooled a little, Augustus, as was his wont, proposed a little play to while away an hour or two, which Mr. Waghorn, being already weak in the legs, readily agreed to; the result being that Augustus rose from the table towards
four o'clock in the morning appreciably richer than when he sat down. But these little losses were nothing to Mr. Waghorn. During the day he was always a sharp-eyed, hard-hearted, close-fisted man of business; and if he occasionally relaxed by making a brute of himself at night, why, he could afford it.

Leaving Mr. Waghorn to celebrate in appropriate style the eve of his wedding-day, we return to Portland Place and to respectability. Mr. Gresham of course intended that his daughter's wedding should be marked with all the éclat which became his own position, and frequent had been the visits paid by milliners and outfitters of every description during the past month. Maud found a good deal of pleasure in all this. To pay attention to such matters was to fulfil the world's requirements, and this, in Maud's philosophy, constituted the only serious business of life. Never had she been so caustic and sceptical in her conversation as during these last few weeks. With Helen in particular, it seemed as though she felt bound to show herself absolutely consistent in what is normally considered one of the most momentous epochs of life, to make it clear that she regarded the whole affair in the light of a more or less tedious farce, even as she regarded all the every-day occurrences of her existence. To Helen this mental attitude of her friend was painful in the extreme. Day
after day she studied Maud’s manner and
countenance, and always with a growing
conviction that there was nothing genuine at
the bottom of all this cynicism, that it was
merely acted. It seemed to her, also, that it
was a part of which the actor was beginning
to grow weary. Very closely did she watch
for any sign of sincere emotion, any indica-
tion, however slight, of a growth of serious-
ness as the eventful day approached. Nothing
of this kind was perceptible, Maud seemed
only to harden in her indifference. It was
with deep apprehension that Helen looked
forward to a union entered upon in such a
spirit.

Helen had not failed to notice the pecu-
liarity in Mr. Gresham’s manner when last
he spoke to her of Mr. Waghorn, and she had
observed since then that her guardian did not
greet his future son-in-law altogether as
heartily as he was wont to do. She noticed
all this, and it made her uneasy, though it
was as impossible for her to conjecture
causes as it was to conceive remedies. She
had observed, moreover, that Maud and her
father had seemed to shun each other of late.
They spoke but seldom in her presence, and
Maud never now visited the studio when her
father was at work there, as she had pre-
viously been in the habit of doing. Was it
possible that this marriage was distasteful to
one or other of them? If so, to which?
On the present evening Helen made a point of visiting Maud's chamber, ostensibly to view her friend's trousseau, but in reality to seek the opportunity for a serious conversation which had never yet presented itself. Helen was not to take any formal part in the ceremony, and that at Maud's earnest request. Mr. Gresham had wished his ward to be first bridesmaid, but to this Maud had strenuously objected, though altogether without reasons, and her father had yielded. But Helen yearned for a few sincere words from her friend of so many years, and could not but hope that this evening would see her desire satisfied.

Waiting till she knew Maud was in her chamber, Helen knocked at the door, and entered. Maud was sitting in the midst of an immense quantity of magnificent equipments, her hands crossed upon her lap, her face thoughtful, even sad. But as soon as she saw her friend enter, she rose with a brisk movement and greeted her with an ironical smile.

"Have you come to obtain food for future meditation upon earthly follies and vanities?" she said, glancing scornfully around at the muslin and lace. "Don't spare me, Helen. Lecture me soundly, and with as little remorse as if I were the fool in the Proverbs. Now if all the money that has here been wasted upon knavish drapers and milliners,
had only been put into Helen Norman's hands for distribution among her multifarious pensioners—isn't that how you are going to begin?"

Helen sighed in disappointment. Maud seemed more frivolous than ever.

"Why do you sigh and look miserable?" pursued the bride. "Surely it is I who should have the monopoly of such performances; and yet I am in excellent spirits, as you see."

"But why should you have the monopoly of misery, Maud?"

"Why? Am I not about to be married to-morrow? Am I not about to play the fool on a broader stage and before a larger audience than I have yet had experience of? Am I not about to exchange liberty for slavery?"

"But surely, Maud," replied Helen, with much gravity, "you cannot mean what you say? If you look forward to marriage as only a state of misery, why do you marry at all?"

"Why, my dear Helen? Doesn't everyone get married sooner or later? Depend upon it you yourself will be no exception to the rule."

"I trust I shall never marry with such a disposition," returned Helen. "I should be deeply grieved if I thought you were in earnest, I should indeed. Have you lost all confidence in your old friend, Maud?"
"Confidence? How can you ask me the question? I protest, Helen, I have this moment been more confidential to you with regard to the state of my mind than I would or could be with anyone else."

"And you seriously tell me, Maud, that you look for no happiness from this marriage? That you have no love for your future husband? That you enter upon married life merely because it is conventional to do so? —I cannot believe you!"

Helen had risen as she spoke, and trembled with the excess of her motion. Maud continued sitting, and smiled in her wonted manner.

"And could you believe me," she began, in turn, speaking in a hard, inflexible voice, "if I were to tell you that I not only look for no pleasure but for intolerable wretchedness —at all events till I have got used to it? That, so far from loving my future husband, I hate and despise him? That I am altogether unable to say why I am going to be married, except that papa wishes me to be, and that I know I may as well marry this man as any other? Do you believe all that?"

"If I must believe it," replied Helen, "I can only say that you are acting very wrongly, Maud, and that I should not be a true friend if I did not tell you so."

Maud suddenly rose to her feet with a flash
of anger in her eyes, an expression which Helen had never before seen on her face.

"And what is it to me," she cried, in a voice shaken with passion, "whether you are a true friend or not! Do you think I have any faith in friendship of any kind? What does it matter to me whether I am doing right or wrongly? Who commissioned you to come here and tell me so? Am I a child to be lectured in this way?"

Helen trembled like a leaf before this display of most unwonted passion; she was scarcely able to realise that Maud had spoken. She saw, however, that the latter had turned her back to her, and, looking straight before her into the glass, could see the girl's face all distorted by a thousand conflicting emotions, among which anger still held the supremacy. Bursting into tears, she quitted the room and sought the quietness of her own chamber.

As soon as she saw that she was alone, Maud sank into a chair and sat there in the same attitude as before. But her face soon lost its angry expression. Before many minutes had passed tears rose irresistibly to her eyes, and began to trickle down her cheeks. She made no effort either to check them or dry them as they fell, but sat as motionless as a statue, weeping, weeping. And even so she sat and wept till far on into the night.

When it was nearly one o'clock, her father,
on his way to his room, paused at her door. He could see that there was a light within, but could hear no sound. For a moment his hand sought the handle, but the next it dropped again to his side. Once, twice he moved away from the door and returned to it. But not a sound came from within, and he walked softly away.

Early next morning bustle and bell-ringing was the order of the day. The usual stately quietness of the house in Portland Place was violated by innumerable unwonted intruders, who drove up in carriages or cabs, and vied with each other in showing undoubted appreciation of the dignity and felicity of the occasion. The Greshams had few friends, but a very great number of acquaintances, and as Mr. Gresham was determined to spare no means to ensure the brilliancy of the festival, invitations had been issued in the most liberal and open-hearted manner. Mr. Gresham himself, perhaps a trifle paler than usual, as if from a bad night, undertook the duty of receiving the guests, and went through the task with that perfect gentility of demeanour which he prided himself upon, never allowing it to be mistaken, however, that he hid beneath this outward complaisance a serene contempt for the whole affair which was extremely edifying. Now and then he would whisper in a friend’s ear some sarcastic

vol. ii.
remark on social conventionalities, the next moment he would delight his inward soul by discussing ironically to this or that lady, perfectly sure that his listener understood him in the literal sense. There was a pleasure in all this for Mr. Gresham. Perhaps the only real pleasure he had experienced in life had been this successful blending of outward respect for society with never-ceasing internal ridicule of its vanities. Mr. Gresham had not met with much affection in the course of his three and forty years, and had been equally sparing in imparting it to others. Thus there was probably not one among this crowd of strangers for whom he entertained anything approaching friendship. They, for their part, regarded him with considerable admiration, as a perfect gentleman, a man of money, a man of talent; but beyond that, little, if anything. Maud Gresham excited even less real interest in those who had come to witness her marriage. With a contempt of society equal to that entertained by her father, she exercised less care in glossing it over with external forms and graces, and had seriously offended not a few of her so-called friends by her carelessness in this particular. Under these auspicious circumstances it was hardly to be expected that conversation amongst the visitors should greatly turn upon the chief business of the day. There was a little chat
with regard to the dowery with which it was probable Mr. Gresham would make up for lack of sweet disposition in his daughter, a little subdued scandal with regard to the bridegroom, with whose habits of life a few of the gentlemen present were rather more acquainted than Mr. Gresham was; also a few instances of sweetly spiteful vaticination on the part of certain ladies in regard to the probable relations of the couple a year hence; after all which they turned their attention principally to their private affairs, discussed matches likely to come about and talked scandal with regard to others already effected. Truly, Mr. Gresham and his daughter had some grounds for their attitude of mind as regards this world of society.

There was, however, one point of interest common to most of those present, curiosity with regard to which had not, as yet, been satisfied. It soon became evident what this was when at length Helen Norman unobtrusively joined the company. A few of the guests were altogether unconscious of Helen's existence, but the greater part had, notwithstanding her retired and simple life, both heard and talked very much of her lately. I should but display my incapacity to deal with the mysterious problems of the world of fashion if I attempted to explain how intelligence of Helen's so-called eccentricities
had permeated the walls of her guardian’s house and filtered through a great variety of social strata; creating an itching sensation as it went, an eager curiosity to know more of this strange beast in woman’s form that Mr. Gresham sheltered beneath his roof. If I might hazard a very private conjecture, I might possibly be disposed to imagine that certain unusual gratuities which had of late found their way into the pockets of Mr. Gresham’s servants were not unconnected with this phenomenon. We know that when the gods of old quarrelled they were wont to tell each other somewhat unpleasant truths, and we likewise are aware of the portentous fact that, in our own day, rival editors of rival papers have in anger charged each other with procuring their “fashionable” intelligence by the means here hinted at. As I say, I must not, however, venture to account for mysteries such as these. It is certain that neither from Mr. Gresham nor his daughter did the information proceed, for both of these cherished in the depths of their hearts too sincere and involuntary a respect for Helen Norman to permit of their making her a common subject of conversation. Be the matter how it may, it is certain that reports concerning Helen, often widely exaggerated, were very rife among all who knew the Greshams, and the main inducement of not a few to honour the house with
their presence this morning had been the hope of seeing this peculiar creature in the flesh. The ladies, in particular, were prepared to be scandalised. The idea that a young, handsome, and unmarried lady should think of benefiting her poorer fellow-creatures was, to begin with, altogether shocking; and how disgracefully immodest must any young lady be who could visit the East End—positively, it was asserted, the East End—and there mix with people whose very aspect ought to be enough to create loathing, if not still worse feelings, in the mind of any properly trained young person. But there was even worse behind. It was whispered—who would have dared to speak it aloud?—it was actually whispered, with bated breath and blanched lips, that Mr. Gresham’s ward never went to church! Though the very monstrosity of this accusation was sufficient to deprive it of all credit, save among those whose attendance at the same church as the Greshams has enabled them to be personal observers, yet the mere fact that the accusation could be made pointed to the existence of moral depravity in the unfortunate individual in question, scarcely inferior to that which would have been implied by habitual absence from church.

Helen had reflected much upon the part it became her to take in the day’s proceedings. If she had obeyed the truest impulse of her
heart she would have proceeded with her usual work and have kept entirely aloof from the wedding. This, however, she had felt to be impossible. Ordinary respect for her guardian demanded that she should pay some attention to his guests, and, disagreeable as the duty was, Helen faced it like every other duty, and resolved to be present. Accordingly, when she made her appearance in the drawing-room in Mr. Gresham's company, she was dressed with considerably more attention to effect than usual, but still in a very plain manner compared with those who surrounded her; and her countenance wore its accustomed expression of calm self-possession, though perhaps with a trifle more colour in the cheeks than they were wont to show. Her manner displayed just as little of gaucherie as of immodest effrontery. Helen was indeed, as she always was, beautiful, unaffected, queenly.

The first effect produced by her appearance upon those who had already arrived was one of disappointment. After all, her likeness to the Scarlet Woman of Babylon was faint in the extreme. But, before long, more positive feelings began to assume the place of mere disappointment. Glances of undeniable admiration were exchanged between the gentlemen; little shrugs, smiles and sneers began to indicate the emotions of the ladies. But, however bold the man who was favoured with
an introduction, his eyes fell involuntarily before Helen's calm, frank look; however envious the ladies, they had to confess to themselves an influence in her face and tone which made their miserable little souls shrink and pine within them. This made many of them absolutely vicious. They could not bear to be made to feel their vast inferiority by one who spent her days distributing charity in the East End, and—did not go to church.

It is none of my purpose to give a detailed account of this notable wedding. Let the curious in such matters refer to the account in the Times of the marriage between Sir Horace Good-for-Nothing and Miss Lydia Rake-at-Heart, which made so much fuss last week. The description of the proceedings will apply equally to the present case. The same singular ceremony was gone through; the same wonderful vows were plighted between John Waghorn, immaculate in his Sunday dress of respectability, and Maud Gresham, impassive and slightly smiling; the same tears were wept by hysterical bridesmaids (the only appropriate part of the entertainment); the same benedictions were pronounced by a similar priest in a similar hurry to get home to lunch; and then—Glory to God in the Highest! Maud Gresham is no longer Maud Gresham, but Mrs. Waghorn; and all go away, charitably hoping that the result of it will be more
children, who will in turn, if parental affection spare them, take their part in a similar pantomime.

Helen passed through this day of benedictions and congratulations with sorrow in her heart. As soon as she saw Maud in the morning she had turned towards her, hoping that she would come forward in her wonted easy manner, and show that the scene of the previous evening had been forgotten. But Maud evidently avoided her among the company, and Helen saw but little good in pressing upon her friend in this mood. Her friend? Helen asked herself whether Maud, no longer Maud Gresham, would henceforth be her friend, and she experienced keen pangs as she thought that the marriage might be the means of severing their intimacy. She cherished a sincere affection for the strange girl, notwithstanding the slight sympathy which appeared to exist between their respective thoughts and aims. She could not but believe that beneath the cold surface of Maud’s character lay seeds capable of bearing at least the ordinary fruits of human kindness. Even till the last minute she endeavoured to afford her opportunities of speaking one friendly word before they parted, but Maud would not hear them.

When, at last, she saw the door waiting for them...
to the railway station, and when farewells were being exchanged all round, Helen received a kiss just like that Maud gave to her bridesmaids, but not a direct look, not a pressure of the hand. She was on the point of whispering an ardent wish for her happiness in the bride's ear, but her voice failed her, and the chance was past. Mr. and Mrs. Waghorn were already on their way to Italy.
CHAPTER V.

GUARDIAN AND WARD.

In a dark corner of the church, whilst the marriage ceremony was going on, sat one spectator who had no eyes for the magnificent toilette of the bride, the starched respectability of the bridegroom, or any of the follies attendant upon the occasion. Arthur Golding's sole purpose in coming had been to obtain, if possible, a glimpse of Helen Norman. He had seen her hitherto only in her simple morning dress, or in her neat, but plain walking costume, and he was curious to observe the effect her beauty would produce when arrayed in the costume appropriate to a wedding. This, at least, was the excuse he made to himself for giving Mr. Tollady to understand that he was about to take an ordinary walk, and then hurrying off to the church where he knew the marriage was to take place and securing a "coign of vantage" before the strangers began to arrive.

It was purely an artist's fancy, he had thought, a piece of study which might give him new ideas.

But never did artist gaze upon mere model
with the fervour which led Arthur to seek eagerly for Helen's face in the crowd, and, when he had found it, keep his eyes fixed upon its beauty till the very moment when it again disappeared from the church. For him the place was vacant of other forms and features, so intensely was his interest centred in that one alone. He had no need to compare her appearance with that of the other ladies present; for him her beauty was something absolute, a type of perfection which, in the nature of things, could not be compared with other types. He did not notice that her dress was much plainer and simpler than of those all around her; he merely knew that it was richer than that in which he had previously seen her, and that its adaptability to her loveliness was perfect. The strength of his admiration almost amounted to frenzy. He gazed at her till an actual halo, a visible aureola, seemed to glitter about her, and he feared to turn away his eyes for a moment lest the beautiful effect should vanish.

When at length he suddenly found the church empty, and rose to go away, he was not conscious of any one of his actions. So visibly did he retain Helen's features in his memory, that they floated before him in the air as he walked, still surrounded by the aureola.

He regained his bedroom, which served
him for a studio, and sat down before a picture he was then working at, intending to paint. It was impossible. Even as a vision of the sweet-faced Madonna may have floated before the eyes of Fra Angelico, and held his mind in a state of pious rapture till he took his pencil and, almost without the exertion of his will, embodied the tender outline in a tangible form, so Arthur sat, brush in hand, gazing into vacancy, unable to think of anything but the chaste features of Helen Norman, till, scarcely knowing what he did, he took up a fresh sheet of paper and began slowly and lovingly to outline what he saw. In ten minutes the sketch was finished, the likeness was complete, and with a loud cry of delight Arthur sprang to his feet and held it at arm’s length to sate his eyes upon it. He dared not add another touch, erase a line, lest the exquisite resemblance should be destroyed. What if it were but a rough outline in crayon? His imagination filled it out with the hues of life; it seemed to him to breathe, to smile. He had drawn it with the eyes directed full upon his own, and he now thought with rapture that Helen, his Helen, made his by this portrait, would forever gaze upon him with that sweet, tender smile. No one could deprive him of this joy. However great the gulf that wealth and social dictates spread between himself and the original, however little Helen might think of
him, she could not prevent her lifelike image from gazing upon him as he sat at work, breathing into his blood a rapture of enthusiasm for love, for beauty, for art, which would urge him to the achievement of great things. Henceforth Helen must be his Muse, his tutelary goddess. For a moment he had a glimpse into those regions of immeasurable exaltation which genius alone admits to; he felt that the world was within his grasp.

The sketch was too precious to be put away with the others. Repairing to a stationer's hard by, he purchased a piece of mill-board, and upon this carefully mounted the drawing. He then emptied his best portfolio, henceforth to be reserved for the idol alone, and, having carefully tied the strings, put it away in a safe place. This done, he was too overwrought to proceed as usual with his work. Seeing the afternoon to be very fine, he slung over his shoulders the little bag containing his sketch-book and pencils, and set off on a walk to Hampstead Heath.

Meanwhile, the house in Portland Place had assumed its wonted quiet air, but with the departure of the newly-married couple and, very shortly thereafter, of all the guests, a sense of loneliness had come upon those left behind which they did not ordinarily experience.

Mr. Gresham was in his studio, making
believe to paint, for his hand refused to work as usual when his thoughts were straying he knew not where. Helen was in her room, busy at some correspondence which arose out of her work in the East End. Upon the completion of this, she endeavoured to study, but wholly without success. The thought of Maud too completely occupied her mind, and made her sad. It was a relief to both guardian and ward when at length the dinner bell rang, calling them from the cheerless company of their own reflections.

"Well, Helen," said Mr. Gresham, as they took their seats at table, "now that Maud has left us to our own devices, I suppose the first thing to be done is to decide how we are to spend the next two months. What do you propose?"

"My time will be quite fully occupied," replied Helen, in a tone of natural decision; "but no doubt you purpose taking your usual holiday?"

"And no doubt you purpose doing the same," said her guardian, with good-natured mockery. "Do you imagine I shall permit you to remain in town all through the autumn, and come back to find you worn to a skeleton?"

"You need not anticipate the latter extremity," said Helen, smiling; "but it will be impossible for me to leave town."

Mr. Gresham had learned the significance
of the quiet but decisive tone in which his ward delivered these words. He glanced at her furtively, and read the same significance in her undisturbed features.

The rest of the dinner, which was quickly finished, passed almost in silence. Only when the dessert was on the table, and the servant who had been waiting had retired, did the artist renew the conversation in earnest.

"Bye-the-by, Helen," he began, "did it ever strike you that, now we have lost Maud, I must have some one to look after my house in her place?"

"Yes, I have thought it might be necessary," replied Helen.

"You have? I never thought of it till Maud brought up the subject the other day."

Mr. Gresham played with his walnuts as he spoke, and from time to time glanced timidly at Helen from beneath his eyebrows.

"Do you know," he said, at length, smiling as he always did when about to advance some particularly audacious proposition, "I have been thinking that, rather than go to the trouble of hunting up such a person from among my list of distant relatives, I would sell the house and emigrate to the farm in Dorsetshire. I might live there in rural peace and happiness for the few remaining years of my life. Might I not, Helen?"

"The few remaining years!" exclaimed
Helen, smiling. "I trust that you may reasonably hope for more than a few, Mr. Gresham."

"Think so? Well, perhaps I may. Do you know my age?"

"I am a bad judge of such questions."

"Well, I am just forty-three. Upon the whole, one is rather young than otherwise at forty-three. Don't you think so, Helen?"

"At all events, far from old."

"Yes," said the artist, as if reflecting, "I was married at twenty-two, when I was a boy; and didn't know my own mind."

Helen looked curiously at him; but, meeting his covert glance, again dropped her eyes.

"Upon my word I have a good mind to carry out the scheme. Do you think I should make a good gentleman-farmer, Helen? Should I be apt to learn the price of grains and bullocks, think you?"

"Not very, I fear."

"Indeed! But why?"

"It is merely a guess," said Helen; "but I fancy you would never be so much at home in the country as you are in the city."

"Upon the whole, I think you are right," exclaimed her guardian, laughing. "No, the Dorsetshire farm is in very good hands, and doubtless had better remain as it is. But then we revert to the old question, Who is to take care of my house?"
"You spoke of distant relatives," said Helen; "do you know of anyone who would suit you?"

"Only one. That is an aunt, a sister of my mother, who, I believe, is very little older than myself. She is a widow without children, living in Birmingham."

"Do you think she would like to come to London?"

"I really have no idea, but I might ask her."

There was again a short silence.

"But I had hoped there would be no need of that just yet," he pursued, in a disappointed tone. "I imagined you would leave town till at least the end of September, and then it would have been time enough to think of my aunt. It would be the easiest thing in the world to make up a party. The Leigs are just thinking of going to Ireland, and they would be delighted if we would join them. You would have Mrs. Leigh with her two daughters to chaperon you. Surely you do not mean, Helen, that you intend to stay at home?"

"I seriously mean it, Mr. Gresham."

"But why? Are you too ascetical to permit yourself a holiday?"

"At present I really have no need of one," replied Helen. "Then next week I begin my evening school. You would not wish me to disappoint the poor girls who are looking forward to a chance of learning to read and..."
write? Mr. Heatherley thinks I shall have at least a dozen to begin with."

Helen ceased, and her guardian made no reply. His brow lowered slightly as he heard the clergyman's name mentioned.

"Mr. Heatherley," pursued Helen, in unconsciousness of the last movement, "has had no holiday for three years. I heard so from an old lady whom I occasionally meet at his house."

"Do you go often to his house?" asked Mr. Gresham, cracking a walnut somewhat fiercely.

"Not very frequently. If I wish to see him we generally meet at the chapel. Indeed he is very seldom at home. I should not have thought it possible for anyone to work as hard and as continuously as Mr. Heatherley does."

The artist rose suddenly from his chair.

"Then I understand," he said in a rather husky tone, which caused Helen to look up in surprise, "that it is impossible to persuade you to leave town?"

"I really must not," returned Helen, rising and looking at her guardian with a smile which was not returned.

"Then I remain at home myself," said the latter.

"But not, I trust, on my account?" said Helen. "Mrs. Thomson—the housekeeper—is quite capable of seeing—"
“No, no,” broke in Mr. Gresham, turning away his head, “of course not only on your account, Helen. I have a picture or two that I must get off my hands. Yes, I shall stay at home.”

“I am sure you will alter your mind,” urged his ward. “You really require a holiday. I hope you will alter your mind, Mr. Gresham.”

“You are anxious to get me away?” he said, and immediately feeling that the words had been spoken unguardedly and with some rudeness, reddened a little and laughed. “Yes, yes,” he repeated, in a jocular tone, “you are anxious to get rid of me, Helen.”

“I am anxious that you should not break an agreeable custom solely on my account,” returned his ward. “It would distress me to think you did so.”

“It would? Then I shall think the matter over.”

Helen nodded, smiled, and left the room.

“What the devil did she mean by that?” muttered her guardian to himself, when he was left alone. Then he struck the table a blow with his clenched fist, drank off what remained in his wine-glass, and walked away, seemingly in no very good humour.

What could be the matter with Mr. Gresham? All the next day he paced up and down, first in the studio, then in the library, quite unable to settle to anything. Several
visitors who called were dismissed with the reply that he was not at home; he had no taste whatever for conversation. At meals he spoke very little, but, as often as Helen was not looking, watched her from beneath his eyebrows constantly. When she asked him whether he had decided to go to Ireland, he replied that he was thinking the matter over. If so, it appeared to occasion him more reflection than so slight a matter had ever done before. He could scarcely be well.

In the evening he decided to take a walk. Just as he issued from the door into the street, the postman was about to put some letters into the box. He took them from his hands instead, and examined the addresses. Two were for himself, and one was for Helen. Mr. Gresham altered his intention of going for a walk, and went into the library.

He was in no hurry to open his own letters; that directed to Helen seemed to absorb all his attention. On looking at the post-mark he saw that it had been posted in the east of London. That, and the fact that the address was written in a bold male hand, satisfied him that it was from Mr. Heatherley. It was a pity that Mr. Gresham had not just missed the postman on leaving the house.

Holding this letter in both hands behind his back he once more began to pace the room. Mr. Gresham was, without doubt, a gentleman as far as ordinary manners and social
condition went, but it was unfortunate for him that he had decided to live without the guidance of any such thing as principle, that, indeed, he did not think the business of life serious enough to require more than tact in its transaction. This state of mind would have been still more unfortunate had Mr. Gresham been so unhappy as to be a poor man; being, on the contrary, a rich man, he had never yet met with any temptation sufficiently strong to call for firm principle to resist it. Without a doubt he would himself have conceded this to you in argument, and, for the same reasons, would have looked with the most liberal tolerance on a poor man whom temptation had caught unawares and led into mischief. This was one of the better points in his character. But the fact remained that Mr. Gresham had not principle. Had he possessed it, he would, in the present instance, have thrown Helen’s letter on to the table, rung the bell, and ordered it to be taken to her. As it was, for some cause or other, he seemed wholly incapable of letting it escape his hands. The expression which rested upon his face, meanwhile, was half a frown, half an ironical grin—a smile it could hardly be called—just as if there were at that moment two voices speaking within himself, the one a rather angry and serious one, the other an ironical, bantering voice, very much like that in which he usually spoke.
Several times he gave utterance to exclama-
tions, such as "Pooh! psha!" evidently part of the internal argument. Then he again looked at the letter, and it seemed to decide him.

Quickly he tore it open and came to the contents. They were these—

"Dear Miss Norman,

"You will be glad to hear that I have a list of thirteen girls, all more than fifteen years old, who will gladly attend your class on Tuesday and Saturday evenings. I have told them, as you instructed me, that next Tuesday would be the first evening.

" Faithfully yours,
" E. W. Heatherley."

Mr. Gresham quickly crushed the letter in his hand, and then thrust it into his pocket, with an extremely unpleasant expression of countenance. He seemed disappointed that he had not found more. The next moment he broke into a low laugh.

"And I have made a damned fool of myself for that! Pooh! I need not fear Heatherley. He's only a parson."

Muttering this he resumed his intention of taking a walk, and left the house.

This little event formed an epoch in the life of Mr. Gresham. Had he been told, but a very few months previously, by some plain-speaking and clear-seeing cynic, that he would
one day commit an act which the polite world has agreed to brand as dishonourable, he would have listened to the prophecy with silent contempt; had he been further told that he would commit this act under the impulse of an ignoble jealousy, he would have laughed the idea to scorn. For all that, he had to-day been both shamefully dishonourable and unmistakably jealous. The effect of the unconsidered act could not but prove most disastrous to himself. If previously he had renounced the guidance of principle, he had at all events been tolerably well led by pride and prudence in the same paths in which the former would have guided him; now that he had absolutely set principle at defiance, his pride would henceforth be his evil genius, bidding him look with contempt upon the rules of morality he had hitherto observed, whilst his prudence would only serve him in keeping secret the outrages of which he might be guilty. Had he been twenty years younger, it is just possible that this act of dishonour with its altogether futile results might have proved such a salutary lesson that, with the help of that new and strong passion which was for the first time taking possession of his being, it might have effected a wholesome revolution in his views of life. As it was, such a result was impossible. The man was too hardened in his career of eternal scepticism. For the
future, instead of being a mere sceptic, he would be a hypocrite, a character still more despicable. But nature, whose dictates he had so long violated, had prepared a severe punishment for him. Henceforth, Mr. Gresham is rather a subject for pity than indignation.

When he and Helen met at dinner on the following evening, the latter's first remark caused him acute suffering.

"It is a curious thing," she said, looking directly at her guardian, "Mr. Heatherley tells me that he posted a letter for me yesterday, about noon, which I ought to have received by one of the evening posts. Yet it has never come."

"Very curious," replied Mr. Gresham, forcing himself to return her direct gaze.
"Have you made enquiry of the servants?"

"Yes. They tell me we had no letters yesterday except by the morning post. No doubt it is the fault of the post office. Have you ever failed to receive letters?"

"Once or twice, I think, at long intervals. But never anything of consequence. I hope your letter was not important?"

"Oh, no; not at all. Merely a note in reference to my evening classes. I begin on Tuesday, Mr. Gresham."

"What sort of pupils shall you have?" asked Mr. Gresham, relieved at length, and smiling in the usual manner
"Mostly grown up girls. Girls who are hard at work all day, poor things, and have never had the opportunity of learning to read and write."

"What are your hours?"

"From eight to ten, using a room in the chapel for school-room. You cannot imagine the pleasure with which I look forward to these lessons. As the attendance is of course purely voluntary, I know I shall have some capital scholars. And then I hope by degrees to be able to find better situations for those who show themselves able and industrious. Mr. Heatherley is doing his best to interest several ladies in the scheme, whose help will be very useful."

"But eight to ten!" exclaimed Mr. Gresham. "That is horribly late, Helen. You won't be home till eleven. Do you consider it altogether ladylike to be travelling about London, alone, at such hours?"

"I certainly see no objection to it," replied Helen, "when one's engagements make it necessary."

"H'm. You are aware, I presume, that young ladies do not, as a rule, permit themselves to indulge in such night excursions; that, in fact, it is hardly considered bon ton?"

"The ordinances of so-called society concern me very little, as you know, Mr. Gresham. As yet I am unconscious of having in any
way neglected propriety. It is only between the chapel and the station that there could be any real danger for me, and in that walk Mr. Heatherley will always be kind enough to accompany me. It happens to lie in his way as he goes home.”

Mr. Gresham flinched visibly at these words, and endeavoured, by raising his glass to drink, to conceal the expression which rose involuntarily to his countenance. He made no reply, and the meal continued in silence.

As they rose, at its conclusion, Helen asked whether Mr. Gresham had yet decided upon leaving town.

“I find I have too much work on hand,” he replied. “I shall not leave town at all.”

“Indeed? I am sorry.”

“I wrote last night to my aunt, Mrs. Cumberbatch,” he continued. “In all probability I shall have a reply to-morrow morning. I hope it will be favourable.”

Helen said nothing, but left the room, pondering on the possible character of Mrs. Cumberbatch. Mr. Gresham, unable to find rest at home, went out very shortly and passed his evening at the theatre.

On the following morning the anticipated letter arrived, bringing the news that Mrs. Cumberbatch, after mature reflection, had decided to accept her nephew's proposition. As it happened, she was just then on the point of removing from her house, so that it
only remained for her to dispose of her furniture and come at once to London. In all probability she would present herself at the house in Portland Place in not later than a week.

After hearing her guardian read this letter, Helen went up to her sitting-room. She purposely left her door slightly ajar, and when at ten o'clock she recognised the footstep of Arthur Golding passing by and entering the studio, which was on the same landing, she left her room and followed him.

"Have you heard anything from Mr. Tollady lately," she asked, "with regard to Mrs. Thomson?"

This, as the reader will perhaps remember, was the woman Helen had assisted at the printer's request.

"Yes," replied Arthur, who had been startled by Helen's entrance, his pulses throbbing with delight at the sound of her voice. "Only this morning Mr. Tollady told me that she was getting better every day, and able to do more work. She is very anxious to see you, Miss Norman, and to thank you with her own mouth for your kindness to her."

"I am so glad to hear she is better!" exclaimed Helen. "I must see Mr. Tollady again very shortly; perhaps he has found some other poor people for me."

"I am afraid he is himself far from well,"
said Arthur, only venturing to glance for a moment at the face before him.

"Not well!" exclaimed Helen, in a tone of pained surprise. "What is he suffering from?"

"I hardly know. A short time ago, after we had been a rather long walk together, he fainted as soon as he entered the house. The same thing happened again last night, and this morning I left him seeming very depressed."

"But has he seen a physician?"

"I think not. He makes light of it, and says that it is only what he must expect now he is growing old. But it makes me very uneasy."

"But he must certainly have advice, Mr. Golding," urged Helen, earnestly, "I am sure his life is of far too much value to be lightly risked. Pray tell him this from me, will you? Say that I beg he will consult a doctor."

"I have myself frequently urged him to do so," replied Arthur, feeding his eyes upon the speaker's beauty, thus heightened by emotion, "but he always puts me off with a good-natured excuse. Perhaps your request will weigh more with him. It is very kind of you to express so much interest in his welfare."

"I must see him," pursued Helen. "Though I have only spoken with him once, I feel as if I had known him all my life. It
is only noble natures that can inspire such confidence."

"And only noble natures, Miss Norman, that are so quick to recognise nobility in others. You do not exaggerate Mr. Tollady's goodness. I have not seen a day pass for several years without some act of kindness on his part to those who were in need of it."

For a moment their eyes met. The sincere feeling with which the young man spoke gave to his countenance a striking vivacity, and Helen saw in its expression a spirit in closer sympathy with her own than any she had discerned elsewhere. When Arthur turned his head away, she followed his look, and her eyes fell upon the picture he was then working at. It was a copy of a small Rembrandt which Mr. Gresham possessed. She bent forward to examine it.

"You are making wonderful progress," she said, frankly. "To my uncritical eyes this piece that is finished seems scarcely inferior to the original. I envy you your talent, Mr. Golding."

The last words were spoken warmly, with a look which avouched their genuineness. Arthur's reply followed rapidly, and in eager tones—

"You envy me, Miss Norman; you, who are so richly endowed with every excellent quality, envy another's trifling facility in handling a brush or a pencil? It may
excite your wonder, perhaps, but never your envy!"

"That is hardly fair, Mr. Golding," said Helen, smiling. "I spoke truth, and you reply to me with flattery. Let me advise you, if it is not too great a liberty, never to deprecate your art. In your estimation nothing should excel it. You will be more zealous for its claims some day, when you become one of its foremost representatives."

And nodding a pleasant good-morning she left the studio. For some seconds Arthur remained gazing at the door through which she had disappeared, with passionate longing and regret depicted upon his countenance, then, with a deep sigh, passed his hand over his eyes, as if to prepare them for their ordinary functions, and hurried to his work.

It happened that the studio had two doors, the one ordinarily used, which led out into the landing; the other, at present concealed behind an easel supporting a large canvas, which communicated with Mr. Gresham's dressing-room. Through this latter Mr. Gresham had passed a few minutes before Arthur entered the studio, and had left it very slightly ajar, but quite sufficiently to admit of his becoming acquainted with every word of the conversation between his pupil and his ward. He had no scruples in listening; in his present state of mind would have had none even if the act had been far more
objectionable, than, considering his relationship to Helen, it in reality was. What he had heard, innocent and meaningless as it would have sounded to any less interested auditor, inflicted upon him the keenest torture. That Helen should so far transgress the bounds of conventional propriety as to enter into conversation under such circumstances at all, was alone sufficient to aggravate his new-born intolerance; that the conversation should terminate in what he regarded as unwarrantable familiarities exasperated him almost beyond endurance. For a full half-hour he sat in his dressing-room, exerting his utmost ingenuity in the devising of self-torment. Doubtless she was in the habit of indulging in these morning interviews. No doubt, also, she saw Golding at other times, when he knew nothing of it; for what considerations could restrain a girl who openly defied all social regulations. These same social regulations which he had hitherto looked upon with such scorn, how he now respected them in his heart, how convinced he was of their propriety and necessity! Yet how was it possible for him to begin to assert his authority as guardian for the purpose of compelling Helen to observe them. It would be to stultify himself, nothing less. He thought with exasperation of her spending all the day in going from place to place alone, making acquaintances of
which he knew nothing, meeting with respect and admiration which he had no means of checking. For, had he possessed the power, he would have reduced her to the condition of a Turkish slave, allowing her to see, and be seen by no one; so fiercely had his involuntary infatuation begun its operation upon him.

That morning he did not visit the studio at all, sending a servant to excuse him to Arthur on the ground of other engagements. He felt it would be impossible to face his pupil with any degree of calmness, and an acute feeling of shame, which was but a little less strong than his jealousy, withheld him from any risk of self-exposure.

The same evening Helen fulfilled her intention of visiting Mr. Tollady. Arthur was again away from home, and Mr. Tollady, when he had submitted to his visitor’s pressing interrogations with regard to his health, turned the conversation by asking what she thought of Arthur’s progress in the studio.

“It is impossible to speak too hopefully of it, Mr. Tollady,” she replied. “I have been delighted with what little I have seen of his work. I suppose you have many pictures of his here?”

“A great many drawings,” replied the old man, with that air of justifiable pride which always marked his tone when he spoke of Arthur. “It is possible you would like to see a few, Miss Norman?”
“If it would not be taking too great a freedom in Mr. Golding’s absence,” replied Helen.

“It is one of the greatest pleasures my life affords me to look over his work,” said the printer. “I frequently take down his portfolios when I am alone. But it is so seldom that I have the opportunity of looking over them with anyone capable of appreciating their merits that you will confer a real favour on me, Miss Norman, by allowing me to show them to you.”

He went up accordingly to Arthur’s room, and brought down the portfolios which held the young artist’s work. The first they opened was full of copies, some in crayon, some in sepia or Indian-ink, of celebrated pictures by old masters.

“It is Arthur’s habit to make copies such as these,” said Mr. Tollady, as he turned them over with a loving hand, “whenever he meets with engravings of old pictures in books or elsewhere. His collection will soon be a large one. Ah! Here are his copies of Raphael’s Cartoons. Are they not admirably finished? There is a Madonna of Correggio; the original is in the Museum of Parma. I always think he has caught the expression of the child’s face wonderfully. Here are a series of pen and ink copies from Albert Dürer, grand old pictures, and finely drawn.”

They passed on to another portfolio.
"That is a copy of an etching by Nasmyth, 'The Alchemist.' It took Arthur more than a week's hard work, there is such an immense amount of detail in it. You like it? I knew you would. Ah! Here are a few water-colours. I like that copy of Rosa Bonheur; the sheep are admirable. I often laugh at my learning in these matters, Miss Norman. Arthur has made quite a connoisseur of me."

The next portfolio was a smaller one, and contained only a few drawings, most of them in pencil.

"These," said Mr. Tollady, with a smile of peculiar delight, and with a confidential lowering of his voice, "these are his original designs. He has made a great number at different times, but there are only a few that he has cared to preserve. Indeed he often destroys drawings which I think admirable. These are a series illustrating Shelley's 'Witch of Atlas.' It was a bold flight to undertake, but I notice that Arthur is most at home at regions farthest removed from the earth. It seems to me there is much of delicate fancy in these drawings. What is your opinion, Miss Norman?"

"I should say they were quite admirable. I certainly never saw illustrations of the poem which at all approached them. I know they are defective in drawing here and there," she added, "but the ideas are wonderful in each case."
"Here again," went on Mr. Tollady, his face beaming with pleasure, "are a few sketches of subjects from Scott. There is Rob Roy's wife challenging the invaders from the top of the rocks. There is astonishing force in that woman's attitude. That is meant for a portrait of Habbakuk Mucklewrath. Ha, ha! I always think that capital. There is the Master of Ravenswood on his last ride."

And so the old man went on, pointing out all the merits of the drawings—and indeed the merits were not few—delighted whenever Helen put in an assent or expressed herself pleased. When they came to the last of the four portfolios, he exclaimed—

"What have we in this other? He has been making some changes here lately. It is a portrait, carefully mounted, too. Why, it is—"

Indeed it was no other than Arthur's memory-drawn portrait of Helen. She saw it, and blushed deeply.

"I did not know you had favoured him with a sitting," said the old man, regarding Helen with wonderful naïveté. "But it is an admirable likeness, though so slight."

"I never did," replied Helen, in some confusion. "It—it must be some picture he has copied which bears some slight likeness to me. Have we seen all, Mr. Tollady?"

"Those are all his finished drawings. He has an abundance of crayon studies from
casts, and of sketches from nature, but those I know he does not like to be seen. He calls them his chips."

And Mr. Tollady laughed with a quiet gaiety of heart which only appeared when he spoke of Arthur. A little conversation followed with regard to the poor people in whom the printer was interested, and then, leaving half-a-sovereign for one of these, Helen took her leave. She walked thoughtfully homewards, not unfrequently smiling to herself, as if her reflections were far from disagreeable. Throughout the evening she was distraite, being wholly unconscious that her guardian scarcely averted his eyes from her during dinner, and replying to his few questions in an absent manner which goaded him to hardly repressible irritation. But Helen was not aware of his feeling. When she retired to her room, it was with the intention of reading a new volume of poems she had just purchased, but the lines seemed to her lacking in inspiration. There are certain moods in which even the loftiest verse seems poor to us compared with the odes and poems which nature is chanting within our own hearts; and in such a mood Helen Norman found herself to-night.

The next day was Sunday.

"Will you read to me for an hour or two this morning, Helen?" Mr. Gresham asked, at breakfast.
GUARDIAN AND WARD.

It was a scheme which had just entered his head for keeping his ward near him.

Helen assented, and they shortly met in the studio, which was Mr. Gresham’s favourite room at all times. After looking round the room as if in search of something, as soon as she entered Helen asked—

“Did Mr. Golding take away his picture yesterday?”

“I suppose so,” replied Mr. Gresham, averting his face, and endeavouring to speak with indifference. It was only a few minutes ago that he had taken the picture in question from the easel and placed it with its face leaning against the wall, because he could not bear to have it before his eyes.

“I am sorry,” said his ward. “I wished to look at it again.”

Then she proceeded to tell her guardian of the treat she had enjoyed on the previous evening in looking at Arthur Golding’s drawings. Every word of praise she uttered was torture to her hearer, but he mastered his feelings with a great effort and succeeded in keeping the slightly sneering smile upon his features unbroken.

“Golding will never make an artist,” he said, with all the calmness of a habitual calumniator, though such had hitherto by no means been his character. A somewhat contemptuous universal toleration had always marked his criticisms; and in Arthur’s case,
that portion of genuine artistic feeling which he undoubtedly possessed had made him at first even sincerely laudatory. But the change which had for weeks been developing itself within him now began to make itself openly seen, and imparted a sincerity to many of his remarks which could hardly be mistaken.

On hearing him speak thus of Arthur, Helen looked at him in surprise.

"Never make an artist, Mr. Gresham?"

"Not he. He has no perseverance. He takes offence at my slightest corrections, and not unfrequently shows hastiness of temper. I shouldn't be surprised if he thanked me for my trouble and went off about his business one of these days."

He had begun to speak with his eyes firmly fixed on Helen's, but could not support her gaze to the end. In his heart he trembled lest her clear intelligence, of which he had always stood in awe, should see through his narrow disguise of words and pierce down to his inner purpose. Helen made no reply, however, save a pained look of infinite surprise. At Mr. Gresham's request she began to read, and continued for about an hour, the former standing at an easel the while and painting. At the end of that time he suddenly laid down his pallet and brushes, and stood with a satisfied smile upon his face till a pause came in the reading.

"There," he said, "we have had our
first sitting. Will you inspect the result, Helen?"

Helen rose, surprised, and, on looking at the canvas at which the artist had been engaged, saw the first outline of her own face. She did not know whether to appear pleased or annoyed, for, in truth, she was neither; the matter was indifferent to her.

"Does it please you?" asked Mr. Gresham.

"Any opinion would be premature," she answered. "Besides, I am, in any case, the worst person to consult with regard to my own portrait. Shall I continue to read, Mr. Gresham?"

For a moment the artist's lips worked, as if under some keen inward emotion, and once he raised his eyes with a serious expression, seeming about to speak. But a momentary paleness, followed by a flush, was the only result of this hesitation. He nodded merely, and Helen resumed her book.

When Arthur entered the studio on the following morning Mr. Gresham was in his dressing-room, purposely. The door was left slightly open, and an easel arranged in front of it so as still to permit a clear view of all that the artist desired to see. The first object that met Arthur's eyes on entering was the newly-commenced portrait. He could not help seeing it, one person well knew. He started as he recognised the like-
ness, then gazed at it long and intensely. Not one of the shades of expression which passed over his countenance escaped the notice of the watcher in the dressing-room.

Five minutes after Mr. Gresham entered the studio as usual. His reply to Arthur's "Good-morning" was a trifle curt, and he continued throughout the morning somewhat abstracted in manner. Not unfrequently he glanced searching looks at his pupil, when the latter was closely occupied with his work, and each look was more lowering than the last. When Arthur requested his assistance he replied in the briefest possible manner, scarcely turning his head whilst he spoke; and whilst it yet wanted nearly half an hour to the usual time for the former's departure, he consulted his watch and excused himself on the plea of an engagement.

Arthur, whose temperament was keenly sensitive to the least slight, noticed these changes and did not cease during the rest of the day to distress himself in searching for an explanation of them. On the following morning, Mr. Gresham's inattention was yet more marked; it amounted to plain incivility. It was Arthur's way to be explicit in matters that nearly concerned him, and just before he left he could not resist speaking out the thought that had troubled him.

"I fear, sir," he said, speaking in decided, though respectful tones, "that I have been
so unfortunate as to offend you. May I beg you to tell me how?"

"Offend me, Mr. Golding?" returned the artist, with a curl of the lip. "I scarcely understand you."

"Your altered manner to me yesterday and to-day," pursued the young man, and somewhat irritated by the ill-concealed contempt of the other's manner, "appeared to me only to admit of that explanation."

"Do you refer to my correcting a mistake in your colouring?" asked Mr. Gresham, without turning from his canvas. "I have noticed that you seemed to resent my interference of late. Perhaps it would be better if you finished the picture without consulting me, and then allow me to criticise it at the end."

"I certainly was not aware that I received your remarks otherwise than with gratitude, Mr. Gresham," replied the young man, with quiet dignity. "I much regret it if I should have given you reason to think me disrespectful."

"I am sorry I have not time to discuss terms with you," said the artist, consulting his watch. "I find I must leave you, for the present, to the guidance of your own genius. And, bye-the-by, I am sorry I shall not be able to see you to-morrow. I am engaged during the morning."

So saying he left the studio, and Arthur
retraced his way slowly to Charlotte Place, half-grieved, half-angry, and altogether astonished at what had occurred. He scarcely knew whether he should return to the studio again. At all events he would tell Mr. Tollady what had happened, and ask his advice. Something must have occurred to annoy Mr. Gresham, in which case the next meeting would be sure to bring with it an explanation from him. To this, at least, Arthur felt he had a right. He forgot that superiority of social standing brings with it a licence in the matter of insults quite unknown to those whose civil bearing is the only test of their respectability.
CHAPTER VI.

THE STORY OF A LIFE.

When Arthur reached the shop he found Mr. Tollady standing in the doorway with his hat on, as if prepared to go out.

"Could you sit in the parlour for about an hour, Arthur?" he asked; "I have to go into the City."

Arthur looked up and saw that the old man's face was much paler than usual and wore a haggard look. As he took out his watch to see the time his hand trembled perceptibly. He had the appearance of a man just risen from a bed of sickness.

"Isn't the business such that I could see to for you?" asked Arthur. "You don't look well, Mr. Tollady. It is too far for you to go this hot day."

"No, my dear boy; no, thank you," replied the old man, with a forced smile. "I must see to it myself—myself. I hope not to be long. Have dinner as usual, of course. I have just had a mouthful of lunch and that will serve me till tea-time."

Arthur brought down his drawing-board to the back parlour, and tried to get on with his work. But reflection upon his own
sources of annoyance and on Mr. Tollady’s
evident suffering, the cause of which the old
man persisted in keeping a secret, held his
thoughts from the subject in hand. The
time went very slowly; it seemed as though
the printer would never return. When, at
length, Mr. Tollady re-entered the shop,
about three o’clock, it was in a state of ex-
haustion which he in vain endeavoured to
conceal. Dropping his trembling limbs into
the wonted chair, he let his head fall back-
wards, and sat gazing at the ceiling in a
manner which seemed to bespeak lethargy
both of mind and of body. Arthur walked
to his side, when he had sat thus for a few
minutes, and laid his hand upon his shoulder.

“Let me persuade you to lie down upon the
bed for an hour,” he said, in an affectionate
tone. “It pains me to see you like this, Mr.
Tollady. Have you no regard for me that
you refuse to pay more attention to your
health, though I every day beg you to? Your
face is as pale as death; I can see you are
suffering. I am neglecting my duty in
allowing you to remain without advice. Will
you let me go and ask a doctor to see you?
I am determined to do so on my own account
if you leave it later than to-night.”

“You shall have your way, Arthur,” re-
plied the old man, smiling feebly. “I have
such pains here on my left side; just now
they are very severe. I will go to the
hospital to-morrow morning; I shall have better advice there. Let me rest a little now. Can you continue to draw here?"

"No, I cannot, Mr. Tollady!" exclaimed Arthur, as he saw the other pressing his hand against his side, and turning his face away to conceal its expression. "I cannot do anything whilst I see you suffer so! I am sure that you are suffering in your mind as well as in your body. This business you have been seeing to has distressed you, it has been burdening you for a long time. Are you sure that you do wisely in keeping it from me? Are you sure I could not help you in it? Yo do not still consider me a boy, in whom you cannot confide?"

Mr. Tollady held down his head in reflection for some moments, then he took Arthur's hand and pressed it.

"I believe you are right, Arthur," he said. "It is not because I have not the fullest confidence in you that I have hidden from you this burden on my life; I kept it to myself to spare you needless trouble. But, perhaps, it was not wise to do so; sooner or later you must know, and I have several times been on the point of telling you lately. Go upstairs to your work as usual, Arthur, for the present. After tea we will have an hour's talk together. The pain has gone for the present; I feel better."

Accordingly, when tea was over, Arthur
remained downstairs in the parlour, where Mr. Tollady also sat, the door being left open in case of customers entering the shop. For a long time the old man remained buried in deep reverie, the expression of his face changing as it was in turn lit by a gleam of pleasure or darkened by the shadow of gloomy recollections. Unfortunately the shadows predominated, and from time to time a slight sigh broke from between his lips. At length the entrance of a customer called Arthur away for a moment, and when he returned Mr. Tollady had roused himself from his abstraction, and was prepared to speak.

“I have been thinking, Arthur,” he commenced, “that it would not be amiss for me to tell you the complete story of my life, now that I have made up my mind to let you know the trouble that has weighed upon me for the last few years. For very nearly forty years it has been a far from eventful life; during that time I have always lived very much as you have seen me. But my early years were neither so quiet nor, I think I may say, so profitably spent. As I look back from my sixty-fifth year upon those far-off memories, I can, at times, hardly believe that it is my own history I am reviewing, so utterly do I now find myself out of accord with all the impulses which then guided me. It is not, then, from any sense of pleasure
that I go back to my early days, but because I think there is a lesson to be learned from them. Every thoughtful man is capable of receiving benefit from the contemplation of other men’s lives, and I feel sure you will see what warning may be derived from mine. It is, indeed, little less than a homily against a special vice that I am about to recite to you."

Arthur gazed at the speaker in surprise as he heard these words. It seemed so impossible to him to conceive of his deeply-respected friend as capable of being under the dominion of any vice. It was with a sense of pain at his heart that he listened whilst Mr. Tollady went on.

"I was born," he said, "at Ipswich, in 1805. It seems a long time ago, doesn’t it, Arthur? In that year Scott published his ‘Lay of the Last Minstrel’; then Byron was still at Cambridge, and Shelley, a boy at Eton. Can you believe that I was nine years old when ‘Waverley’ first appeared, and that I distinctly remember the delight with which my dear father then read it? It is like looking back upon a glorious dream to think of my boyhood, spent amid such wonders, both of peace and war. I remember hearing our friends talk of Wellington’s victories in the Peninsula as matters of yesterday; it may be self-deception, but I have always been convinced that I could recollect my father’s
enthusiasm at the result of Bonaparte's Russian campaign, when I was seven; and Waterloo, with all its wild excitement at home and abroad, is yet vivid in my mind. For you, Arthur, these are all matters of history, for me they seem dear and precious remembrances of a happy time that has gone for ever.

"My father was a bookseller, and, if only he had possessed the means, would have been an excellent publisher. With him, his trade was something far more than a mere mechanical occupation, the chief end of which was to secure daily bread. Rather, he regarded it as a means for the elevation of himself and all those with whom he had business or friendship. There was not a book in his shop of which he did not possess some accurate knowledge, quite distinct from those technicalities of the trade which a bookseller usually possesses. His books were living souls in his eyes, and on me, his only child, he never ceased to impress that to damage a book was to commit a sin. 'Books are men's brains' he would say, and I shall never forget a favourite quotation of his from Milton, often uttered to me when I was a child, and intended, of course, to be taken by me in the literal sense: 'As good almost kill a man as kill a good book. Who kills a man, kills a reasonable creature, God's image; but he who destroys a good book kills Reason
itself; kills the image of God, as it were, in the eye. Many a man lives a burden to the earth; but a good book is the precious life-blood of a master-spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life.’ I had to write that passage out ten times for him on one occasion, when I had wantonly torn to pieces an old volume of ‘Don Quixote,’ which had strayed out of its proper place.

‘I was sent to a day-school at Ipswich, where, I am sorry to say, that I did not learn much besides Greek and Latin; in those days they were alone thought worthy of being seriously taught; but I learned at home what a multitude of other things the world contained of vastly more interest than Virgil and Homer, and I had in after life to add to my education by pursuing such courses of reading as my tastes naturally led me to. For beyond the age of fifteen I did not remain at school. When I was so old my father died.

‘He had been far too charitable and too generous to his own family to have saved much money, and one of the first things I learned after the funeral was that I should not return to a school. I cannot say that I was sorry to hear it; in those days the fervour of boyhood was added to a naturally adventurous disposition, and I felt decided pleasure in looking forward to so great a

VOL. II.
change as was involved in beginning to work for my living.

"The sale of the house and business brought my mother a little money, with the aid of which she established herself as a dressmaker, whilst I was apprenticed to a printer. When my time was out I became assistant to the same man, and thus I worked on till I reached my twenty-first year.

"Those six years were among the most miserable of my life. I detested my business, and would gladly have run away if I had had the least idea where to go or what to do. Day after day I made my poor mother wretched with my selfish complainings, whilst she was all the while working hard to keep us both in some degree of comfort. I was but a boy, and had no eyes for my mother's sufferings.

"I think it would be impossible for any youth to be more selfish than I was during these years. I had no thought but for my own annoyances, my own wishes and plans, and many an evening did I embitter for my mother by spending it in unceasing complaints of our poverty, and descriptions of the indescribably selfish things I would do if I were once rich. All my dear father's lessons seemed to have passed away from my mind. I hate myself when I look back at these years. How heartless, how despicable I must have been!
"But at last came my twenty-first year, and with it came the news from my mother that an uncle of mine, who had died two years before, had left me a thousand pounds. I thought I should have gone mad when I heard this. A thousand pounds was for me a fortune. My visions were realised, and I was rich.

"In vain did my poor mother try to make me sensible, to advise me as to the use I ought to make of this money, to put before me, though in no selfish manner, the help it would be to her if I were to settle down in a business of my own, live with her still, and do my best to thrive. I was utterly deaf to all this. One idea alone possessed me, and that was a desire to see the world. For years this had been my ardent wish, and now I had the power of fulfilling it.

"When my mother heard this purpose she sighed and went away to her own room, doubtless to weep. I thought nothing of her grief. I do not believe that even then I was base and hard-hearted. The truth was that I did not realise my mother's position; I knew nothing of the world, and could not deem it possible that she had serious need of my assistance, though such was indeed the case. She was too fond of me to hold out long against my determination, and so, with many promises to write frequently, and not to be away more than a few months, I
set off to see foreign countries. Was there ever such a young madman?

"I was away three whole years. I saw something of most countries of Europe, of India, and of America. Everywhere I lived as cheaply as possible, and in one or two cases I worked my passage from country to country. Often do I re-travel in thought over all that I saw in those three years, and, separated from the other circumstances of my life, how delightful is the memory of it to me.

"The mountains and the valleys of Switzerland became familiar to me, the grand old Italian cities, the vineyards, the blue Mediterranean, each place I came to I thought I should stop there for ever; but my eager and restless spirit drove me away. I walked through the streets of Athens, rushing thence to Constantinople, and thence again to the banks of the Ganges. I lived for a month at Benares, and can still see it as well as if I had been there yesterday; its bridge of boats across the river, its ghauts where I lounged and bathed, its numberless mosques and temples, its sacred bulls which roamed at will through the streets and bazaars, and over all that fierce Indian sun which so baked my skin that I often fancy it is still darker than that of most Europeans.

"Many other cities I wandered through, and I even saw the everlasting snow on the
crests of the Himalayas. Thence I came back once more to Europe, passed over into Africa, saw the Nile. In Cairo I lived some weeks. How distinctly I can see its red-and-white minarets, its dark and narrow streets, and hear the eternal shouting of the hucksters and beggars. And the view from Mount Mokattam! There, as you looked eastward, stretched the long line of tombs, where the old caliphs sleep. To the west you saw the Nile, like a streak of silver, and, far away beyond, the distant Pyramids rising dim and ghostly out of the desert. Oh, the walks and rides at evening around this city, through the groves of fig-trees, of tamarisks, and acacias!

"After this the dream seems suddenly to change, and I find myself in Spain, rushing with an enthusiasm, that was almost frenzy, over the scenes I had learned to love years before in 'Don Quixote.' I was now comparatively near home, but I had not as yet been away two years, and not a thought of returning crossed my mind. I wrote occasionally to my mother, but did not expect to hear in return, so uncertain were my movements.

"The Atlantic was now before me, and I crossed it, working my passage in a French vessel from Marseilles. On arriving in the States, impatient of towns and all the evidence of civilisation, I plunged at once into
the wilderness. For a long time I lived with an English family which had established itself in a spot nearly two hundred miles distant from any other settlement, and here I worked in the labour of clearing till I got weary of it. Then I visited Niagara, the vision of which still, at the distance of more than forty years, occasionally haunts my sleep; I saw the great lakes, and thence passed into Canada. But already I was growing weary of my mad restlessness.

"Very shortly I made my way back to New York, and arrived there just as my money came to an end. Now the business I had learned, and which I had formerly so much despised, stood me in good stead. For nearly half a year I worked as a printer, saving up till I should have enough money to return to England. That day at last came, and I once more crossed the Atlantic.

"I found myself again in Ipswich, after an absence of almost precisely three years. During my voyage homewards I had reflected much, and already a change was working in my inward nature; already that repentance for my folly was beginning which was to last to the end of my life.

"I reached my native town with a heart full of uneasy apprehensions. Should I find mother in health? Should I find her well-to-do, or poor? For the first time I reflected seriously upon her position, and asked myself
how she had endeavoured to live during these years of my absence. Had it been wise in me to leave her so completely alone? For she had no relative of her own, and my father’s relations all lived in other parts of England. A terrible uneasiness, the beginning of a dreadful self-reproach, seized upon me by degrees. Between my disembarkment at Liverpool and my arrival at Ipswich I neither ate nor slept; and in those days, you must remember, travelling was a very different thing from what it is now.

"I went to our old house, and saw at once that it was inhabited by strangers. I went thence to the house of my father’s most intimate friend, and I found him dead. In an agony of apprehension I hurried to the house of another acquaintance, and here at length received intelligence. It was nearly a year and a half since my mother had left Ipswich for London, hoping to earn a better living than she was able to at home. I was told her address, and, after only an hour’s pause for refreshment, started for London.

"Arthur, may you never suffer in your mind as I suffered during that journey. It is sufficient if I say that my punishment was proportionable to my fault, and that, as you have learned, was almost unpardonable.

"The address I sought was in a poor quarter in the East End, and, when I found it, appeared to be an ordinary lodging-house.
A girl who came to the door knew nothing of the name I asked for, but, on my requesting that she would make further inquiry in the house, she called down the landlady. This woman remembered my mother well enough. Mrs. Tollady, she told me, had lived with her about half a year, only occasionally paying her rent, and, to all appearances, making next to nothing out of her sewing. It was now some months since she had suddenly been taken with a serious illness, had been removed to the infirmary—and there had died."

Mr. Tollady again paused and sat long in silence, struggling with the bitter emotion which his story had awakened in himself.

Arthur knew not how to console him, and, a customer entering the shop, he was glad to withdraw from the room for a few minutes. When he returned, the printer roused himself from his depression, and smiled sadly.

"I did not think it would have cost me so much to tell you all this, Arthur," he said. "I had thought I could speak of it aloud with as much calmness as I have grown accustomed to go over the horrible story in my own mind, for there is not a day passes without its being all acted over afresh before me. Now you know the worst, and I feel relieved. I hope the pain it has given you will be compensated by the lesson my conduct teaches."
“I shall not endeavour to describe to you my state of mind during the months, nay, the years that followed. At first I seriously believe that I was as near suicide as ever man was who did not actually yield to the temptation. I woke night after night from hideous dreams, in which the figures of my father and mother appeared to me in all kinds of situations; now on the precipices overhanging Niagara, now on the top of one of the Pyramids, now in the dreadful silence of a western prairie, always with angry faces, cursing me for my selfish cruelty.

“How often I have dreamt that I fled before these terrible images, and, as the only means of escape, leaped wildly into the chaos of a terrific cataract—and then awakened only to bitterly regret that the dream was not true, and that I still lived in my agony.

“Well, by degrees my suffering lessened, as all suffering, sooner or later, must, and I began to think of how I should expiate the crime of a mother’s murder, for of that I sincerely accounted myself guilty. At length I came to the resolution simply to do all the good in my power for my fellow-creatures, never to let a day go by without having assisted by word or deed someone who was in suffering and want.

“I was then earning my living as a journeyman printer in this very house. I did not earn very much; but out of that I forced
myself to save enough to always have a few coppers in my pocket for charity. By degrees, too, I bought myself, a few second-hand books, among them most of the historians and the poets that you see now on my shelves, and, in what leisure time I could get, worked hard to improve my very defective education. And very thankful I am that I did so, as it has enabled me to help you a little, Arthur, in your own self-education.

"Well, well, all that happened a long time ago, long before you were born, and probably there is not a person now living who remembers me in those early days. I shall not trouble you with the story of my life from year to year; it was very quiet and uninteresting, for I never again left London, or this house, except for a long country walk now and then on Sunday, when I returned to my dear botanising, and by degrees made the collection we have so often looked over together.

"I must hurry on to the matter which just now most concerns me, the trouble which has led to my telling you the story of my life. You must know that for fifteen years I was employed by the same master, an excellent man, whom I truly loved and honoured, at the end of which time he took me into partnership with him. Our business was then a very good one, and seemed to promise constant improvement. Five years after becom-
ing a partner, we were in a position to purchase together the house we worked in. Not two months after the completion of this purchase my dear old friend died—he was then sixty—and by will bequeathed his share in the house to me. So that the house became my own.

"For some years I continued to prosper in my business. I used to employ five men and a boy, and I even thought at times of removing to a larger place. But then, almost before I knew it, my profits began to decrease. I don't know whether it was that I was already growing old and losing my energy, or whether several other large printing-offices that had opened round here took away my customers. At all events, within three or four years I had dropped down to one man and a boy, and had scarcely employment for these. I was obliged to let the top part of the house, and, shortly after, to turn my office here into a shop, and become half news-vendor, half stationer, still, however, continuing to do whatever printing I could get.

"It was very shortly after this that you came to me, and I have no need to tell you how the business went on in succeeding years. One thing, however, happened, that you, of course, know nothing of. Seven years ago exactly I was visited by a man in a wretched state of poverty, who gave as his reason for
calling on me the fact that he had had an uncle of my name. A little talk showed me that he was the son of my mother's brother, who had for many years been dead, but whose name I recognised at once when mentioned to me. He told me that he had been a publican, but had fallen on ill-luck, and had now nothing but the workhouse before him unless I could afford him help of some kind. It was impossible for me to give him any employment, but it was no less impossible to refuse assistance to a relative of my poor mother.

"I felt that I must do something for him; I was not in very good health at the time, and conceived a sort of superstition that this man was sent to me as a means of atoning in some poor degree for the sins of my younger years. Giving him all the ready-money I then possessed, which was a very paltry sum, I requested him to see me again on the following day.

"In the meantime I went to the only wealthy acquaintance I possessed. This was Mr. Henry Waghorn, an elder brother of the Mr. Waghorn who has just married Miss Gresham. I had done a good deal of printing for him from time to time, and had found him a pleasant, straightforward, generous gentleman. Summoning all my boldness, I went to Mr. Waghorn, stated to him my need and asked him whether he would lend me a
hundred pounds on the security of my house. Before he consented, he went on to question me in a most friendly manner about my own business. I told him frankly my position, and thereupon he offered to lend me three hundred pounds, so that I might have the advantage of a little capital for myself, with the assistance of which he thought I might revive my business. This I refused, but I was at length persuaded to accept of two hundred. This was secured by a mortgage on my house, by the terms of which it was arranged that the principal should be repaid in five years, during which time I was to pay at stated intervals a certain rate of interest.

"With the money I went off rejoicing. I spent half of it in establishing my relative in a coffee-house in Holborn, for he seemed best fitted for this, and he still does an excellent business. For a few weeks after I had so assisted him, he visited me occasionally, then he ceased to come entirely, and for more than six years he has never been near my shop."

"The ungrateful fellow!" exclaimed Arthur, indignantly. "And you say he prospers! I wonder you ever gave away another penny in charity."

"Not so, my dear boy," replied the old man, calmly. "Such cases of ingratitude are, happily, very rare, and a long life among the poor has convinced me that real gratitude is pretty certain to reward the vast majority of
one's efforts do good. But I must hasten to the end of this miserable business. I continued to pay my interest regularly; but the prospect of having to pay the principal lay as a terrible burden night and day upon my mind. Notwithstanding the hundred pounds, my business showed no signs of improvement; I could not imagine how the money was to be paid.

"As the period drew near, I one day visited Mr. Waghorn and told him I feared he must take possession of my house, as I saw now no possibility of paying more than a small portion of the debt. But he behaved to me with noble generosity: 'We will say nothing about the principal when the time comes,' he said. 'You shall just continue to pay the interest, as you have been doing, and also pay a portion of the principal whenever you are able. Don't trouble your mind about it. I am rich, and can very well wait for my money.'

"After this he exerted himself to procure me customers, and with some success. That was just the time when you were beginning to be of great service to me, Arthur, and you remember our business thrrove better than it had done for a long time. To cut the tale short, I paid off portions of the principal by degrees, and by the beginning of last April owed only one hundred. But just then Mr. Waghorn died."
"His death has been a serious misfortune to me. Nearly all Mr. Henry Waghorn's property, it seems, has gone to his brother John, Miss Gresham's husband, and amongst it this mortgage on my house. Mr. John Waghorn is sadly different from his brother. Though he is now very wealthy, he has taken advantage of the fact that the period for the payment of his principal has gone by without any definite renewal, and yesterday he announced to me that the whole must be paid within three months from the present date, or, if not, he claims the house. There, you have the secret of my misery, Arthur. You know that I am utterly unable to pay this money, and—"

The old man did not finish the sentence, but sank back again into a state of sad reverie.

Arthur sprang to his feet, his blood boiling with indignation.

"The mean rascal!" he exclaimed. "I felt sure that that was his character, even from the little I knew of him. I knew that his visits here were the cause of your suffering, that that mean face of his could bring nothing else! Will he not wait a year, half a year?"

"Not a moment longer than the three months. And he takes credit to himself for being so generous as to allow that, though I believe the law would compel it."
“A hundred pounds!” cried Arthur. “Why, it is nothing, after all. The miserable fellow shall have his hundred pounds, with interest and what not in the bargain, and then we will hiss him out of the shop. Do you forget that I am a rich man, Mr. Tollady?”

He laughed gaily as he spoke, endeavouring to cheer the old man; but the latter rose from his chair with a grave expression upon his face, and took Arthur’s hands in his.

“I was prepared for this, Arthur,” he said, “and prepared to resist it. If it had been possible to hide the affair from you completely I should have done so, but it was not. I could not allow you to try and obtain this money. I could not, indeed, Arthur.”

“But why not?” cried the young man. “You know we have agreed that my interest, as Mr. Gresham pays it me quarterly, goes to our common expenses of whatever kind. Where is the harm in forestalling two or three quarters in order to keep a roof over our heads? Surely that is a very necessary expense, Mr. Tollady?”

“No, no. It is not just that you should suffer for my debts. We must not speak of it, Arthur.”

“Suffer!” cried the other. “Whether do you think I shall suffer most, of the loss of a little money, or by seeing you driven out of house and home, and having myself to look
out for a dwelling in a strange place when I love this old house so well? It is you that are unjust, Mr. Tollady! Will you not allow me to do this little service for you? Is it fair or right that you should keep the power of conferring kindnesses to yourself, and not allow me to exercise it when I can? I insist upon seeing Mr. Gresham before I go to bed to-night; you must allow me!"

Mr. Tollady still resisted, but was at length obliged to yield to Arthur's vehemence. Without a moment's delay the latter started out for Portland Place. Once or twice on the way he thought of what had occurred when he last saw Mr. Gresham, but that was a matter of such little importance compared with what he now had in hand that he dismissed all thought of it from his mind. He had not a doubt with regard to the success of his mission. His heart throbbed with the pleasure of being able to benefit his old friend.

At the same time Mr. Gresham was sitting alone in the library, in no very pleasant mood. As it was Tuesday night, Helen had gone to her evening school, a circumstance very distasteful to her guardian, who could now scarcely suffer her to be out of his sight. It irritated him to think that he was of so little account in her daily life, that her principal friends were people entirely strange to him, that her aims were of such a nature as alto-
gether to exclude him from any participation in them. Every day, as his own uncontrollable passion continued to grow in vehemence, he clearly perceived that Helen became constantly more distant in her intercourse with him. He half suspected that he had betrayed his secret, and that his ward was adopting this method of discouraging him. The effect upon his temperament of this unceasing agitation—agitation all the more severe because he had never hitherto experienced anything of the kind—was to convert his equable cynic's mood by degrees into harshness and irritability. He was intensely angry with himself for nourishing a sentiment which he had hitherto ridiculed with such persistent sarcasm, and, with the injustice of a man whose only philosophy is founded on habitual deception of himself and the world, visited his bad temper on whosoever had the misfortune to be a safe object of insult. Love performs very curious metamorphoses on different characters, but perhaps its operations are almost always for the better. In the present case, however, this was not so. Whereas, Mr. Gresham had previously been only rather cold in temperament and a good deal affected, love had now made him mean and despicable.

When Arthur's visit was announced to him, he first bade the servant say he was from home, but the next moment altered his mind
and ordered that he should be admitted. Accordingly Arthur appeared in the library.

"You come at an unusual time, Mr. Golding," said the artist, in a distant tone. "What can I do for you?"

"A great kindness, Mr. Gresham," returned Arthur, somewhat abashed by his reception, but determined to do his utmost. He then went on to relate the chief circumstances connected with Mr. Tollady's loan, and to describe the difficulties in which the printer at present found himself. The artist suddenly cut him short as he approached the end of the story—

"And the object of all this, Mr. Golding?" he said, abruptly. "Excuse me, but your tale is a trifle long and not as interesting as it might be."

"My object, sir," returned Arthur, preserving his calmness with a great effort, "is to endeavour to spare Mr. Tollady the severe suffering which is threatening him. It can be done so easily. If you would so deeply oblige me as to allow me the use of the sum I need, advancing it upon the interest which will fall due to me this year and next, this claim could then be satisfied, and a very deserving man would be freed from the danger of being driven out of house and home. Mr. Tollady is sixty-five years old, and in very feeble health. I dread to think of the result of his having to seek a new home, and perhaps a new
occupation, under such circumstances as these."

The young man paused, and, keeping his eyes steadily fixed on Mr. Gresham's face, waited a reply with a throbbing heart.

"I am very sorry, Mr. Golding," returned the artist, with a rather malicious sneer, "but I am altogether unable to comply with this request. I must beg you to remember that your legacy is not, strictly speaking, due to you till you become of age, which you will not do for about a year and a half. Thinking the money might be of use to you I took upon myself the responsibility of paying the interest before you could really claim it. I have no objection to continue doing so, but I should not feel justified in advancing large sums to you. It is quite impossible."

A sudden chill passed over the young man's frame as he heard these words pronounced, but the next moment he flushed hot with righteous anger at the insulting manner in which he had been reminded of his dependent position. Close upon the anger followed intolerable shame. For a moment he turned away, and with difficulty kept back the tears from rushing to his eyes. Then again came the memory of Mr. Tollady, and bitter disappointment took the place of all other feelings.

"I am sorry you cannot do this kindness for me, Mr. Gresham," he suddenly ex-
claimed, "but perhaps I should not have ventured to ask it, it was requesting too much. But you have it in your power to help us in another way, if you will. I cannot think that you will refuse to do so. Mr. Waghorn is now your son-in-law. Will you ask him to put off this claim for another year? I am sure you will do me this kindness, sir? Mr. Waghorn has no need of this money. A hundred pounds are scarcely as much to him as one pound is to Mr. Tollady. Will you ask him to give us a year longer. I am sure we can pay off the debt in that time. Only a year!"

Arthur forgot everything in the eagerness of his pleading. He felt that this was his last resource. Should this fail him, he knew not what evils might ensue. His impassioned tones and the glow which mantled his fine features as he spoke would have vanquished any ordinary obduracy. But Mr. Gresham’s jealousy was by no means an ordinary obstacle. It showed no sign of yielding.

“I am really very unfortunate, Mr. Golding," replied the artist, "in my utter inability to serve you. Though Mr. Waghorn, as you remind me, is now my relative, I have absolutely no concern in his private affairs. He is at present on the Continent, too, and I could not apply to him if I wished. I am sure you will see that it is impossible for me to do what you wish.”
Arthur was beginning to speak again, but Mr. Gresham interrupted him.

"I regret that I have no time at present for further conversation, Mr. Golding," he said. "Indeed I have already allowed you to detain me too long. I must really say good-night. Bye-the-by, you remember that I am engaged to-morrow?"

Arthur rose to his full height, looked for a moment sternly into the artist's face with a look before which the latter dropped his eyes, then bowed and left the room without a word, with the same stern expression on his countenance. With set lips, clenched fists, and throbbing veins, he walked rapidly along the streets homewards. Already he had made up his mind what to do. The very next morning he would say good-bye to his painting for ever and henceforth would devote himself to his dear benefactor. His exact plan of conduct this was no moment for deciding. Sufficient that he knew his duty and was determined to perform it.

When he reached Charlotte Place he was surprised to find that the shop was not lit up as usual, for by this time it was quite dark. Stepping quickly inside he saw that the parlour at the back was also in darkness. All at once every drop of blood in his body seemed to rush to his heart, he gasped for breath. Manning himself with a desperate effort he stepped to the parlour door and
called Mr. Tollady's name. There was no reply. He ran to the foot of the stairs and called repeatedly and loudly, the perspiration breaking out upon his body in the intensity of his nameless dreads. Still no reply came. Hurrying back through the darkness into the shop, he groped for the matches in their usual place and hurriedly struck a light. With this burning in his hand he entered the parlour. He had just time to see that Mr. Tollady was sitting in his arm-chair, when the match went out. He struck another, and with it lit a candle that stood on the mantelpiece; then drew near to the printer, and, thinking him asleep, laid his hand upon his shoulder to shake him. As he did so, the old man fell forward into his arms. Arthur hastily raised him, and held the candle close to his face, calling his name the while in loud and rapid tones. But not a breath stirred the flame; there was no intelligence in the clear eyes which seemed to regard their questioner: Mr. Tollady was dead.
CHAPTER VII.

THE SHADOW OF DEATH.

Speechless and horror-stricken, Arthur Golding stood for full a minute, holding with his right hand the dead man upright in the chair, while the candle, still close to the pale features, trembled in his left. Involuntarily he had endeavoured to give utterance to a cry of pain and terror, but, though his lips were widely parted, no sound escaped them. The eyes of the corpse were still open, and seemed to gaze upon him with a resemblance to life which held him fixed as with a horrible charm. At length he forced himself to turn away and put down the light upon the table; then he once more leaned his ear close against the breathless lips, and, suddenly seized with terror at the dreadful silence, fled from the room out into the street. A minute brought him to the shop of John Pether, the umbrella mender, into which he burst with breathless haste.

John Pether was sitting in the little room which formed his shop, upon a low stool, closely engaged in divesting an old umbrella of its last strips of tattered silk. A small oil lamp stood upon a very rickety table, and
its light fell strongly upon his features, showing all their grim and sallow meagreness with hideous effect against the dark background of the rest of the shop. The wine-coloured stain upon his left cheek seemed more than usually distinct to-night, and as he sat working he bit his lips with a species of ferocity. His face was strongly smeared with grime, and his long, skeleton-like hands, which rent the silk as if they took a pleasure in destruction, were black and hairy like those of a gorilla. The effect of his eyes, as he turned them upon Arthur’s sudden entrance, was that of two very small black spots in the centre of two spheres of gleaming white. On hearing the young man’s stammered words of explanation, he rose from his stool, interlacing his long fingers, and stood leaning forward with an expression upon his face as if he not yet understood what had happened.

"Mr. Tollady ill, you say?" he asked, in the slow, hollow tones of one who is not accustomed to speak much.

"He is dead!" cried Arthur. "I can see no trace of life! Come with me and look!"

John Pether followed him immediately, and they entered the dark shop together. There in the back parlour they found the corpse sitting upright in the chair, the candle faintly illumining the room. The umbrella-mender took the light, and, as Arthur had done, approached it to Mr. Tollady’s face. In a
moment he set it down again and faced his companion.

"Dead," he remarked, with hollow emphasis. "How did it happen?"

Arthur recounted the events of the evening as far as Mr. Tollady was concerned, whilst John Pether still kept his eyes fixed upon the corpse.

"Heart-disease, no doubt," added the latter, when the young man had finished. "I have expected it for years. Help me to lay him upon the bed."

Together they lifted up the old man's body and laid it down again upon the bed, which they previously opened out.

"He had an easy death," said John Pether, gloomily, regarding the calm and noble countenance. "May we die as easily."

Again he bent over the prostrate body, and Arthur, half awed at his gloomy impassibility, stood regarding him. As he watched he saw a change come over the seared features, passion seemed to convulse them and to pass over the man's entire body, making him tremble in every limb. Then the hollow voice once more broke the silence, but speaking with a terrible concentration of energy which almost froze the hearer's blood.

"Another gone," it said. "Another trodden down into the grave in the struggle against the tyranny of kings and princes, of
idle lords, and all the pestilent army of the rich, whose rank breath poisons the bitter crust they throw to us! How many more, how many more of us shall perish before we learn the courage of the dog which leaps at its tormentor's throat? Year after year I have watched you, Samuel Tollady, starving yourself that half a dozen of us feeble wretches should creep on a few paces longer before we dropped into the gutter and died; year after year I have known you a friend to those of us whom hunger and despair had made worse than savage beasts, always bidding us remember we were men and hope that we should some day have our rights; year after year you have toiled without ceasing for others, and at last despair of helping all you could has killed you. How many more, how many more? You fought it out well to the end, Samuel Tollady, but you have lost. You were too kind, too good, too tender for a fight like this. Your voice was as little able to call back freedom or justice to the earth as this candle that lights up your dead face would be to take the place of the sun and light up the whole world! Your struggle against our tyrants was like a pebble thrown into the sea, it could make no more impression! Year after year I have told you the truth, but you refused to believe me. It is not gentleness and kindness and forgiving words that will end our miseries, but swords
and cannon-balls and every river of the earth red with blood. It is good you are gone; the fight that is coming would have been too stern for you; your heart would have been moved to pity by the shrieks of dying wretches when the hour came for killing, and killing without mercy, man, woman and child. We will make the earth fat with their thick blood, and it will grow us better bread! We will pull down their palaces which shut out the air of heaven, and build houses out of the ruins, for we are tired of creeping into dens for our rest!

Here he turned suddenly and seized Arthur by the hand.

"Come," he cried hoarsely, working himself with each utterance into fiercer excitement, "come and swear over the body of this good man! Swear that when the hour comes—and it may be nearer than you think—you will take a sword with the rest of us and kill without mercy! Swear that never till you lie stiff and cold, like this man, will you make peace with the tyrants of the earth! Swear that you will never be the friend of a rich man, that you will never enter the house of one but to destroy it! Swear all this, in the presence of Death, who shall be our only king!"

Despite himself, Arthur became imbued with a portion of the speaker’s enthusiasm as he listened to his fierce words; the touch
of the man’s hands seemed to send a current of hot passion along all his veins. With face deadly pale and voice almost as hollow and ghostlike as that of John Pether himself, he solemnly pronounced the words: “I swear.” At the same moment he thought of Mr. Gresham, and felt capable of fulfilling his oath to the letter. His companion then pressed his hand with a force which seemed intended to crush every joint in it, and strode in silence out of the house.

Thus, left alone, Arthur first of all closed the shop in the usual manner, then returned to the parlour and lit the lamp. This illumined the room more completely and deprived it, in some degree, of its ghostly horrors. By this time he had shaken off the nervousness which hitherto possessed him, and he could now bend over the face of his dead benefactor with no feelings save of affection and sorrow. As he stood carefully perusing every lineament, as if he wished to impress the countenance firmly upon his mind for ever, a natural emotion at length got the better of his firmness, and, sinking on his knees by the side of the bed, he burst into a flood of tears. All the dead man’s unspeakable goodness to him passed through his mind, heightened by that intense light of sudden conviction which so frequently breaks upon us in similar situations. He saw himself coming into the printer’s shop eight
years ago, a struggling, hard-worked child, trembling in doubt whether his services would be accepted; he saw again with perfect distinctness Mr. Tollady's friendly smile of encouragement, that smile which for sweetness he had never seen equalled on the face of any other man, and heard his voice speaking in tones so different from those of harsh vulgarity with which alone he had been familiar. Then the many, many hours spent in delightful study by the old man's side passed before his mind's eye, each illumined with bright sunshine. He could not believe that any one of those hours had been otherwise than hours of sunshine. Then, still later, came the first serious awakening of the artist's genius within him, and he remembered, with tearful gratitude, how Mr. Tollady had noticed its first manifestations and had fostered it by all the means in his power. Surely it was impossible for any man to excel this one in all perfection of tender virtues. In this moment of supreme grief Arthur felt the full grandeur of the dead man's character, and experienced an ardent desire to emulate his goodness. Still kneeling by the bed-side, he took a solemn, though a silent vow, henceforth to devote his whole energy, even as his friend had done, to rendering more happy the lives of others. Henceforth he would be dead to art, for it seemed to him useless labour, devoid of benefit to the struggling
masses of mankind. He would work for his living, but only in his trade of printer; thus, he conceived, he would be benefiting the world even by the toil which brought him his daily bread. All his leisure hours he would devote to works of charity and goodwill, to the utmost that lay within his power. How much even a very poor man can do, if only actuated by a sincere spirit, Mr. Tollady's memory would never fail to remind him.

But before he threw aside his pencil for ever it must perform for him one more service, secure to him one more everlasting pleasure. Once more lighting the candle, he went upstairs to his room and fetched a sheet of drawing-paper. With this he descended again to the parlour, and, having tenderly raised the dead man's head into a suitable position, he commenced to draw the outlines of the high and noble forehead, the closed eyes, the lips even now wearing the half-smile which gave so much attractiveness to the face during life. Slowly and carefully he continued the portrait, lingering with affectionate hand over every trait, not omitting a wrinkle or the slightest gradation of shade. For three hours he bent over the drawing, never satisfied that he could not add yet another touch to render it more complete. When at length it was finished, Arthur wrote the date and his own initials in one corner, and laid the drawing aside. It
was one o'clock. Turning the lamp out, he took the lighted candle in hand, and, bending over the corpse, tenderly kissed its forehead. Then he drew the counterpane of the bed carefully over the body, and went to his rest.

He slept soundly till six o'clock, for the violent emotions of the evening, so various and succeeding each other in such quick succession, had resulted in deadly fatigue. Though still longing to sleep, he resolutely rose from his bed and dressed. At eight o'clock the man whom Mr. Tollady had employed in the printing office would come, and it would be necessary to apprise him of what had happened, to pay and dismiss him. There was moreover one task which must be performed before Arthur could have peace of mind. As soon as he had risen he took a sheet of paper and an envelope and addressed himself to its fulfilment. After some reflection he succeeded in penning the following letter, directed to Mr. Gresham:

"Sir,

"I grieve to have to inform you that Mr. Tollady died suddenly last night. I found him lifeless in his chair on returning home from my interview with you.

"This event confirms a resolution I had all but determined upon when I left your house last night—never to enter it again. I
have no doubt whatever that Mr. Tollady's death was hastened by trouble consequent upon the circumstances you learned from me; and though we now see that even your assent to my request would have been powerless to save him, yet it would be impossible for me to continue to feel myself indebted for the slightest favour to one who would not open his lips in behalf of a man he knew so worthy.

"I am altogether unaware what can have caused the strong signs of disfavour which you have shown to me during the last few days; but as I have already once begged an explanation and been refused, it is needless to express any regret at having offended you. It only remains for me to say that I shall, of course, cease from this day to receive the money which you last night told me I could not really claim. I sincerely regret even having accepted a penny of it. If I live to my twenty-first birthday it is possible I may then address you again on the subject, but till then I trust I may never be compelled to intrude upon your leisure.

"ARTHUR GOLDING."

This letter was despatched at once, after which Arthur breathed freely once more. He could not conceal from himself that he had a double object in writing it, however. Whilst his main wish was doubtless to express to
Mr. Gresham that righteous indignation which took irresistible possession of him whenever he thought of the latter's manner during their last interview, and also to free himself from what he now regarded as merely an encumbrance in entering upon his life of labour and self-denial, viz., the money he was to receive quarterly; there was a second impulse, likewise very powerful, the desire that Helen Norman should become acquainted with his loss. For he felt sure that as soon as she heard of it, her first thought would be to visit the shop. It would be hard to say how much of the sincerest love is pure egotism, and Arthur, though he would never have acknowledged it to himself, had even some degree of pleasure in thinking that his sad position would be sure to create the strongest sympathy in Helen's heart. To be regarded by her with tenderness of any kind was, however much he might endeavour to suppress the feeling, still one of the strongest desires in the young man's breast.

Having completed this task, and having concluded his business with the man when he arrived, Arthur secured all the doors and went once more to John Pether's to consult with him on the necessary steps to be taken with regard to Mr. Tollady's burial and the settlement of his business affairs. Finding that Pether was altogether unacquainted with the story of the mortgage, Arthur re-
lated it to him, whilst the former sat and listened with an ever-dispersing gloom upon his forbidding features.

"Has he left a will?" he asked, when at length the story was finished.

"I have no idea," replied Arthur.

"Then I think you should look. There is pretty sure to be one."

"Come with me, Mr. Pether," said Arthur. "Can you spare the time?"

The umbrella-mender shrugged his shoulders, and, rising without a word, left the shop, locking the door behind him. Arrived once more in the parlour where the corpse lay, they went at once to the desk where it was known that Mr. Tollady kept all his important papers. Among the first they turned over was a sheet of foolscap, at the head of which was written, "My Will." It was dated April 3rd, 1870, and was signed and witnessed quite formally. The document ran thus:

"As I have been warned repeatedly of late by signs which I cannot mistake that I am suffering from an affection of the heart, which I fully believe may result in my death any moment, I esteem it prudent, now that I am in possession of unimpaired faculties, to make known my last will with regard to the disposal of such property as I may own at my death."
"All property that I die possessed of I bequeath, without exception, to Arthur Golding, who has grown up from childhood in my house, and for whom I cherish the affection of a father. Should he be in a position to afford it, I trust that he will continue to bestow small gifts, from time to time, on such poor people as he knows I should like to have assisted. I beg, moreover, that he will never fail to confer any benefit in his power upon my friends John Pether and Mark Challenger. Had I been rich, both of these should have received bequests from me, but as I know that I shall die poor they will forgive my inability to do all that I gladly would. I should like them, however, to choose some book or other slight article out of what I leave behind me, and preserve it as a memento of my friendship.

"To Arthur Golding I leave, moreover, my most fervent good wishes for his future happiness, and my gratitude for the pleasure his true affection has ever afforded me. I trust that he will never forget what was the main object of my life, and that he will do his best to continue that work as long as he lives."

Arthur read this with difficulty, on account of tears which filled his eyes, and even John Pether's hard countenance betrayed signs of emotion. After a short pause they continued the work of examining
the papers in the desk. There was very little of importance, the chief articles being several bundles of letters neatly tied up and docketed, and one or two old manuscript volumes, which appeared to be a diary kept abroad many years ago. Having fastened up the desk again, the two went out together and spent the rest of the day in the transaction of necessary business.

On the third day after his death Mr. Tollady was buried. A very favourite walk of the old man’s, on Sunday evenings, had been by Highgate Cemetery, and here Arthur resolved that he should have his last resting-place. Arthur still possessed sufficient money to cover the expenses of the funeral. In consultation between John Pether, Mark Challenger and himself, it was determined that the ceremony should be of the simplest nature, or rather that there should be no ceremony at all. The deceased had never made any secret of his religious opinions, though no man could have been less fond of making a display of them, and the three friends knew well that a simple burial, devoid of the affectation of a service which could have had no significance for him, would be the best way of testifying their deep respect for his memory.

The news of Mr. Tollady’s death had spread rapidly throughout the neighbourhood. So very little was he known by the
more well-to-do of his neighbours, that the majority of them had long thought him mad. There was a very general opinion, too, among these worthy people, that he was immensely rich, in short an absolute miser, and some little conversation now arose with regard to the manner in which his money would be disposed of, if anyone should be so lucky as to find it. Most of them, however, heard of his death with a shrug of the shoulders, and some such exclamation as, "Poor old bloke! I wonder he lived so long. Never left his 'ouse for ten years, have he?" But there were great numbers of the miserably poor round about to whom the news of the printer's death was a veritable affliction. It meant to them the sudden loss of frequent kindly assistance, of help and advice in sickness, of consolation in trouble, of a friend in the best sense of the word. Many was the boy and girl, the children of drunken or criminal parents, who had to thank Mr. Tollady for getting them a situation, when they could find no one else who would "speak for them" to employers. Many an ill-used wife remembered him gratefully for services performed on her behalf with a brutal husband, words spoken in scorn which went with forcible directness to the wretch's heart and made him either ashamed of his cowardice, or at least afraid to repeat it. Many an honest-working-man had found in him an earnest
friend whose advice was invaluable in restoring something like domestic quietness to a home which was threatened with destruction. How often had he paid a trifling fine for some penniless victim of drunken folly, and so saved him from the imprisonment which would, in all probability, have proved his ruin. Not a few families there were with whom it had become quite a custom to seek out Mr. Tollady if a boy or girl had shown signs of going the wrong way, trusting implicitly to his influence to check them while yet there was time, and seldom disappointed in their hopes. With such poor people as these, victims of the world's vices much more than of their own, the good old man had stood on terms of the most intimate familiarity. He, a man who had been at great pains to provide himself with a good education, had the completest sympathy with the most brutal forms of ignorance; he who was to the day of his death absolutely pure and chaste, did not feel himself repelled from the vilest of the vile if he felt that he could do them good. And all this good work had been performed so quietly, so unpretentiously, with such an extreme regard for the feelings of those who were its objects, that now when their benefactor's death became the subject of common talk, the people were surprised at the revelations in which the talk resulted. "Why, and did you know him, Mary?" one
woman would ask of a neighbour, as they stood gossipping on their respective doorsteps. "Know him! Sure I did," would be the reply. "Why, when my Billy were down wi' fever six weeks after Chris'mas who else paid the doctor as come and give him medicine?" Many such little sentences were exchanged during the day when Mr. Tollady lay in his coffin in the back parlour. And when at length the day of the funeral arrived a very large crowd of women and children had assembled round the shop door to see the coffin brought out. Many were there who wept unrestrainedly, perhaps even then they lacked their dead friend's assistance or advice, and when at length the simple coffin was borne out and deposited in the plain hearse, it was in the midst of an absolute silence, only broken by a sob here and there.

The three friends were the only mourners who followed the coffin to the grave. They rode together in a cab behind the hearse, all along the noisy thoroughfare of Tottenham Court Road, and its continuation, Hampstead Road, and so out to the Cemetery. Here in a retired corner, which they had previously visited together, they stood around the open grave whilst the body of their friend was lowered into it. Not a word broke the solemn silence. Only when the hollow sound of the first sobs fall-
ing in made itself heard did Arthur’s tears refuse any longer to be withheld, whilst Mark Challenger, who stood close by his side, broke into unrestrained weeping. He was a good and tender-hearted fellow, who had suffered much from wrong of many kinds, and it was his wont, as we have seen, to rail on all occasions with unsparing bitterness against the injustice of his oppressors, but had the occasion presented itself he could not have found it in his heart to hurt one of them. As he walked away with his companions from the grave, he recited to them in inarticulate tones the long story of Mr. Tollady’s many kindnesses to himself personally, charging himself with all sorts of ingratitude, of which he had never been guilty, and protesting that he had lost in the printer his best and only friend. Arthur and John Pether maintained silence, the former so sad that he was unable to utter a word, the latter seeming to brood with a savage intensity, which had already become in him a species of madness, over the wrongs and sufferings which afflict the world.

Very shortly they parted, Challenger and Pether going back to their day’s work, whilst Arthur, seeming to derive consolation from the bright, warm sunshine, continued to linger about the walks of the Cemetery, pausing here and there to read an inscription half-mechanically, and ever returning in the
direction of the grave, which the men were still at work filling up. At last he saw their labour completed, and with a deep sigh he walked up the hill-side to the highest point of the grave-yard. It was a perfect day, just at that period of the year when summer is gently fading into autumn. One or two white clouds alone flecked the deep blue above, and the intense clearness of the atmosphere rendered the colours of the trees, the grass, the flowers, and the whiteness of the marble monuments almost painfully brilliant. Reaching the top of the hill, he turned and beheld the view over distant London. At this moment it seemed to him that the dim, smoke-capped city was a veritable abode of misery, and that only here, in the midst of those who had left it for ever, was true peace to be found. A weight of melancholy, a suffering distinct from that of sorrow, pressed upon his heart, filling him with a sense of dreary and hopeless misery which he had never hitherto experienced. The future seemed dull and hopeless, the past bright with a gladness which could never return. In vain he endeavoured to shake off the intolerable load, to breathe in fresh hope from the breeze and the sunlight, to look forward to the life of energy and usefulness which he had promised himself, and in which action would be its own reward; he could not succeed in freeing himself from a gloomy
presentiment that his period of gladness had gone bye for ever. His thoughts, wandering at will over the whole field of his past existence, frequently rested upon the image of Helen Norman. She had never called at the shop, though she must know that Mr. Tollady was dead; and this omission on her part added to his misery. Then he burst into an exclamation of self-scorn, asking himself what reason he had to expect that Helen would take any interest in his loss. There was a whole world between them. It had only been as a promising artist that Helen had ever taken any interest in him, and now that he had done with art for ever he had at the same time done with her and all recollection of her. What business had he—the foundling of a London slum, henceforth to work hard for his living as a common journeyman—what business had he to be thinking of a wealthy and beautiful young lady who might one day not improbably become a striking ornament of the fashionable world? And, at this last thought, his blood worked itself into a very whirl of democratic ferocity. The world, forsooth! And he, and such as he, were of no account in this "world," formed no fraction of it! He thought of the insults he had received from Mr. Gresham; and all the lessons which life had taught him concerning the relations between rich and poor, seemed all at once to
bear fruit within his heart and to make him another man. He looked back with scorn at the calm life he had hitherto led, with double scorn upon the art which had absorbed his energies and kept his mind from troubling itself with all-important questions. But he assured himself that that period of his life was at an end. The hours of grief following upon his old friend’s death had wrought a development in his moral being. When at length he turned from the Cemetery the west was already beginning to glow with the hues of evening, he walked with a firmer step, saying to himself that he was no longer a boy.

It is not improbable that the constant companionship of John Pether during the last few days had been not a little effectual in bringing about this mood of mind. That gloomy fanatic never allowed the sense of his wrongs to sink to rest for a moment; all his waking hours were spent in exciting himself to fresh passion; and during many years of such perpetual brooding he had at length fanned the fire of wrath within his breast to such an intense glow that it only lacked some special accession of fuel to make it burst forth in all the violence of raging insanity. John had always shown a marked inclination for Arthur, and, but for Mr. Tollady’s careful and judicious interference, would have long ago made the youth a con-
fident of his gloomy imaginations. During the past year his visits to the printer's shop had not been as frequent as before. He had contracted increased habits of solitude, and continual privation at once added to his sense of unmerited suffering and the brooding passions aroused by it. His trade had fallen off by degrees till he had scarcely the means of livelihood, for in the neighbourhood his terrible aspect had confirmed the impression that he was a lunatic, and most people had some fear in approaching his shop. Amidst the congenial occupations of happy days Arthur had had but little leisure or inclination to busy his thoughts much with this strange man and his eccentricities, but now that grief and mortification had rendered his mind susceptible to gloomy impressions he found a decided pleasure in the umbrella-mender's society. Each evening since Mr. Tollady's death they had spent in company, Arthur sitting a silent listener whilst John Pether, with unwonted fluency, had recounted circumstances in his life, at times working himself into paroxysms of passion terrible to witness.

To-night they met again in the back-parlour, and sat there till it was very late. Pether was not much disposed for conversation this evening, but Arthur was unusually talkative. He related to his companion many events of past years which he had
hitherto told to no one but Mr. Tollady, and passed on to an account of his relations with Mr. Gresham, of which his hearer as yet knew nothing beyond that he had been receiving instruction from the artist. Arthur spoke of Helen Norman, too. John Pether was a somewhat strange confident for such topics, but the young man had no other acquaintance with whom he could speak, and at present the abnormal activity of his mind rendered it absolutely necessary that he should give utterance to what he thought. He spoke of her as any stranger might have done, making mention of her kindness to the poor, and the reciprocal friendliness which had at once grown up between her and Mr. Tollady.

"Tollady was always too ready to trust to appearance," put in John Pether, gloomily. Arthur bit his lip and paused. Even now he could not bear to hear Helen spoken of slightly.

"She has not been here since his death," he said, after a moment's silence, as if speaking to himself. "And yet she knows of it."

"How could you expect it from a woman?" returned the other, sitting with his elbows resting upon his knees, and his face between his long, hairy hands.

There was a long silence, and then John Pether suddenly raised his face, and asked—
"Did you ever know your mother?"

"She died before I was old enough to really know her," replied Arthur.

"So did mine," said Pether, speaking in slow, deep tones, and as if he had a grim pleasure in the recollection to which his thoughts were turning. "Did I ever tell you of my mother?"

Arthur looked into the speaker's eyes, which were blood-shot to-night, and almost shuddered at their expression. He shook his head.

"She murdered a man she had lived with—perhaps my father—and she was sentenced to be hung for it. But at that time she was on the point of giving birth to me, so that her execution was put off for a month. Then they hung her, and I was brought up in the workhouse."

Even before he had ceased speaking, he had relapsed into abstractedness, and was apparently forgetful of what he had said. But his words had thrilled Arthur with horror. During the hour that followed neither spoke a word, and at the end of that time Pether rose in his usual manner and left the house in silence.

The next day but one was Sunday. During the morning Arthur went out to keep an appointment with a man to whom he had offered his services as compositor, and in his absence John Pether sat before the
counter in the shop. The door was slightly ajar, admitting a long streak of sunlight, which also made its way through two round holes in the shutters. The umbrella-mender was meditating as usual, his eyes watching the moats which were making merry in the sloping shafts of light. He was in a quiet mood this morning, influenced doubtless by the cheerful weather, and beyond an occasional twitching of the fingers, as they rested upon his knees, he exhibited no sign of internal agitation. All at once the shop door was pushed open, and the veiled figure of a lady entered. Raising her veil, she stood for a moment unable to discern objects in the gloom. When at length she became aware of John Pether sitting close in front of her, she started slightly and gazed at him with surprise.

"Is Mr. Tollady at home?" she asked.

Pether regarded her countenance closely before replying, and for a moment something like a grim smile rested on his lips.

"He is," was his answer.

"Is he at liberty? Can I see him?"

"Scarcely."

"How am I to understand your answer?" repeated the visitor, shrinking a little before Pether's ill-omened eye.

"He is at home," said the man, sternly, "but neither you nor anyone else can see him—unless you take a spade and a mattock
to Highgate Cemetery and disturb the dead," he added, with a slight shrug of the shoulders.

"Do you—do you mean he is dead?" stammered the lady, with the utmost astonishment depicted on her face.

"I do. Are not the dead at home? What better home can a man have than the grave? There no tax-gatherer comes to trouble you, no hunger, no oppression. You look surprised. Your home is not so poor and comfortless as to make you look forward with pleasure to the grave."

"I look surprised because I had no idea that Mr. Tollady was dead, that he had even been ill. When did it happen?"

"Last Tuesday night. What is your interest in him? Are you Miss Norman?"

"I am. How is it you know me?"

"I have been warned of you."

"Warned? By whom?"

"It is no matter. You have asked for Mr. Tollady, and I tell you he is dead. What more do you want?"

"Is Mr. Golding still living here?" asked Helen, after a slight pause, and with some hesitation.

"He is."

"Is he at present in the house?"

"It is unnecessary to say whether he is or not. He warned me of your coming. You cannot see him."

vol. ii.
"Do I understand you to say that he has determined not to see me in case I call?"

"You may do so. He has taken an oath never again to speak to you. Are you satisfied?"

Helen stood for almost a minute regarding the speaker's face. Not a muscle on his seared countenance moved, but his eyes spoke a struggle with inward emotion. Helen was turning to leave the shop when he suddenly rose and caught her by the arm. Her nerves were firm, and she looked into his face undismayed.

"I have been told," he said, speaking in hollow tones and more calmly than usual, "that you try to do good to the poor, to satisfy their hunger, and to clothe their nakedness. Stop, if you are wise, and don't trouble yourself with what does not concern you. What are the miseries of the poor to you? You have your great house to live in, and your fine clothes to wear; what do you know of suffering? Do you lack amusements? Haven't you your theatres and your balls, your carriages and horses to show yourself with in the park; can't you eat and drink of the best from morning to night? Isn't this enough, but you must look for new excitement in gaols and hospitals and the holes which such as we call homes? You help the poor! Do you know that every penny you give in charity, as you call it, is poison to the
poor, killing their independence and that sense of liberty which is the only possession they can hope to boast of? Do you know that you accustom them to think of you rich as the lawful holders of all the fruits of the earth, from whom they must be glad to receive what scanty crumbs it pleases you to throw to them, when they ought rather to rise as one man and demand as an eternal right what you pride yourself in giving them as a boon? Go home, go home!" he added, in a softer voice, "you have a pretty face, and perhaps a good heart, but you are only a woman. The work that you make your play, the amusement of your leisure hours, is not for women's hands. Men will set to it before long, and you will see then how it ought to be done. I should be sorry to see you, or such as you, suffer for the faults of your fathers, but it is the curse of wealth that you are born under, and it will prove your destruction. Don't you know some far-off country where there are fewer people and happier, where you can play with your toys all day long and wrong no one? If you do, go there, go there quickly. Who can tell what morning you may wake and see these streets of London running with the blood of your friends and relatives. There are knives sharpening now that will before long set right the injustice of centuries, set it right far more quickly than all your gold, if you scattered it all day long about
the slums and alleys. Have you studied history? Did you ever read of the French Revolution? Take warning by it, and see to your safety while you have time."

Helen stood for a few moments uncertain whether to speak in reply, but seeing that the man had resumed his seat and was apparently lost in gloomy meditation, she again drew her veil over her face and left the shop in silence. Grieving and wondering much at what she had just seen and heard, she took her way homewards. As she entered the house and was going upstairs to her own room Mr. Gresham called her into the library.

"Are you busy this afternoon, Helen?" he asked.

"Not at all," she replied.

"Then you can give me a sitting?"

"Yes," said Helen, absently. Then she suddenly asked, "Have you heard that Mr. Tollady is dead, Mr. Gresham?"

The artist looked up at her for a moment, then replied in the negative.

"He died last Tuesday," she resumed. "That will account for Mr. Golding's continued absence."

"In part, possibly," said her guardian, looking at her askance.

"Do you know any other reason?"

"Oh dear, yes," he replied, with a slight shrug, "but I did not imagine the matter of sufficient interest to you to be worth talking:
about. I think I told you that he had shown signs of a spirit of independence which was not very promising for his progress. Eventually he became impertinent, and one morning wrote me an indignant letter which opened with the statement that he had resolved never to enter my house again, and went on to say that he had no present need of the money I offered him, but could well afford to wait till it became legally his!

Helen looked at him in astonishment.

"But did you not reason with him, Mr. Gresham?" she asked. "Did you not try to show him the folly of acting so?"

"You know, Helen, that I am but a poor hand at moral dissertation."

"But in so sad a case! Mr. Golding cannot have known what he was writing. Perhaps it was immediately after Mr. Tollady's death, and he was distressed with grief. You certainly answered his letter?"

"A quoi bon?"

"Surely it is worth an effort to keep a young man of such talent from throwing away his best chances, perhaps before he knows the value of them? Have you no intention of trying to bring him back?"

"Do you think my efforts would be successful? What is the result of your own visit this morning, Helen?"

He spoke with a slight bitterness of tone, though still with a smile on his face.
“My visit was not originally meant for Mr. Golding, but on hearing of Mr. Tollady’s death from a strange man in the shop, I naturally asked for him. I was told that he refused to see me.”

“Indeed,” exclaimed the artist, with a short laugh of pleasure. “Then you have experienced his mettle. And what is your opinion of his politeness?”

“I am wholly at a loss to understand why he has taken this course. I sincerely hope he may yet see his true interests and continue to be as before. It is altogether so extraordinary, this sudden change of character.”

“You are very much interested in him,” said Mr. Gresham, with an unpleasant look from beneath his eyebrows.

“It is natural I should feel interested in his welfare,” replied Helen. “When he was a child my father brought him home with the intention of educating him as his own son, only to be disappointed. Now that he has been so strangely discovered again, and has given promise of such a bright future, I think it would be unkindness in those more experienced than himself if they did not do their best to show him his errors.”

“My studio is open to him if he chooses to return,” said the artist, half averting his face.

“But will you not write and tell him so, Mr. Gresham? Write a note and let me take it to him.”
"Helen," said her guardian, with some sternness, "you occasionally go too far in your disregard of conventionalities. It would be entirely improper for you to do any such thing."

"I am at a loss to see why," replied the girl, surprised at the most unusual tone and sentiment of Mr. Gresham's speech.

"If you don't see why, I can hardly explain it to you. I beg, however, Helen, that you will on no account visit that place again, or hold any kind of conversation with this Mr. Golding if you should meet him. His behaviour has not been at all such as I can approve."

An observer of manners would have been amused to hear Mr. Gresham speak these words. To hear the habitual polite mocker at everything, which others esteem serious in this life of ours, adopting the emphatic tones and language of a martinet of the first water, was indeed singular. Mr. Gresham himself, moreover, was painfully conscious of the unreality of his utterances. The very sound of his own voice made him angry.

"Do you intend to pay attention to this request of mine, Helen?" he asked, after a brief silence.

"What other request have I neglected, Mr. Gresham?" asked his ward, justly hurt at the tone in which she was addressed.

"I do not at all approve of the manner in
which you spend your days, and I have frequently intimated as much."

This unkindness following upon the previous agitation of the morning, proved too much for Helen. As she stood facing her guardian, he saw great tears well to her eyes and fall upon her cheeks. These, and the expression of sorrowful astonishment which her countenance had assumed, touched him profoundly. In his heart he cursed his precipitance.

"Why, Helen, do you think I meant what I said?" he exclaimed, taking one of her hands in his own. "Pooh, pooh! I must have acted uncommonly well. That would get me a fellowship in ‘a cry of players,’ as Hamlet says. I would give a fortune if your face could remain just as it is now till I had conveyed it to canvas. Such a picture would make an artist’s reputation. But you do not bear malice for the joke?"

"There are some subjects, in my opinion, too serious for joking on," replied the girl, hastily passing a handkerchief over her eyes. "Must I understand your injunctions with regard to Mr. Golding as also a jest, sir?"

"No, not that part of our scene," replied the artist. "There I was in earnest. You forget that I am responsible for you, Helen. If you err, I am blamed. Do you think I would lay any injunction upon you that was not for your good?"
THE SHADOW OF DEATH. 185

"I am sure you would not bid me do anything that you did not think for my good."

"Which is as much as to say that I am an old fool and had better mind my own business?"

"I am sorry you should attribute such a thought to me. You are unusually severe to-day, Mr. Gresham."

"Only because I mean to be unusually kind."

"May I go?"

The artist still held her hand in his, though he did not venture to exert the least pressure on it. He found it an impossible task to retain it, however, and made no reply.

"Have you further business with me?" Helen asked, looking into his face with perfect ingenuousness.

"You will give me the sitting this afternoon?"

"I have promised."

"You have forgiven my ill-timed jest?"

"Entirely, though it grieves me that you should insist upon the other prohibition."

With a muttered exclamation the artist loosed her hand, and Helen left the room.

"Damnation!" exclaimed Mr. Gresham, as she closed the door behind her; and for the next hour he paced the library in the worst possible temper.
CHAPTER VIII.

A WORKING-MAN'S CLUB.

For many days Arthur's mind was almost entirely occupied with troublous anticipations of Helen Norman visiting the shop. John Pether had said nothing with regard to the interview between the latter and himself, and Arthur still felt convinced that Helen would come.

Almost certainly she would hear of Mr. Tollady's death from her guardian; but, even if she did not, a still small voice whispered flatteringly in the young man's ear that his prolonged absence from the studio would cause her to try and see him, for she had always manifested a frank interest in him, which, he felt, could not all at once give way to indifference.

If she should interrogate him on the subject, how would Mr. Gresham explain his pupil's sudden desertion?

Arthur trembled as he asked himself the question. So indignant had he become with Mr. Gresham that he could believe him guilty of almost any disingenuousness, even to an entire misrepresentation of what had taken place between them. When a week had
passed, and still he had not seen Helen, the belief that the latter event must have occurred began to take firm possession of him. Doubtless the artist had so far defamed him in conversation with Helen that the latter could no longer experience any solicitude on his account. Who could tell what Mr. Gresham might not have accused him of? For it was plain to Arthur that, for some inscrutable reason, the artist had suddenly conceived a dislike to him. It was pain unspeakable to think of Helen viewing him in the light of false accusations, and losing all that interest in him which his talent—was it his talent alone?—had excited.

When the week had passed, and still he was disappointed, his mind entered upon another mood. What was Helen Norman to him, or he to Helen Norman? There was slight enough connection between them under the most favourable circumstances, and if Helen had so poor an opinion of him as to credit the first calumny she heard, then, indeed, she was of less than no account in his life.

Could he persuade himself that he had ever had especial interest in her? Impossible. That he had ever been on the point of loving her? Monstrous! Ignorant as he was of Helen’s daily life, her schemes and her aspirations, he had little difficulty in so representing her character to himself as to per-
suade himself that there was nothing to regret in losing her from sight. What if she had given a few pounds to Mr. Tollady to distribute among the poor? There was no great credit in that, seeing that she had most likely thousands at her disposal. Very likely this had been a solitary instance of charity, induced by some momentary curiosity, some lack of occupation.

She was beautiful; that he could not endeavour to deny; but what was physical beauty to him, a man with a serious life before him and no ignoble aims?

Thus he argued with himself sophistically, and thought he was convinced. But the very currents of his life-blood, had he been calm enough to listen to them, as they throbbed along his veins, gave the lie to every one of his arguments.

In an evil moment he took her picture out of the portfolio, with the intention of destroying it; but at the first glimpse of that pure and noble countenance, he fell on his knees before it with a sob of pain. After all, she was his idol, the embodiment, to his heart and mind, of all that is loftiest and most worthy of pursuit in life. With an irresistible rush all the poetry of his nature seized upon and swelled hisanguished heart; he wept violently. No, no, he would never destroy her picture! To the end of his days it would remind him of a time of real, though foolish,
happiness, and would be capable of awakening the purest emotions of his breast.

He was now anxious to leave the old house as soon as possible. Since Mr. Tollady's death the shop had not been opened, and notice of the cessation of business had been forwarded to the few regular employers of the old man's printing-press. It remained to dispose of all the moveables, with the exception of Mr. Tollady's books, and the few articles of furniture which Arthur resolved to retain for his own use. The books he would not have allowed himself on any consideration to part with, so intimately were they connected with the happiest memories of his life; and with the furniture he proposed fitting up a little empty room somewhere in the neighbourhood of his work, wherever that might happen to be.

This matter of employment was naturally one of the first to be attended to. With the assistance of a few respectable tradesmen, with whom his work in former days had brought him into connection, he succeeded, after the lapse of a couple of weeks, in obtaining a situation as compositor in the office of a daily newspaper. During one week his work would occupy him throughout the day, during the next throughout the night, alternately.

This point happily gained, he was proceeding to look for a lodging, when a visit from
Mark Challenger spared him the trouble. Mark (who had some time since given up his shop in Charlotte Place, and gone to work as a journeyman), occupied a bedroom in Gower Place, a small thoroughfare running out of Gower Street into Euston Square, and in the same house happened to be a small room, to be let unfurnished. Mark begged so earnestly that he would not go quite out of the neighbourhood, and represented with such sincerity what a delight it would be to him to have his young friend’s companionship, that Arthur consented to take the room.

On the following day his bed, table, and two or three chairs were transported thither, and the old house in Charlotte Place was abandoned for good. At the same time it was intimated to Mr. John Waghorn that, as it was impossible to pay the remaining hundred pounds on the mortgage, the property was waiting for him to take possession of it as soon as he chose.

Arthur was now to have his first experience—that is, since early childhood—of the ordinary London lodging-house.

His landlady’s name was Pettindund, and, besides her own family of grown-up sons and daughters, she had her house always full of lodgers. When Arthur grew to know these people with some degree of familiarity, they excited in him a feeling of unutterable disgust. Enthusiastic as were his hopes for the
amelioration of the poor and ignorant, he saw at once that here he had come into contact with a class of people from whom it was vain to expect improvement save by the agency of time. They could not be called poor, since the weekly earnings of the family amounted to no small sum, the whole of which they regularly squandered in surfeit and vice; and their mental and moral debasement was to them no pain whatever. To attempt to influence these people by any powers of example or persuasion, which an individual could exercise, he saw at once would be waste of time. They were too completely sunk in their hoggish slough to be capable of rescue by any single hand. Many an hour did he spend in contemplating their condition, and not without good results to himself. He got thus by degrees truer views on the subject which most interested him. He had glimpses in time of the great truth that education, and education only, working perhaps through generations toward the same end, gaining here a point and there a point, could be the instrument of the redemption of the well-to-do labouring classes.

But, in the meantime, events occurred which were the instruments of bringing him into active spheres of life such as he longed for.

One evening, very shortly after the two had gone to live together in Gower Place, Mark
Challenger announced to Arthur that he had joined a club of which he should like his friend also to become a member. He proposed to take Arthur to a meeting which would be held on the ensuing Sunday evening.

"It's a club of working men," he said, when describing it; "but men that are unmarried and have no one to support but themselves, and who come together just to do what good they can. Every man pays just what he likes every week; we have a box with a slit in it hung up in one corner, so that no one sees what you put in. And this money goes to form a fund, you see, out of which any member can have help if he really needs it. It isn't like a public club that almost anyone can join. We mean to have no more than twenty in it, at all events just at present, and all those twenty, Arthur, must be men that feel the wrongs of the poor and are sworn to work tooth and nail for bettering them. You see, it's more like a sort of committee for real working purposes. If anyone of us knows someone that's badly in want and deserves help, he's only to tell the rest of the club, and they inquire into the matter. If they find it all right they either give help out of the funds of the club, or have a special subscription. We're all teetotallers, mind you. If we drank away half our money every week we shouldn't be able to con-
tribute much; but as it is we make up a
good purse, and, I can tell you, it goes to
good uses."

"It seems to me a grand idea, if only it
can be well carried out," said Arthur. "But
how much is it usual to contribute each
week?"

"The best-to-do sometimes give two shill-
ings. I earn thirty shillings a week, and out
of that I manage to give five. But then, you
see, I've no one dependent on me now, and I
only pay six shillings rent."

"Five shillings, Mr. Challenger!" ex-
claimed Arthur. "You indeed show your-
self in earnest. I honour you for it."

"Bah! It's nothing. I have all I want
to eat and drink, and before I get too old to
work there'll be better times coming, see if
there won't."

"How many members have you at pre-
sent?"

"Why, only twelve. You'll make the
thirteenth, if you join. You see, where there's
no fixed contribution, and where there's
serious work meant, we have to be quite sure
of our men. Most working-men when they
join a club just do it for their own advan-
tage. But, as I've told you, that isn't our
aim. We help each other if we need it, but
most of us have very little fear of wanting
much as long as we've our heads and our
hands on, and our object is to help those poor
vol. ii."
devils that haven't had the strength or the good luck to hold out against the rich that we have. I should have been one of that sort still if it hadn't been for old Sam Tollady. Aye, aye, Arthur Golding, we must never forget Sam. Gad! what a chairman he'd have made for us if he'd only been alive now!"

"What do you do at your meetings? Is there one every Sunday night?"

"Yes, every Sunday night, and sometimes an extra called in the week, when there's any case to be considered. I'm told it was started by Will Noble. He's a printer, like yourself, and a grand fellow. You must know Will. Will had an idea that we working-men have waited too long for other people to help us, and it's time we turned to and helped ourselves. So he began to look round him, and before long he found half-a-dozen other men who were not miserably poor, but who had the same ideas as he had about doing what they could to help others. You'll know them all if you'll come down to-night, and I can tell you they're worth knowing. What do we do at our meetings? Well, we have some settled subject for discussion, you see, each Sunday night. Last Sunday was my first night there, and then Will Noble got up and spoke what he thought about the best way of helping poor people without making them lose their independence. Will said some un-
commonly good things, and the best was that it’s the poor must help the poor. The rich will never do it—till the day comes when they’re made, and that won’t be so long, either! He said that we working men had the best chances of going about and seeing just what people wanted and what they didn’t want. And when Will Noble had done, one or two of us got up and said what we thought, you see. The subject to-night is: ‘How are the poor to get possession of their rights?’ A man named Hodgson, a carpenter, will speak first. I don’t know him at all, but I’m curious to hear what he’s got to say.”

“Does Mr. Pether belong to the club?” asked Arthur.

A look of perplexity rested for a moment on Mark’s countenance.

“Well, no, he doesn’t,” he said at length, hesitating slightly in his speech; “and, to tell you the truth, Arthur, I shouldn’t care for him to know about it. Poor John Pether has suffered more than any of us, and his wrongs have driven him half mad like. I’m getting almost afraid of John, he’s so terribly fierce at times; I often fear he’ll do either himself or some one else an injury. You see, he has brooded year after year in solitude, always growing poorer and poorer, till he couldn’t get his thoughts away from that one subject, however much he tried.
John won’t hear of any other way of righting things except by violence, and it’s just that that our club won’t have anything to do with. Now you’ll hear to-night what Hodgson says, but I’ll warrant there won’t be a word about blood in the whole of his speech. So you can see the reason why John Pether couldn’t very well be a member; and things being so, I wouldn’t have him know of it at all. It would seem unkind, you know, to keep him out, and I wouldn’t have him think me unkind to him for the world. John and I have known each other hard upon thirty years, and we’ve been good friends all the time. I only wish he’d let me help him a bit now and then, but he gets into one of his fearful moods if ever I mention it. Poor fellow! I often wonder what’ll become of him.”

Eight o’clock was the time at which the club met, and about half-past seven Arthur and Mark set out together. Mark led his companion down Tottenham Court Road and across Oxford Street into Crown Street. Near the lower end of this they passed before the closed shop of a tin-worker, over which was written the name, “Isaac Spreadbrow.” Knocking, they were almost immediately admitted, and passed through the shop into a little yard at the back. It was a sort of small timber-yard, one side of which was occupied by a long carpenter’s shed. Here it
was that the meetings of the club were held *pro tempore*.

Half-a-dozen men were already present in the yard, walking up and down, engaged in conversation. They were all hard-faced, hard-handed men, dressed with a decent care which betokened the tolerably well-to-do artisan.

Amongst them Arthur’s eye at once singled out one who, he felt sure, must be the leader. He was not mistaken. To this tall man Mark at once led him, whispering that it was Will Noble.

“Mr. Noble,” said Mark, “I’ve ventured to bring you a friend of mine, one I’ve known ever since he was a lad of ten or eleven. He’s heart and soul in this work of ours, I assure you, and he’d feel proud if he was made a member of the club. Wouldn’t you, Arthur?”

“I should indeed,” replied the young man, returning the hearty grasp of the hand with which the tall man greeted him. “There is nothing I feel so much interest in as efforts such as yours, and I should think it a privilege to work with you. Mr. Challenger forgot to tell you my name. It is Golding.”

“Well, Mr. Golding,” said Will Noble, in a full, deep voice which spoke the heartiness of the man’s nature, “I like the way in which you speak. You must know it is our rule that a new member must be introduced by
at least two old ones who know him personally. You are one, Mr. Challenger; who is the other?"

"Why, it's rather awkward," returned Mark, looking round at the other men, who stood in a group apart. "I am afraid there isn't another of us that knows Arthur personally. But I'll tell you just how it is. Arthur has lived and worked from a boy up with an old friend of mine called Tollady. You didn't know him, Mr. Noble; I only wish you had, but—ha! here comes Spreadbrow. He knew him. Isaac!" he called out to a stumpy little man who was shaking hands with the members of the other group, "Did you know Sam Tollady?"

"Know him, by God!" exclaimed the tin-worker, energetically; "if I didn't know Sam Tollady show me the man who did. Damn me if I didn't!"

"Well, did you ever hear him speak of one Arthur Golding, who had lived with him?"

"Many a time, and a good lad he must have been, though I didn't know him at all. Where's he gone now that poor Sam's dead?"

"Why, here he stands," replied Mark, pointing to Arthur. "I want him to be a member, but unfortunately I'm the only one who knows him."

"I know him, Will Noble," cried Isaac, in a squeaking voice which he might appear to
have caught from his trade. "Damn me, I'll go bail for him. Now I see him, I remember his face too. I must have seen him in the shop. But I'll go bail for whoever was Sam Tollady's friend, damn me if I won't!"

"Then I think that's quite enough," said Noble. "Wait till we're all together, and we'll have you elected, Mr. Golding. Mr. Challenger will take you to sign the book. Isaac, I wish you could get out of that habit of swearing. I'm no Puritan, as you know; but it don't fall pleasantly on a man's ears. Couldn't you make shift to do without it, don't you think?"

"I tell you what it is, Will Noble," returned the little man, stroking a scruffy beard, "you're about right in what you say, as you always are for the matter of that. I've had many a damned hard struggle with this habit; but, by God! it's always been too much for me yet. But I'll try again, if it's only to please you, Will. I'm damned if I don't!"

Will Noble turned away with a good-natured laugh, and Mark Challenger took Arthur into the shed, which was now illuminated by half-a-dozen tallow candles. The litter of the shop had been all pushed away into corners, and in the centre of the shed stood a long deal table, round which were placed benches. A chair was at the head, for the chairman, and on the table in front
of it lay a small book containing the rules of the society, written out in Will Noble’s own bold hand.

Every member had to read these rules and sign them. They recapitulated pretty much what Mark had already told Arthur, the principal being—“That every member must be a bona fide working man; that every member must be a teetotaller; that each must contribute something every week, the amount to be left to his own discretion.”

As Arthur put his name after Mark Challenger’s, for Mark had been the last admitted, the men began to assemble in the shed, and to take seats round the table. Counting Arthur, exactly thirteen were present.

The office of chairman, it appeared, was held by all in turn. To-night, Isaac Spreadbrow assumed the head of the table. On his right hand sat Hodgson, the man who was to introduce the debate, if such it could be called where there was no opposition. Hodgson was the owner of the shed, and worked in it on weekdays.

As soon as all were seated, Isaac Spreadbrow rose.

“Gentlemen,” he began, “the first thing we have to do to-night is to vote for a new member. I know you’ll be glad to hear that, and I’m glad to tell it you. You know we’ve set our limit at twenty, this one makes the
thirteenth. His name is Arthur Golding, and he’s worked for years with an old friend of mine as is just dead—that’s Sam Tollady, one as would have been a member if he’d lived. I knew Mr. Golding through Sam Tollady well enough, though I never exactly talked to himself before to-night. Mr. Challenger has known him ever since he was a boy, too; and it’s Mr. Noble’s opinion as we may introduce him as a new member. So I’ll ask your vote on the point. Those who are in favour of electing Mr. Arthur Golding hold up their hands, please.”

The vote was unanimous.

“Then,” continued Isaac, “Mr. Golding makes our thirteenth member. And now, before we listen to our friend Mr. Hodgson, I’ve got something more on my paper to speak of. And it’s this. Most of us here, I think, are men as do a good bit of reading when we get the time, but most of us could do a good bit more if we’d only the books to read. It’s a great shame we haven’t a good public library to go to, where we could get books out for a small subscription, which we should all be able to pay. But as we haven’t that, we shall have to fall back on an old rule, the rule as proves our guide in everything we do, and try to help ourselves. Now, Mr. Noble, who, you know, has our work thoroughly at heart, and constantly puzzles his brains to see how things can best
be managed, has suggested to me that we should have a small weekly subscription of a stated amount, which is to go to buy a good book now and then, and one, you see, that would be too dear for each one of us to buy for ourselves. When we bought the book, whatever it was, it could go the round of us, each keeping it a certain time, and after that we'd put it somewhere to be kept for the benefit of the club in general. In that way, you see, we should get a library by degrees. Now, any one that's got anything to say to this idea, I should like him to speak."

A short discussion followed, two or three difficulties being raised with regard to the choice of books. This, however, was ultimately arranged, and the Book Club was unanimously voted for. The weekly subscription was arranged to be threepence.

The chairman then called upon Mr. Hodgson to deliver his address, which lasted some twenty minutes, and was listened to most attentively, several of the hearers making notes of what was said.

There was nothing very original, but at the same time nothing absurd or exaggerated in the speaker's ideas, which were principally that providence and co-operation were the best resources of the poor. He dwelt upon the evils of drink, maintaining that it was one of the most serious drawbacks to ad-
vancement; that it brutalised the poor and made them necessarily the servants of the rich, who had more command over their passions, or, at all events, had more means of concealing their results. He held that it was only a question of time, this restoration of the poor to their rights. In conclusion, he hoped that such working men as had votes would always use them in behalf of such candidates for Parliament as bound themselves to protect the interests of the poor.

One or two members having made remarks on this address, there ensued a pause, in the midst of which William Noble rose, and was received with much slapping of the table and clapping of hands. He looked round at his fellow-members with an earnest glance, and, after collecting his thoughts for a moment, began to speak in a slow, emphatic voice.

"Our friend Mr. Hodgson," he said, "has made a good and sensible speech, and I have had very much pleasure in listening to him. With what he said about the evils of drink I entirely agree. We are all here teetotallers simply because we see such terrible results ensue from the abuse of liquor that we choose rather to go without it altogether than to run the risk of becoming its slave. I only wish all working men could be induced to do the same. I know very well there is many a working man who drinks a glass or
two glasses every day without its doing him the least harm; but these are the exceptions, I am sorry to say. We working men, on the whole, are a lot of poor, weak, ignorant fellows, who have next to no command over ourselves, whether it's in anger, or whether it's in any kind of enjoyment, and in my opinion we must try to remedy our weakness by strong means. Our disease has gone too far for a moderate treatment. We must set our faces firmly to the task of cutting away the whole habit, just as if it was a limb, and I think that if even moderate drinkers set the example of altogether going without their drink, it will be an aid and an encouragement to those who have a harder struggle to undertake. In all things we must help each other, and in this way I think we, by being teetotallers, are helping the drunkards."

The speaker was interrupted by applause, after which he continued in more rapid tones—

"But I didn't mean to talk much about this matter just at present. In all things I like to go to the very bottom; if it's geometry I study, I like to know what a straight line is; if it's arithmetic, I must know the multiplication table; and so in this matter we're discussing to-night, I want to ask myself what are these rights that the poor desire to win? Friends, I have heard men speak in
the cause of the poor who seemed as if their object was nothing more nor less than to take away all the wealth from the rich and give it to the poor, as if that would mend matters. Now, I'm not one of these men. I think I have seen very well, from my own experience and from the books I've read, that as long as this world is a world, there will be in it rich people and poor people. That I feel sure of, and I feel that it's no use grumbling about it. Some men are born with more brains than others, and, even if there was no such thing as hereditary wealth, these men with the brains would have ten chances to one against the men without in the struggle for riches. Well, then, I say I am convinced there must be a rich class and a poor class. But shall I tell you what I am not convinced of? I am not convinced that, of these rich and poor, the one must be a class of brute beasts—of ignorant, besotted, starving, toil-worn creatures—whilst the other must be a class of lords and princes, spending in profitless luxuries—luxuries which perish with them and are of no further good to the world—riches which would suffice to put every poor man at his ease, which they obtain without labour, which serve only to rear generation after generation of vicious prodigals. I am not convinced that it is a necessity for the rich class to spend their days in refined selfishness, as careless of the miseries of the poor at
their palace-gates as if these poor lived in another world; or that it is right for them to sit in judgment daily upon wretches who have committed a so-called crime to save themselves from starvation, and to condemn them to horrible penalties. Of all this I am far from being convinced, and that is why I did my best to form this club of ours, and hope to see it number before long twenty men who are as far from being convinced as I am, and who will work with me to remedy what they think wrong."

Murmured approvals. All the listeners hang upon the speaker's lips with rapt attention:

"And now shall I tell you why I am far from being convinced that these things are necessary? For that is the next point in an attempt to get to the bottom of the matter. For these reasons then. At their birth all men are equal, all are helpless, young creatures, dependent upon the care of parents for existence. These parents have to find sustenance for the children as they grow up, sustenance and clothing. These are the essential needs of man. Now nature has ordered that the infant's sustenance should first of all come from the mother; after that, that it should come from the earth. Now suppose a mother finds herself unable to afford milk to her new-born child, what do we say of her? Do we not say that the
mother is diseased, that there is something wrong in her system, that things are not as they ought to be? Very well. Now if at a later period the child, or the grown-up man, finds himself unable to obtain that sustenance from the earth which nature prescribes, oughtn't we also to say that here too something is most clearly wrong? And worse wrong, friends, than in the other case! For whereas the diseased mother could not afford milk, the earth offers abundance of food, but certain men monopolise it, and do not allow their starving brothers to have their share. Mind you, I say their share, and their share is a sufficient quantity properly to sustain life. I have already told you that I believe some will always have more than others, but I hold that it is a wrong against nature to say that some shall have none at all!

"But you will perhaps say to me, why do you talk so much about nature? We are no longer in a state of nature. We are no longer savages, but men living in a social order. And I have even heard men say that it was one of the necessities of this social order that certain men should starve, they said they could prove it by political economy! But I tell you, friends, that, as far as food, clothing and shelter go, we are still in a state of nature, and must be, as long as we are men. We require all these as much as any savage, although we boast of being civilised.
In spite of their political economy I venture to assert that my argument has proved man's right to these necessaries. If the human family increased so much that the earth could not afford food for them all, that would be a very different thing. Then no one but the earth would be to blame, and the maker of the earth, whoever that is. But we know this is so far from being the case that untold millions could yet be added without exhausting the capacities of this old earth!

"Now I think I have shown you what these rights are that Mr. Hodgson has spoken of, and also why they are rights. These are two important points gained. Now we pass to the harder questions of practical application. After all the men are right who say that, though every man is the earth's creditor for a sufficient quantity of food, it is impossible for everyone to go into the fields and gather it whenever he wants it. Of course he cannot, and the reason is because we live in an artificial state of society. (Mind, I don't imply anything bad of that word artificial. I should be crazy if I proposed that we should break up society and go back to the woods, to live as savages.) Well, it has been found necessary, through long centuries of experience, for men to do a certain amount of work for this food. As we can't all plough and reap we must do something to pay those men who do actually plough and reap for us. All men
agree to this in theory, but strangely enough it has been found in practice that certain men refuse to work because they can obtain food without it, whilst others are willing to work their hardest, and yet cannot obtain food for all that. You will see that the fact of our being civilised does not in any sense take away our original rights, it only slightly alters the mode in which we are to receive them. So when the case is found to be as I have described, what shall we say? Surely not that a man must suffer because he happens to be a social being, but that there is something radically wrong in the social system which deprives him of his rights. I know very well that we find men now and then who starve because they are too lazy to work. Should I say that because these men are men, therefore they must be fed whether they work or not? Certainly not, and for this reason. If it is bidden by nature that every man should be fed, it is equally bidden by nature that every man should take the trouble of reaping his food. Now one way of reaping our food now-a-days is by working for it, and if a man refuse to do this he must suffer just as a savage would who should lie down on the ground and refuse to take the trouble of plucking fruit or killing animals. Nature would not drop food into his mouth.

"I assume, then, that nature bids the construction of a social order. But then comes

VOL. II.

P
a question which it is left for man to decide: 'How shall this social order be best arranged for the benefit of all men?' And here we are, friends, at the centre of the problem. We grumblers don't complain that nature will not feed us without our working, but we complain that this rich class, this class which has the main voice in the formation of society, has managed things so badly that they could scarcely have been managed worse; and, further still, that these rich men are altogether careless about the result of their bad management, trouble themselves not the least about anything, so long as they have their fine houses, their fine clothes, their fine dinners.

"Mr. Hodgson ended his address by reference to politics. Now what do we mean by politics? The science of government, I should say. In other words, the sum of what men know of the best rules for managing this social machine of ours. Now, because it is impossible for every man to have a hand in this management, we have what we call a government. Never mind that our form of government, monarchy, is in theory the most absurd the mind of man could conceive; for in reality we are not governed by a monarch, we merely pay for maintaining one because it looks generous, I suppose, to do so. But this parliament which really governs us, what has it to say to these frightful evils we have
hourly before our eyes, these outrageous wrongs to which the poor have to submit? Friends, does it not in reality say: 'Well, I see the evil, I am very sorry for it, but I really don't know how to remedy it?' I maintain that all its acts amount to such a speech. But, I ask, what right has a government to exist, except as long as it successfully does its duty, the managing of the social machine? If a government no longer does this, it is no government. It should be swept from the face of the earth!

"But, friends, I am sorry to say that we cannot do this. We are not strong enough. In numbers we poor constitute a vast majority, but in influence you know we are very weak. The weakness is partly due to our poverty, partly to our ignorance. Before we can get a government such as we wish we must become as influential as the rich. How to bring this about, then, was the question Mr. Hodgson asked to-night. In my mind there is only one answer: We must get taught! The rich domineer over us not only because we are poor, but still more because we are too like the animals, we have too little of that grand intellectual power which, by taking entirely the place of bodily strength, distinguishes civilisation from barbarism! Yes, we must get taught. You have seen the government this year grant a scheme of education which
will be of admirable effect, and what is this measure but the result of that very spirit in the nation which collects us together here to-night? This is our work, the work of those known as the Radicals, never mind who were the immediate agents. Well, is not this an encouragement for us? Does it not prove that we shall by degrees gain our objects? Depend upon it, it is not the government that will originate such measures; it is us, the poor, who must struggle without ceasing to raise ourselves out of the gutter and make our voices heard by the rich. If our reasons are good, the rich cannot but listen to them; these reasons of ours will weigh heavily against their wealth, and will ultimately prevail. But first we must get our reasons! We must keep our brains clear from the fumes of drink, we must get books, read and remember them; we must lay hold of this boon of reading and writing for our children, and make it a stepping stone to still more! And in the meantime we must also do our best to aid those suffering from actual want of the necessaries of life. The rich will not do this to any purpose, so we must do it ourselves. We who are here form a club of men without any ties, and therefore we can spare something out of our weekly wages. To-night we have got a new member, that means new possibilities for doing good. Don’t let us be discouraged,
friends, if we seem to do only a little. Every little helps, and depend upon it our exertions will not be without their influence. And so I have had my say."

Noble resumed his seat amidst much applause. Arthur, in particular, had listened to him with admiration, and had warmed with him into enthusiasm. When a few more had spoken and, after the chairman had announced the subject for the following Sunday, as well as certain items of business for the week-day meetings, the assembly broke up, Arthur shook hands heartily with him, and expressed his gratification in a few words glowing with earnest sincerity. Noble returned the young man's warmth with interest.

"Well, Mr. Golding," he said. "I see no reason why we shouldn't be very good friends. We are both of a trade are we not?"

"Yes, I work at the case," replied Arthur, with a sense of pride. "But at present the death of Mr. Tollady has put me out of employment. I hope to find some, however, before long."

"I will keep my eyes open for you, if you like," said Noble.

"Thank you," returned the other, "I should be very glad if you would."

By Mark Challenger's advice, Arthur had said nothing about his interval of artist's
work, and indeed he felt there was no insincerity in altogether passing it over. For in his present mood he firmly believed that all the time spent in the study of art had been wasted time, and that he was only now beginning serious life. His feelings were excited to the highest pitch by the events of the evening, and, on their return home, he and Mark sat up together till a late hour ardently discussing the prospects of the club.
CHAPTER IX.

TEACHER AND TAUGHT.

If Arthur Golding had his days of uneasy expectation, followed by the momentary sickness of hope deferred, when Helen Norman appeared to have renounced all interest in him and his, Helen herself was but little less hurt at the repulse she had received upon her visit, the result, as she could not but believe it, of Arthur's direct instructions. Hurt she was, in the true sense of the word, and not merely distressed, as she had told her guardian, at the apparent folly with which Arthur had thrown aside his best chances of attaining to eminence in the path to which his genius had directed him. In the communings with herself which followed her return home, and the short conversation with Mr. Gresham, she would fain have persuaded herself that it was the latter feeling alone which influenced her; but that sincerity of self-examination to which she had long been accustomed told her that she suffered an emotion quite distinct from this. She was pained at the indifference to her displayed by Arthur, grieved that she had
not been allowed the opportunity of expressing to him her sincere sympathy in his misfortunes. Subsequently she learned from her guardian that Arthur had renounced the benefits he might have received from her father's will, and this made her anxious with regard to his future subsistence. Nevertheless she was in no wise tempted to neglect Mr. Gresham's injunctions and pay another visit to Charlotte Place. Despite her loftiness of character, Helen Norman was still a woman, and instinct preserved her from exposing herself to still further slights.

But she too, like Arthur, had her refuge from painful reflections in determined application to her daily work. The path she had chosen for herself was no flowery one, and, though never daunted in her onward progress, she not unfrequently came to obstacles against which she had to struggle with unutterable sadness, or pity, or disgust in her heart. To begin with, wherever she went among the destitute poor, she was almost always met with the most open feelings of distrust and suspicion. She found at the very entrance to her work how terribly deep and wide was the gulf set between the class to which she belonged by birth and these poor wretches whom her heart was set on benefiting. Too often her kind words met with surly and ungracious replies, and sometimes her benefits were
repaid with the basest indifference or even ingratitude. This subject was the occasion of numerous long and earnest conversations between her and Mr. Heatherley. One such took place on the day after Arthur's introduction to the club. The clergyman had met her by chance as she was returning homewards, and, reading in her countenance the signs of extreme fatigue, he had insisted upon her repairing to his house, which was but at a short distance, and partaking of some refreshment. Helen did not refuse, for she seriously felt the need of half an hour's rest. Seated in Mr. Heatherley's homely little parlour, she allowed herself to be persuaded to drink a glass of wine and eat a biscuit, and very shortly the wonted light of cheerful energy came back to her eyes, and the little colour she could boast of to her cheeks. The clergyman was unceasing in his attentions, and though at first she could only reply to him with a grateful smile, she soon found herself able to converse with her accustomed freedom.

"It always does me good to hear you talk, Mr. Heatherley," she said, as she sat in the arm chair by the table, and the clergyman on an ottoman in front of the window. "I have seldom felt so dreadfully exhausted as when you met me, but now I could almost go over my morning's work again, though it has not been very pleasant. You never seem tired.
There is always a healthy freshness in your words which does one good."

Mr. Heatherley reddened slightly, and laughed, a low but clear and genial laugh.

"I am heartily glad my conversation has such tonic properties," he replied. "Let us hope I lose none of it when I am in the pulpit. But you say your morning's work has not been pleasant, Miss Norman. Where have you been today?"

"To some of the worst places you permit me to venture into. But I spoke more particularly of some people I have never mentioned to you before. To tell you the truth I was very doubtful of what I had done for them, and wished to see the result. I find that I was not mistaken in my fear."

"Indeed? What do you refer to?"

"It is a family, named Crick, living in a cellar kitchen in an unspeakably foul alley. When I first visited them I found the man lying asleep on the floor, and his wife with three little children sitting about the room in a state of absolute idleness. Not a particle of furniture of any kind was to be seen in the place. The woman told me that none of them had tasted food for several days, that they had long ago sold all their furniture and spare clothing to keep themselves alive, and that her husband had just found work of some kind but was unable to begin because he had not a decent coat to appear in. I did
not much like the appearance of the people at the time, for the man seemed a great strong fellow who ought long ago to have found some sort of occupation, and I felt sure that the cellar smelt strongly of spirits. But I could not refuse to do something for them, if only to see what effect my efforts would have, and to earn experience. So I gave the woman a few shillings to buy food, and then went with her to a shop close by and bought her a few articles of the cheapest furniture I could find, and also a suit of clothes which she said would fit her husband. She seemed extremely thankful, and when I went away I promised to call again in a very few days. Well, I went again, and this time only found the three children at home. They said their father had not been at home since I was last there, and that their mother was out looking for work. I noticed, however, that one or two of the articles of furniture had disappeared, and I had many misgivings with regard to the state of affairs. This morning I called again, and once more found the whole family at home, but this time the woman was asleep on the floor, the man was sitting in a state of drunkenness on the cellar steps, and the children were quarrelling for a jug of beer which the eldest of them was just drinking out of as I entered. All the furniture had once more disappeared, and the man was wearing the same clothes I had
first seen him in. It was impossible for me
to do any more, for they seemed hopeless
people, so I went away with a heavy heart."

"I have known only too many such cases," said Mr. Heatherley. "As you say, Miss
Norman, you acquire experience from them;
but I should advise you to be very careful
not to waste your money where there appears
but slight hope of its doing good. After all,
we have but very little power, except where
the recipients of our charity come half way to
meet us. Happily there are many such in-
stances, and, as a rule, it is not very difficult
to discern between honest distress and a true
anxiety to take advantage of help."

"But the other poor wretches? Must we
then let them perish in their dreadful life?
Have we no means of raising them?"

"We individually have, I am afraid, none.
The most we can do is to lose no opportunity
of lending our aid in all reforms for the good
of the poor generally. The spread of educa-
tion will do a very great deal, it is to be
hoped. But at the best, we cannot hope for
perfection in this life."

"It is only when you speak so, Mr.
Heatherley, that you are discouraging," said
Helen, with a smile. "You then make me
feel that, spite of all your activity and hope-
fulness, you in reality despair of the world.
It is not this poor earth of ours on which
your highest hopes are fixed, after all, and in
looking forward to that shadowy future world
I cannot but think that you must at times
lose interest in the present.”

The clergyman looked at Helen with a
slight surprise. It was the first time since
their first meeting that she had alluded to
religion, even in the most distant manner.

“You are right, in a certain sense, Miss
Norman,” he replied. “I can never hope for
the perfection of this world, but that does not,
I trust, in the least dishearten me in my work
here. The certainty of a future life of per-
fection is rather an inestimable incitement to
me. How much more glorious to know that
I am doing my best to prepare souls for
eternal bliss, than to be actuated by a mere
desire to lessen pain for a few fleeting years.
I know you will forgive me the comparison,
Miss Norman.”

“Most certainly,” replied Helen, smiling.
“Will you permit me, in return, to ask you
a question relative to your religious beliefs,
Mr. Heatherley? Pray do not have any hesi-
tation in refusing if you think me impor-
tinent.”

“I shall have the utmost pleasure in
answering any question, Miss Norman,” re-
plied the clergyman, who heard Helen enter
upon these subjects with a pleasure he could
scarcely conceal.

“It is this then. Do you believe in the
doctrine of eternal punishment?”
"What means an all-powerful and an allmerciful God may, in His wisdom, adopt for
the purification of all souls and rendering
them worthy of everlasting life, I am unable
to say, Miss Norman; but that all souls
will ultimately be likened in purity to their
Creator and live for ever in His presence, I
firmly believe. So you see that the doctrine
of eternal punishment has no place in my
creed."

"You relieve me," replied Helen, "Shall
I confess it? I always feel a little uncomfort-
able in the presence of those who I know are
possessed with this idea of the damnation of
their fellow-creatures."

"Had you," asked Mr. Heatherley, "any
other object in asking the question besides
the desire of relief?"

"Merely that I might more thoroughly
understand the spirit in which you labour
among the depraved and the wicked. Under
such circumstances as these, why weary your-
self in efforts to bring about an end which is
already predetermined?"

"How do I know, Miss Norman, that I,
humble creature as I am, may not be an in-
dispensable instrument in the hand of the
Almighty? I work in obedience to the
spirit which most distinctly pervades the
revealed will of God, to do good to others,
even as I would that others should do unto
me. But I fear you do not comprehend my
religion. It is not a matter of calculation and reasoning to me, but an unmistakable conviction. I follow an impulse which irresistibly actuates me, an impulse which I feel to be the will of my Creator. I do so because I cannot do otherwise."

"And I am afraid, Mr. Heatherley," replied Helen, "that it is just as impossible for you to understand the hopes and fears which actuate us who look to no other home but this present one. You can have no idea of the intense desire to be doing which possesses one who is firmly convinced that, if this life and its opportunities are neglected there will be no other chance. If you regard each one of these wretched beings as an immortal soul, and work to render them worthy of immortality, I for my part regard them as lives which are burning away like a candle, being extinguished for ever, losing day by day the million glorious possibilities which humanity sees before it, perishing without having ever known one noble thought, one worthy impulse, one hour of human happiness. Is not that a prospect capable of exciting sympathy, the deepest that can be born of human heart? Are there not here motives—frightfully urgent motives, for action? But I grant that you have the advantage over me in sources of consolation when you feel your weakness. It is dreadful to me to see that I can do so little! Can you not advise me,
Mr. Heatherley, some better way of winning the confidence of these poor? That is what I want, their confidence. They will not trust me. My speech, my dress, perhaps, revolts them. They think that I do not belong to their class, and, though they take my money, it is with suspicion of my motives. I have made my dress as plain as it possibly can be, to be respectable. If I could, I would even speak in their uncouth tongue. There is always that horrible difference of caste between us. Can it ever be removed? Will they ever learn to look upon me as a human being like themselves?”

Mr. Heatherley’s eyes had remained fixed on the girl’s face as she spoke, and they involuntarily expressed admiration as all her lineaments glowed with a richer beauty begotten of enthusiasm. When he replied, it was after hesitation, and in a low voice.

“You ask me, in effect, Miss Norman,” he said, “to do what you have forbidden me to do—to impress you with the truth of my religion. I fear there is much reason in what you say. I fear you find your superior position a sad obstacle. It is necessarily so. There is but one thing—the influence of Christianity—sufficiently strong to remove this obstacle; and of that you are unable to avail yourself. I grieve profoundly that it should be so.”

The emphasis with which he pronounced.
these last words impressed Helen. She looked into his face, and, meeting the full gaze of his earnest eyes, averted her head again.

"I cannot think you are right, Mr. Heatherley," she replied, after a moment's pause. "Have these people so utterly lost the reasoning powers of human beings as to be unable to see that all men are necessarily born equal, though wealth may make them different as far as attainments and outward appearance go? Are they so degraded as to consider themselves hopelessly inferior? Have they not sufficient insight to discern kindred hearts even in those whom the world exalts?"

"Possibly what you imagine to be an overwhelming sense of their own superiority," replied Mr. Heatherley, "is rather a proud and obstinate assertion of their equality. We must blame the dreadful social errors which have so long forced them to live the life of beasts, even whilst they felt and knew themselves to be men. No; they have not sufficient powers of insight to distinguish one wealthy person from another. It is their hereditary belief that the rich are their enemies, and how can we expect them to be suddenly converted from it? They will much rather attribute any extravagant motive to your charity than surrender the traditions of their lives by attributing it to true benevolence."

"And do you seriously believe, Mr.
Heatherley, that your religion materially assists you in gaining their confidence?"

"I do, Miss Norman. When I speak to them of God and their Saviour, when I tell them that one great Being has created all men alike, and that one Christ came down to earth to die for all; when I point to the future life, and tell them that there we shall all live again in the sight of our Father, no one of us superior or inferior to the rest, then indeed they see that I am only a man such as themselves, and they are willing to trust me. As well try to make their minds comprehend a metaphysical problem, as to put before them the fact of the equality and brotherhood of men as you understand it, Miss Norman, and expect it will aid you to win their confidence."

Helen rose to depart, and held out her hand to the clergyman.

"I thank you for your frankness with me, Mr. Heatherley," she said. "It shows that you rate my independence at its true value. What you have said will afford me matter for thought."

"If your reflection led you to see the truth of what I have said, Miss Norman," returned the clergyman, as he took her hand, "and to enter into the spirit of the faith which is my support, it would be the richest blessing of my life that God had made me the instrument to so great an end."
Helen thought, on her way home, that the more thoroughly she came to know Mr. Heatherley, the further removed from him did she feel in all the most essential of the principles by which her life was guided. If possible, she respected him more then ever after every conversation she held with him, as she came more fully to recognise his consistency, his sincerity, his powers of sympathy. But, great as were the latter powers, she felt that they were insufficient when applied to her own philosophy, and felt that in the nature of things it must be so. Mr. Heatherley did not even understand her motives, much less truly sympathise with them. All the more, however, did she respect his tolerance, and wonder at it. This, indeed, was the one feature of his character which greatly influenced her.

In listening to him, she herself became more tolerant. Hitherto she had taught herself to look upon the Christian religion as a gigantic mistake, every sign of which must be swept away from the earth as soon as possible. For individual Christians her good sense had already made her entertain the widest charity; but for the faith they professed she had been unable to preserve the slightest. Fresh from the study of ecclesiastical history, with all its hideous barbarities, its ghastly beliefs, its brutal condemnations of what is noblest in man, it was but natural
that her young and enthusiastic mind should look upon Christianity as an enemy to be combated with and destroyed, of no possible use to the world, but rather of unutterable harm. But experience of life since she had been in London, and, above all, conversation with Mr. Heatherley, had greatly modified her opinions. Though her reason still forbade her as strongly as ever to relinquish her intellectual freedom for the bondage of dogmas, she was beginning to understand that Christianity has its reason for existence, and to doubt whether, even if it were possible, it would be wise to suddenly exterminate it.

After all, was there not a very close analogy between the mental condition of these denizens of the slums and alleys and that of the men of earlier ages, who found religion absolutely necessary for them, and so created it if they had not it ready to hand? Was not every child naturally impressed with religious beliefs, and was it not very possible that the history of the world was but a steady growth to maturity, corresponding to the growth of the individual mind? Theories such as these she had already met with in her reading, but had scarcely considered them with sufficient impartiality; and now they came upon her with the vivid reality of experience.

Helen was an example of that most en-spiriting rule in the moral order of the world,
that no one can endeavour to do good to others without at the same time actually benefiting himself.

When Helen reached home that afternoon she was rather surprised to see a cab standing before the door, from which the driver, aided by one of the servants, was lifting two large trunks into the hall. She knew of but one person who was expected to arrive about this time, and that was Mrs. Cumberbatch, Mr. Gresham’s aunt. And on glancing at the first trunk that was set down in the house, she saw that it was labelled with that lady’s name.

At this moment she was accosted by the housekeeper, who appeared in somewhat of a flurry.

“How very unfortunate, Miss Norman! I’m so glad you’ve just come. Mr. Gresham told me that this lady would be here tomorrow afternoon, and here she has come quite unexpected. There’s been no fire lighted in her room yet, and hardly any preparations made, and, what’s more, Mr. Gresham went out about an hour ago, and I dare say won’t be back till dinner. Whatever shall we do?”

“I suppose I must see Mrs. Cumberbatch,” whispered Helen in reply. “Where is she?”

“I have taken her into the drawing-room for the present, ma’am.”
"Very well, I will go to her. See that her room is put into some kind of order immediately. She will want to go to it at once. There must have been some mistake."

So saying, she passed into the drawing-room.

Sitting in an arm-chair, with a small travelling-bag upon her lap, was a middle-aged lady of no very striking appearance. She was short in stature, rather prim in countenance, and wore ringlets of greyish hair on each side of her face. She was dressed with scrupulous neatness, in garments which betokened widowhood. She rose as Helen entered, and listened with close lips and a peculiar smile, half gracious, half supercilious, whilst the latter apologised for Mr. Gresham’s absence.

"You didn’t expect me to-day, perhaps—h’m?" asked Mrs. Cumberbatch, in a subdued voice.

The assertion she first uttered was pronounced in a tone which seemed to take the point for granted, and the interrogatory "h’m?" came out with a sudden, unexpected start, which almost made the listener jump.

"Mr. Gresham was under the impression that you said Tuesday," returned Helen. "He must have made a mistake."

"No," said the lady. "He was quite right. I merely altered my mind."
The matter-of-course way in which she said this struck Helen as curious. Mrs. Cumberbatch spoke with her lips very close together, despite which Helen fancied that she had few, if any, teeth. She did not behave in the least like a stranger, but spoke and looked rather as if she had just come on a visit from the next street.

A servant knocked and entered.

“If you please, mum, the cabman says he has not been paid.”

“I quite forgot,” said Mrs. Cumberbatch, smiling calmly at Helen. “And I positively have no change. My dear, might I trouble you to lend me a couple of shillings.”

Helen gave the servant the desired sum, still marveling much at the stranger’s matter-of-fact manner.

“You are Miss Norman,—h’m?” asked the lady, and, on receiving an affirmative reply, proceeded to examine Helen’s face so closely, so much with the air of a mistress inspecting a new servant, that the latter’s eyes dropped, and she began to feel uncomfortable.

“Scarcely what I expected to see,” proceeded Mrs. Cumberbatch, as if to herself. “Mr. Gresham—he is my nephew, you know, but I have never seen him, and so I speak of him as a friend merely—Mr. Gresham has told me that you are much engaged in philanthropic works, h’m?”
"I should not venture to give my efforts so dignified a name."

"But still you don't mind others doing so? In connection with what religious community do you work, may I ask?"

There was a touch of natural maliciousness in the first sentence. Helen began to wish that the duty of receiving the lady had fallen upon anyone rather than herself. She replied to the latter question that she worked in connection with no community of any kind.

"Indeed? I was in hopes you might have belonged to my own form of faith. I attend the meetings of the new branch of the Semi-United Presbyterio-Episcopal Church. Did you ever attend our services?"

"Never," replied Helen, shortly.

"You know, of course, the nearest of our meeting-houses, h'm?"

"I think I never heard of the sect before."

"Sect!" repeated Mrs. Cumberbatch, with a smiling condescension. "So I have heard people speak of us before. Some even call our faith a schism. But, of course, you know, we are the only true Church? After all I am not surprised that you are unacquainted with us. We do not care much to make converts. We alone are the elect, and if it pleases our Master to turn to us one of those who are going the broad way we accept
the offering gladly. Otherwise, we can ac-
quiesce in the Lord’s will.”

Helen could not restrain a smile at the
cheerfulness with which Mrs. Cumberbatch
acquiesced in the damnation of that not in-
considerable portion of mankind which did
not belong to the new branch of the Semi-
United Presbyterio-Episcopal Church. The
latter answered the smile with one of her
own. At this moment the servant re-entered
and presented the change out of the two-
shilling piece in coppers to Helen.

“Thank you,” interposed Mrs. Cumber-
batch, holding out her hand and taking the
coppers coolly. She took out a purse from
her pocket and deposited them in it with still
the same self-approving smile upon her face.

“I think I may now take you to your
room, Mrs. Cumberbatch,” said Helen,
rising. “As we did not expect you to-day it
was not quite ready, but I think it will be in
order now.”

The lady accordingly followed, smiling
graciously, with compressed lips, at the ser-
vant as she left the room. Helen departed
to her usual occupations, and the two did not
meet again till dinner-time.

When Helen entered the dining-room at
that hour she found Mrs. Cumberbatch dis-
coursing with her nephew as if she had
known him from childhood, and when the
little, black-robed woman with her grey ring-
lets assumed her seat at the end of the table opposite to Mr. Gresham it seemed as though she had always sat there. The same evening Mr. Gresham delivered over to her the management of his house. Henceforth she would be supreme in all matters of domestic arrangement. Mrs. Cumberbatch appeared pleased with the commission.

At seven o'clock Helen took the train, as usual, to the City. It was not a very long walk to the chapel, where she held her class, and on arriving there she found two or three of her pupils already waiting round the door. Helen produced the key and admitted them.

At this hour the interior of the chapel was already dark, so that the gas in the schoolroom had first to be lit. It was a moderate-sized room, fitted with benches, a few small desks, and a large desk for the teacher. Texts of Scripture ran round the walls in illuminated text, but the white plaster showed no other kind of ornament. Throughout the building prevailed a fresh, upholsterish smell, indicative of general newness. Indeed the chapel had scarcely been built three months, and parts of it were still unfinished.

Helen took her seat at the large desk and began to look over a few copy-books, making marks here and there with a blue lead-pencil. Whilst she was thus occupied girls continued to come into the room, each one upon enter-
ing hanging up her hat and cloak on pegs provided for that purpose and assuming her usual place upon the benches. Very shortly some ten or a dozen had collected, and sat rustling the leaves of books and whispering together quietly. Most of them appeared to be between sixteen and seventeen years old, and nearly all—as was to be expected when the class was purely voluntary—had faces indicating a certain degree of cheerful intelligence. Without exception they were dressed with extreme neatness. A glance at the hats hanging on the wall showed that they were not all above the temptation of a little cheap finery, but scarcely any wore ornaments on the dress, beyond a small blue or purple tie. The appearance of their hands sufficiently proved the manner in which their days were spent, the coarse stumpy fingers engrained with ineradicable dirt bespeaking toil of no delicate description. All their fingers bore the impression of the eternal needle, and not a few, on sitting down, had, by force of habit, taken a thimble from their pockets and slipped it on before beginning to spell.

Suddenly a clock in a different part of the chapel struck eight, and as the sounds died away in repeated echoes through the empty building, every girl drew herself up and sat with her book on her lap waiting for the commencement of the lesson. Helen began
by calling over the roll. Two only were found to be absent.

"I have been thinking since last lesson," she then said, whilst the girls all regarded her with fixed attention, "that it would be wise to divide you into two classes. Some of you know the alphabet quite well, and are even able to read a little, whilst some do not yet even know the letters thoroughly. I wish you to understand that those who will be put in the lower class are not put there because I think them any worse than the others. In time, no doubt, they will make just as good scholars, but at present, through no fault of their own, they would keep the more advanced back if they continued in the same class with them. But for two classes it is clear that two teachers will be required, so I have asked Mr. Heatherley to endeavour to find someone to assist me. No doubt he will succeed before Saturday evening. Tonight I must give one hour to each class, asking the class that I am unable to attend to at the time to go on studying by themselves."

As she concluded, Helen perceived a look of disappointment going round among the girls, and one or two whispers exchanged.

"Have you any objection to make to these arrangements?" she asked, with the good-natured smile which had already endeared her to her pupils.
There was silence for a moment, but at length one of the girls sitting on the front bench ventured to speak.

"We know it's best whatever you say, ma'am," she said, "but we don't like to have any one else teach us but you."

Several voices made themselves heard confirming this remark.

"I'm sure I ought to be very proud of your confidence in me," replied Helen, with a glad light in her eyes; "but you see that it will be clearly impossible for me to take two classes at once. Suppose I say that I will take the classes by turns, the first class one evening and the second the next. Do you think that will do, Mary Walker?"

"That seems the only way, ma'am," replied the girl who had first spoken, and the rest also murmured their assent.

"Very well. Now I will call out the names of those who will form the first class."

When the two classes had arranged themselves upon the forms, Helen proceeded to give a lesson to those who did not yet know their letters, leaving the more advanced to study in silence. It was not easy work, but the earnest desire of the poor girls to do their best made it far from disagreeable. But how slow they were! With what immense difficulty they succeeded in comprehending the difference between n and m, between b and p! Helen's quiet patience
seemed inexhaustible. To the dullest she would repeat the same thing over twenty times, and the twentieth with no less of gentleness in her tone than had marked her first explanation. When at length nine o'clock struck, she turned with a sigh of relief to the first class. Here there were one or two who could read at the rate of five words in as many minutes, but these were the exceptions; most, though they knew their letters well enough, puzzled in a hopeless manner over the simplest word of two syllables. There was something dreadful in the sight of these faces bent with a determined, almost a desperate, energy over tasks which every well-educated child of five or six years old would think nothing of. The efforts it cost them were painful in the extreme, they suffered with a physical suffering. But as soon as any one looked up into the teacher’s countenance, the courage which had just been on the point of giving way before apparently insurmountable difficulties came back again. Helen’s smile was a perpetual incitement to the most stupid.

At ten the classes broke up. For several minutes Helen was engaged in answering questions relative to the work for next lesson, and then by degrees the school-room emptied itself. She watched the girls as they took down their hats and cloaks, and made internal comments upon their characters.
She had not noticed that for several minutes Mr. Heatherley had been standing in the doorway of the room, and by his side a girl of perhaps the same age as Helen, rather pretty in face, whose appearance rendered it probable that she was the daughter of a well-to-do working man. As soon as she perceived the two she advanced towards them, and Mr. Heatherley introduced his companion as Miss Venning.

"You desire to help me in my evening classes?" said Helen, as she shook hands with the girl, who was very timid in manner.

"I should not have ventured to think of teaching," replied the latter, a modest blush upon her comely features. "It is Mr. Heatherley who has persuaded me to offer myself. But I am really afraid that I have not ability enough."

"That's all nonsense, Lucy," said Mr. Heatherley, good-naturedly. "You don't mean to pretend that you can't read and write?"

The girl held down her head in silence, still blushing.

"I thought your impudence wouldn't go quite so far," said the clergyman. "Well, nothing more whatever is wanted, except a little patience. And that I know you have."

"Oh, please not to think I am unwilling to do what I can," said Lucy Venning, looking from the clergyman to Helen. "I really
shall be very glad to help, if I am thought capable, very glad indeed."

"I have no doubt whatever that you will be capable, Miss Venning," replied Helen.
"Patience is the principal thing needed. These poor girls are sadly ignorant, and want slow and careful teaching. Can you begin on Saturday?"

"Oh yes," said Lucy.

"Very well. I shall be sincerely glad to see you here. And now I must be off; it is getting late."

"Let me see," interposed Mr. Heatherley. "You pass Miss Venning's door, if I'm not mistaken. You must let me see you safe to the station as usual, Miss Norman."

And so they turned out the lights and left the chapel.
CHAPTER X.

A FOREGONE CONCLUSION.

Seldom had Helen experienced so strong an aversion for any one as that excited in her by the words, the manner, and soon the very appearance of Mrs. Cumberbatch. In the latter's presence she suffered from continual irritation. And this was all the worse, seeing that Mrs. Cumberbatch seemed to take the utmost interest in her nephew's ward, and seldom allowed her to remain alone when in the house. On Sunday alone was there any rest from her persecution. Happily she had discovered a congregation of the new branch of the Semi-United Presbyterio-Episcopal Church, and the fact that it met at the extremity of Mile-end Road, was to her no obstacle whatever. Twice each Sunday did she attend the service there, going and returning by omnibus each time. Helen never knew her to manifest the slightest sign of fatigue. She was always the same close-lipped, smiling little woman, under every circumstance.

Under the pretence of requesting her to read to him, Mr. Gresham continued to en-
gross much of his ward's leisure. Indeed, so strong was his infatuation becoming, that he could hardly bear her to be out of his sight. In the afternoons he always waited for her return home with childish impatience, and called her into his presence on some trivial pretext almost as soon as she had entered the house. His jealousy of a hundred imaginary rivals well-nigh drove him to madness, he plotted and schemed for hours how to put an end to her long daily absences. For all this he had not the courage openly to break his secret to her, and know his fate. Indeed, he felt that he already knew his fate only too well. He saw that Helen still behaved to him with the most perfect frankness, without a trace of embarrassment, in every respect treating him like a friend—and no more. At times he was driven into paroxysms of rage when he thought of the mean acts he had committed, the perpetual torture from which he suffered, all in consequence of this ill-advised but involuntary passion. He mocked at himself, he attacked himself with the fiercest sarcasms and ironies; a thousand times he went to bed at night saying that in the morning he would rise calm and indifferent to the whole race of woman-kind, as he had been but a few months ago. And yet the morning found the invincible worm eating still deeper into his heart. He was beginning to despise himself as a coward,
a creature devoid alike of honour and of courage.

He asked himself whether there was any real obstacle in the way of his offering his hand to Helen, and being either accepted or refused as the case might be. He could see none. He knew cases of men older than himself who had married wards of their own, under far less creditable circumstances. At least no one could think that he was actuated by a mercenary spirit; his own independent position forbade that. What, then, stood in his way? He knew very well that it was that stiff-necked pride, that empty vanity which had been the guiding spirit of his life. Could he, who had scoffed at all the passions, the sentiments, the principles which ordinarily rule the existence of men, who had trained himself into an affected cynicism which all his friends imagined to be real, could he now confess himself a convert to the gentle teaching of love, humble himself to entreat the favour of a girl? The thought was intolerable to him.

Helen’s portrait was proceeding very slowly. Mr. Gresham lingered over it purposely; partly because he had an actual pleasure in the work, partly because it afforded him a good opportunity of frequently enjoying his ward’s society; partly, again, because he felt that the completion of the picture would be the most appropriate occa-
sion for opening his heart; and he dreaded the approach of the time. Soon it had been in hand nearly six weeks, and was all but finished. One morning he had requested Helen to sit, and had lingered for a couple of hours before the canvas, now and then adding a touch, but for the most part only pretending to paint, and keeping his eyes fixed upon the girl’s face. At last he laid down his pallet, and threw himself with a careless air into a seat by Helen’s side.

“And how goes the missionary work in the Oriental regions?” he asked, with a forced assumption of his wonted sceptical tone and look.

“As well as I could hope, I think,” replied Helen.

“Then let us have statistics. How many have you converted to the doctrine of soap and water, say during the last week?”

“I wish the process of conversion were capable of being represented by statistics,” said Helen. “We can only venture to look for decided results at the end of a comparatively long period. Ask me when I have been at work a year, Mr. Gresham, and I hope to be able to give you something tangible.”

“A year! And you mean to say that your whim will last so long? Why, I was calculating that our Christmas festivities, at the latest, would celebrate its burial.”
"You credit me with very little stability of character, Mr. Gresham."

"On the contrary, in giving you till Christmas I conceived I was crediting you with a most astonishing stability."

"I have already said that this will be the work of my life, and I say so in seriousness."

"Your life? And when you are married do you suppose your husband will allow you to spend your days in slums and ragged schools?"

"I think there is little prospect of my ever marrying," replied Helen, with a quiet smile.

"Indeed? Not Mr. Heatherley? You would make an admirable parson's wife, Helen."

Helen looked curiously at him as he spoke thus, and he met her gaze with one which conveyed much more earnestness than his words.

"Mr. Heatherley and I are, I hope, very good friends," she replied, "but the idea of our ever becoming more to each other than that is one for which you must yourself take credit, Mr. Gresham."

"But how and where will you live? I have been very seriously thinking of late of the Dorsetshire farm. Suppose I sell this house and go to live in the country; what will become of you then, Helen?"

"I shall take a lodging somewhere near to the scene of my occupation," replied the girl, calmly. "By so doing I should save much time and expense."
"Possibly you would like to do that at once?"

"I should only do so if I had no near friends in London. At present I enjoy living in your house, Mr. Gresham. I should lose your society with regret."

"And yet there is not much similarity between us, Helen, is there?"

"We often agree in our literary tastes."

"So we do. But then you take the world so terribly au sérieux; I look upon it as a farce, and amuse myself with the spectacle."

"That I am sorry for," said Helen.

There was silence for a while.

"Do you ever think about my character, Helen?" asked the artist then.

"I have naturally sometimes thought of it, Mr. Gresham," returned his ward, with some little hesitation. "Not to have done so would argue want of friendship."

"And what were your conclusions with regard to me? Is it indiscreet to ask such a question?"

"Rather indiscreet, perhaps."

"You decline to make any comments?"

"Would any useful end be served if I consented?"

"Possibly by regarding my image in your clear mind, I might learn to know myself better than I now do."

"In that case I will venture to mention one thought which has sometimes occurred
to me. It is my belief, Mr. Gresham, that people are not so sincere with each other as they might, with great advantage, be. As you have invited me to speak, you will not be offended at what I say?"

"In no case."

"I have sometimes thought, then," said the girl, looking into her guardian's face with frank simplicity, "that it is a pity you do not try to divest your words and your manner of a certain unreality, insincerity—what shall I call it?—which they possess. I sometimes fancy that you are not naturally so sceptical regarding the seriousness of life as you would pretend to be. I have noticed indications of this more particularly during the last few weeks."

Mr. Gresham smiled. He seemed to experience a real pleasure in hearing these words.

"And why is it a pity that I am what I am?" he asked. "Should I be more amiable do you think—should I seem more agreeable, say to you, if I were otherwise?"

"I am sure you would."

"But what would you have me do? How can I evince sincerity? Shall I turn Ranter, and harangue a crowd next evening from the top of the nearest lamp-post?"

"I fear you are incorrigible, Mr. Gresham," said Helen, shaking her head and smiling.

"But, in sober earnest, what shall I do? I am willing—I am willing to be savagely
serious, indeed I am. There shall be a proof of it."

He took out his pocket-book, and released from it a ten-pound bank-note.

"There," he continued, "take this, Helen, and spend it for me upon your unspeakable protégés."

Helen shook her head.

"But why not?" he pursued. "Take it, I beg of you. Shall I go down on my knees? Take it, Helen, and buy somebody a ton of soap with it—the very best brown Windsor!"

"You do not mean what you say, Mr. Gresham. You would regret it the moment the money had left your hands."

"Upon my word, no! I am in terrific earnest. Won't you take me at my word?"

"It is always so difficult for me to understand whether you mean what you say."

"But in this case I do. Take the ten-pound note, Helen. I mean it. Take it, and when it is spent, ask me for another. I wish to be serious. I wish to be amiable. I wish to please you, Helen."

"Indeed you do please me, Mr. Gresham, if you really mean this. I will take you literally." As she spoke she put the note in her purse. "You shall have an exact account of how this money has been spent. I think I have already a purpose for it in my mind. It is very good of you to make me your agent."
Mr. Gresham suddenly took one of her hands in both his own, and looked full into her face. Just as he was opening his lips to speak, the door creaked, and Mrs. Cumberbatch entered. Mr. Gresham rose with a savage look, which he vainly endeavoured to conceal, and walked to his easel.

"The picture near completion—h'm?" asked the intruder, turning first to Helen, who sat perfectly composed, then to the artist, who was leaning over his pallet.

"Almost finished," said the latter, in a low tone, and continued to paint.

Shortly, Mrs. Cumberbatch withdrew, and Helen at the same time. As the latter was leaving the room, Mr. Gresham recalled her for a moment.

"I shall add to it the last touches," he said, "before I go out, but in the afternoon I have an engagement which will keep me away till nearly nine to-night. Will you come up here when you return from the school and have a look at it? I shall be here then."

"Gladly," said Helen.

It was Saturday, and at eight o'clock Helen opened her classes as usual. Her new assistant, Lucy Venning, was punctual, and the room was soon a scene of assiduous study. Lucy, when she succeeded in overcoming her extreme diffidence, made a capital teacher. Her patience equalled that of Helen's, and her comprehension of, and sympathy
with the pupils was perfect. From the first, Helen had regarded Lucy with much interest, and, now that she came to know her better, the interest began to develop into attachment. There was an excessive charm for her in Lucy's perfect simplicity of manner, her low, gentle voice, and her uniform sweetness of temper. As yet there had not been much opportunity of winning the girl's confidence, but each time she saw her, Helen felt more desirous of doing so. At present she felt that Lucy regarded her with somewhat of awe, knowing her to be wealthy, and in a high social position compared with herself. Despite this, she hoped before long to make a friend of Lucy.

Whilst Helen was thus engaged, Mr. Gresham was at his Club. His engagement, which was a real one, had terminated sooner than he had anticipated; and feeling by no means disposed for an evening in the company of Mrs. Cumberbatch—from whose invasions he knew no apartment was safe—he had dined at his Club, and proceeded to amuse himself for an hour or two with periodicals. He was almost alone there, for most of the other members were then out of town. Having finished his dinner, he retained a bottle of wine, out of which he hoped to imbibe something more than the mere juice of the grape. In fact he wanted courage. Helen had promised to visit the
studio when she returned, which would be about eleven. At that hour Mrs. Cumberbatch would be, it was to be presumed, fast asleep; and the artist had resolved that tonight should decide his fate.

His attempt to read resulted in failure. He threw the paper away from him, and resolved to fight it out manfully with his thoughts. By degrees he finished the wine, and ordered another bottle. When he had also finished this, it was ten o'clock. He left the Club, called a hansom, and was driven home.

With a hand and head feverishly hot, he entered the studio. He knew it was too early to expect Helen yet, but he felt relieved when he saw that the studio was dark and empty. Having lit two or three large tapers, he began to pace the room in impatience. He thought over the morning's conversation, and succeeded in persuading himself that there had been something in Helen's manner towards him which he had not before observed, something more gracious, more affectionate even. He was determined to look on nothing but the bright side of things, and the most unusual quantity of wine which he had drunk doubtless aided him in his attempt. By degrees he lost himself in glowing hopes and fancies, and was at length startled at suddenly perceiving Helen by his side.

"Ah! you are here!" he exclaimed. "Did you come down the chimney?"
"In a far more prosaic manner, I came through the door, as I usually do."
"And you have come to look at the finished picture?"
"I promised that I would."
"There it is, then. Are you satisfied with it?"
"Mrs. Cumberbatch told me it is a very good likeness. As a painting, I think it admirable."
"And now what are we to do with it, Helen?"
"I have no idea, Mr. Gresham, what your intentions are with regard to it. I should myself suggest that it be put away into some corner till you take your threatened departure for the farm in Dorsetshire, then taken with you, and hung up in a shady corner of some quiet room."
"Is there no one you would like to give it to?"
"It is not mine to give, Mr. Gresham."
"But say it were yours. Is there no one you would give it to, in preference to all the rest of the world? Tell me seriously, Helen."

The girl looked at him with some surprise, he spoke so earnestly.
"I should give it to you, Mr. Gresham," she said. "There is certainly no one to whom I should give it in preference to you."
"You mean that Helen?" he asked eagerly.

"Certainly. I should like you to keep it as a memento of my friendship."

Helen still gazed into his face. The unusual brilliancy of his face struck her. She made as though she would say good-night and depart.

"Stay, Helen!" he said, catching her by the hands, the fierce beating of his heart almost choking his words. "It is mine, then. I thank you for the present, but grant me one more favour. Let me have it framed and hung up in my drawing-room as the portrait—of my wife!"

He was almost stunned by the word as it left his lips. It seemed to him to echo throughout the whole house. He appeared to himself to have shouted, rather than whispered it. At all events, the word was uttered, and he stood holding Helen's hands, waiting for her reply.

She said nothing, but replied to his burning gaze with one of amazement, almost of fright. He continued to speak, using tones such as, perhaps, had never before passed his lips.

"Yes, as my wife, Helen! I mean it. In this I am serious—in this, at least! Cannot you believe it? You have spoken to me of friendship, Helen, but it is with far more than friendship that I have long regarded
you, rather with affection which I feel is sincere and true, affection such as I have never before felt for living creature. Speak Helen! Have you any such affection for me? Could you accept me for your husband? Do you believe in my affection?"

"You cannot mean what you say, Mr. Gresham," Helen replied at length, drawing her hands away.

"Every word. I love you devotedly, Helen! Quick; free me from this wretched suffering. I can endure it no longer. Will you be my wife?"

"I cannot," replied the girl, in firm, but gentle tones. "It would be impossible for me to accept your offer, Mr. Gresham. I entertain the sincerest friendship for you; I regard you always as my adopted father; I could not be your wife."

The answer fell with a calming effect on Mr. Gresham. He took one turn up and down the room, then suddenly stopped before her with the old ironical smile on his face.

"Why, so I anticipated, Helen," he said. "And the picture has been painted in vain—not an unusual thing in this world. And so we may say good-night, I suppose, may we not?"

"Was this a jest, Mr. Gresham?" asked the girl, with something of indignation in her tone.
“By no means,” he replied, grinding with his teeth. “Oh no, not a jest, by no means. But yet it would be best to think of it as such. Do you know what I am going to do now, Helen?”

She looked at him in doubt, for a moment in fear, but reflection told her that the latter feeling was groundless.

“On Monday I shall begin the task of settling all my business affairs, and as soon as they are all settled, I shall leave England for a year, perhaps for longer. Do you approve of that?”

“It grieves me extremely that I should be the cause of it, Mr. Gresham.”

“You the cause of it?” he exclaimed, with affected surprise. “My good child! not in the least. You the cause of it!”

“Then why impart this purpose of yours to me under such very strange circumstances?”

“You think them strange, eh? Ah! perhaps they are rather so. Never mind. My purpose holds good for all that. You can do very well without me for a year?”

Helen began to be convinced that her guardian had partaken of too much wine. She stepped towards the door.

“It is getting very late, Mr. Gresham,” she said. “I must wish you good-night.”

Suddenly he started to her, and seized her arm.
"You are not a chatterbox, are you?" he asked, in a low and rather fierce tone.

"I hope not," replied Helen, relieving herself from his grasp, and opening the door.

"Then you won't go and boast to people what a damned fool I have made of myself to you to-night?"

"I shall not speak a word of it, Mr. Gresham," replied his ward, regarding him with concern; "and I hope by the morning it will all have passed from your mind."

"Amen! Good-night, Helen."

"Good-night, Mr. Gresham."

The artist was absent from home all the next day, and also the whole of Monday. During that time Helen did not see him. On Tuesday they met at meals only, during which Mr. Gresham behaved quite in his ordinary manner, except that perhaps he spoke rather less than usual. Helen also did her best to show no sign of remembering what had happened, and succeeded in appearing quite at her ease. At dinner on Tuesday, Mr. Gresham announced his departure at the end of the week for the Continent.

"Do you propose to be long away, Gilbert,—h'm?" asked Mrs. Cumberbatch.

"Probably a month or two," was the reply. "I shall write to you, aunt, and tell you of my plans."

Mrs. Cumberbatch glanced from her nephew to Helen. She suspected something. For a
wonder, however, she did not pursue her interroga-
tions, and the subject dropped.

Mr. Gresham and his ward alike took care to avoid a private interview. On Saturday morning the artist was ready to depart, apparently in quite a cheerful mood. He shook hands with his aunt and with Helen, bestowing no more pressure in the one case than in the other, and stepped into his carriage. Helen sighed as she saw him depart, but whether with relief or not she scarcely knew. The incident which had apparently given rise to this departure affected her much; even yet she scarcely knew what to think of it. In any case, she did not see how she could have adopted any other course than that she had chosen. Nothing remained but to settle down to the companionship of Mrs. Cumberbatch, and to see whether Mr. Gresham would really fulfil his purpose of being away a year.
CHAPTER XI.

LOVE OR PITY?

The Club of which Arthur Golding had become a member was only one of a great number of similar combinations which at this time the glorious spirit of Radicalism was calling into existence throughout the Metropolis. It is true that this association stood perhaps alone in the lofty and unselfish nature of its immediate aims. This was the result of the individual character of its founder, who, by gathering around him only single and moderately well-to-do working men, rendered practicable the noble scheme which he had long meditated before endeavouring to carry it into execution. The aims of other Radical clubs, which began to manifest activity towards the end of the year 1870, were almost exclusively political, though some comprehended in their scheme the advantages of a benefit-society for their own members when in need of assistance. It was a season of strong political ferment among the oppressed classes throughout the kingdom. As early as April of that year a great public meeting had been held in Trafalgar Square, at which resolutions were passed
demanding the attention of the Government to the scandalous sufferings of the working-classes.

The notes of the "Marseillaise" were occasionally heard in the open streets. Republicanism of an advanced type was loudly advocated on numerous platforms and in open-air assemblies; active associations, such as the Land and Labour League, spread a knowledge of the wrongs of the poor and the tyranny of the ruling classes, far and wide over the country; men who were so crushed beneath the burden of ceaseless, brutal toil, that they had forgotten to raise their eyes from the dull earth, now began to look eagerly around them, to read the signs of the times, and to rejoice that at length their voices would be heard as they clamoured for justice.

The war between France and Germany came to aid, with the impulse of a new excitement, the movement for justice and liberty. With hopes of the downfall of tyranny in France and of the establishment once more of a Republic, the thoughts of the poor in England were naturally turned in the same direction more strongly than ever. One of the ripest outcomes of the time was the London Patriotic Society, whose meetings at the tavern called the Hole-in-the-Wall, excited the attention of rich as well as poor, and for the suppression of which indirect efforts were before long made by the Government. Great
was the excitement awakened among all these humble, but not ignoble, advocates of freedom when the news of the glorious 4th of September was read in London, when it was known that Paris, the suffering high-priestess of Liberty, had once again shaken off the degrading yoke of princes and proclaimed the rule of the people. That evening an extraordinary meeting was held by the club in Crown Street. Every-day business was for once thrown aside, and the members joined hands in mutual congratulation, in exalted enthusiasm. The speech of the evening was made by Arthur Golding, for William Noble saw that his friend was bursting with eagerness to pour forth his emotion in a flood of words, and purposely withheld his own eloquence. After speaking of the event of the day, as it concerned France in particular, Arthur concluded with a glowing rhapsody, wherein was set forth the hopes he entertained for the future of their own country.

"Between England and France," he said, "roll but some twenty miles of sea. But a few hours' journey separates us from a country where the gates of the temple of Liberty have once more been thrown wide open, never, let us hope, to be closed again. Is it alone disinterested love for our fellow-creatures in France that makes us rejoice at their freedom? Let us hope that we duly feel the claims for a common humanity which
links us to the oppressed in all quarters of the globe; but it would be vain to pretend that we had not some yet stronger reason for the delight this news has awakened in us. It means that we shall henceforth have before our eyes, and near at hand, an example of a great people ruled by its own voice alone, of a people that has known but too well all the terrific evils of monopolised authority, and is determined to banish them from its land forever. This example will be of inestimable value, of incalculable aid to us in our struggle here in England. For now nearly a hundred years England has possessed such an example in the United States of America, but this has been of little effect. In the first place the vast sweep of the Atlantic lies between us and America, and though thousands of our fellow-workmen go forth thither yearly, as if to a land of promise, but few ever come to return and bring to us the good tidings. They settle for good and all in the States, exercising in a foreign land and under brighter skies the strength of mind and body which, had they stayed with us, would only have proved their curse. Secondly, it was only by means of a war with England that America procured its freedom, and, though I trust that we here are far above such foolish prejudices, this may perhaps count as one reason why Englishmen have seldom sought for an incitement to progress in the
example of the enfranchised country. But with France it is different. France is a name dear to the present generation of Englishmen. In the last war which called to arms the greatest nations of Europe, France fought by the side of England, and by her side helped to conquer. France is close to our shores, her cliffs can be seen across the strip of sea which divides us. Despite her misfortunes, brought upon her head by the cursed descendant of a cursed house, France always has been, and always will be, a leading state in Europe. Her example will be unspeakably precious in the sight of us strugglers for right.

"She will teach us that the ability to govern is not alone entrusted to those whom centuries of wanton luxury have rendered the slaves of selfishness and ignoble pride, to those whose brains have been warped and narrowed by the hereditary burden of a crown! She will teach us that the meanest beggar in the streets has as indefeasible a claim to justice and right as the pampered lord who flung him a curse instead of a coin! She will teach us that men are not beasts, that light, and air, and cleanliness, and raiment, and food are what every man has a claim to, and what is the duty of those whom the people choose to represent their voices to see that every man obtains! And she will teach us that the poor have brains
LOVE OR PITY?

and mental faculties as well as the rich, that from the ranks of the poor oft-times rise the geniuses of a nation, that consequently the development of the higher nature of the poor man’s child by a course of enlightened education is as much the duty of the State as the establishment and endowment of schools and colleges for the heirs to wealth.

“France has seized upon her liberty in the midst of cruel anguish and misery. Whether we shall live to see England at the feet of a foreign enemy it is impossible to foresee, we can only stoutly hope not. But is such a position the only one in which a change of government is possible? Is it only by the oppression of foreign conquest that a nation is driven to despair, and so wins the courage to cast aside its tyrants? The end of the last century saw a revolution in France which turned her rivers of water into rivers of blood, and darkened the face of Europe with the smoke of conflagration. But surely we need not expect a revolution under any such circumstances as these. Is not our position one which will excite the laughter, if not the scorn of future eyes? Here are we working classes, numbering who can say how many times more than the rich who oppress us, stronger in arm, firmer in endurance, more earnest in aim. Is it not indeed worthy of scorn that, despite all this, we suffer from day to day and see no way out of our
suffering? Suppose every working-man in England got up to-morrow morning, and, instead of going to his work, walked to the great square in the town where he lives and declared that he was sick to death of the life he led and would have things otherwise. You say that the army would be marched against us, and violence would naturally result. Yes, but are not the soldiers themselves working-men, men hired to the despicable toil of making themselves machines in order to be able to slaughter their fellow-men with skill? Why should these men be more afraid of striking, of throwing up their wages with the chance of bettering themselves than other labourers are! You can scarcely say that their wages are so excellent they cannot hope to earn more under other masters and at other and better work. Then what is to prevent these soldiers from joining us?

"Friends, the work for the future lies with such clubs as this of ours. Not content with helping to keep our fellows alive, we must teach them their power!" We know that the lesson has already begun to be learnt, but we must not cease in our effort for all that. We will teach these wretched poverty-stricken crowds their strength, if only they choose to exert it. And henceforth we shall have the example of France to point to, in proof of our assertion that we are not dependent for our existence upon kings and queens. All
LOVE OR PITY?

Good wishes, then, to the new Republic. May she grow, may she thrive, may her future be the more bright and glorious that her birth has been amid scenes of sadness and desolation!

This speech ended the meeting, and the members crowded round Arthur to shake hands with him.

"What do you think, Arthur?" asked Mark Challenger, as the two walked home together. "Isn't this better than being a painter, and living at somebody else's expense? Don't you feel that you are more of a man?"

"You are right!" replied Arthur, "I feel utterly ashamed of myself when I think of those days. What can have possessed me to think of being an artist? Then I should have spent my days and nights in useless labour, and after all been miserably dependent upon the rich and proud. If they had not bought my pictures, I should have starved—and serve me right, too, I think. Now I have the consolation of knowing that I work for a useful end. The newspapers I help to print spreads knowledge among thousands every day; it makes me work with energy when I think of it. Hurrah! We shall do something yet!"

Arthur possessed from nature the temperament which always accompanies genius. Undoubtedly at this period he sincerely believed the sentiments which we have just heard him
express to his friend Mark. Except on Sunday he allowed himself scarcely any time for calm reflection; he lived in a perpetual ferment of activity. If he was not at his work, he was engaged heart and soul in exertions connected with the club. He became acquainted with the editor of a paper—one of many which were springing up about this time—which had for its object the spread at once of Radicalism and Free-thought, and not unfrequently he wrote a letter or a short article which was printed in its columns. All such circumstances as these were incitements to fresh enthusiasm. At the club he seemed already to take precedence of Will Noble himself, for he certainly excelled the latter in a certain fervid eloquence which he himself was surprised to find that he possessed. But in solid force of argument he never equalled the founder of the club. Had either of these two been of an envious disposition, they could not certainly have long continued friends under the circumstances. But envy or jealousy were remote from the thoughts of both, their minds were engrossed with far other and higher feelings. Every day cemented their friendship more firmly; every act or word of the one only incited the other to a generous rivalry.

Both Arthur and Mark kept completely apart from the other residents in Mrs. Pettindund’s house as far as any social inter-
course is concerned. In the first place they were not much at home, and then the appearance of their fellow-lodgers was not such as to excite much interest. To this, however, there was one exception, at least in Arthur’s case. Very shortly after he had taken up his abode in Gower Place, his notice was attracted by one of the lodgers on the floor beneath him. This was a young girl, of perhaps seventeen or eighteen, whom he had occasionally passed on the stairs, and once or twice in the street. She was very pretty, if not positively handsome, tall, with dark hair which she arranged in a tasteful way, and dressed in black which seemed to indicate mourning. Though her beauty was of a somewhat sensual type, and her features betrayed no special intelligence or good-humour, Arthur felt strangely attracted to her for all that. To a beautiful female face he was always especially susceptible, and in this case the natural ardour of his years was additionally excited by the occasional and brief glimpses he obtained of her, and by the fact that she resided under the same roof as himself. There was, moreover, a fixed paleness upon the girl’s face, and now and then a look of suffering which excited his compassion. As week after week went by, he noticed that these signs increased. He thought she must be ill, and felt his interest in her grow yet stronger.
He knew that she took her meals with the landlady's family in the kitchen, for on several occasions when he had gone down early in the morning to pay his rent he had seen her at breakfast there, and had heard her addressed as "Carrie." He concluded that she was in some way related to the Pettindund's. He knew also from conversation heard on the same occasion that she went out to work every day with Mrs. Pettindund's two daughters, as a "mantle-hand." Before very long he learned her complete name, for, taking a letter out of the letter-box one night just as the postman delivered it, he found it was addressed to Miss Carrie Mitchell; and it was not probable that there was more than one young lady in the house. Arthur would have been glad to know more of her; but scarcely knew how the information could be gained. He was thinking of asking Mark Challenger if he knew anything of her, when another piece of chance threw a very unexpected light upon her history.

Arthur had risen one morning about six o'clock—it was drawing near to the end of October—and was engaged in dressing, when Mark Challenger's door, which was next to his, opened, and Mark having called out to know if his friend was up, Arthur opened his door and replied in the affirmative, whereon Mark entered his room.
"Read that," he said, holding out a sheet of paper which looked like a letter.
Arthur took it, and read this:—

"Dear Carrie,—
"My landlady tells me a girl has been calling at my lodgings several times lately, asking to see me. I have no doubt this is you, and I wish you to understand at once that you will have to stop bothering me. I have done all I mean to do for you, and now you will have to look out for yourself. You needn't expect I shall stump up anything even if you have a child, as you say you are going to. If you try to force it out of me, it's the easiest thing in the world for me to prove that you're nothing but a common girl of the town, and then you have no remedy. Do just take this hint, and leave me alone in future; if you don't, I shall have to do something I shouldn't much care to.

"A. W."

Arthur looked at Mr. Challenger in pained astonishment.
"Why did you give me this to read?" he asked. "I thought it was something of your own. We have no business to have read this."

"Why, I'll tell you," replied Mark, scratching his head. "You know I came up late to
bed last night, and as I passed one of the doors on the floor below I saw a piece of paper lying near it. I picked it up and found it to be this. After all, I don’t think there’s so much harm in our reading it. You see, if I’d given it back to the girl, she would never have believed that I didn’t know all it contained. As it is she will perhaps never know she has lost it, and it’s much better it should come into our hands than into those of someone who would talk about it all over the house.”

“But what a rascal this fellow is!” cried Arthur, burning with righteous indignation. “What a cold-blooded villain! I declare, if there was only an address on it, I would seek the fellow out and tell him what I thought of him. Why, it’s that poor girl underneath, called Carrie Mitchell, isn’t it?”

“To be sure. I have rather noticed her lately, and I half suspected there was something wrong.”

“But do you think it likely the Pettindunds know of this?”

“Can’t tell; but I don’t think so.”

“Bye-the-by, how is the girl connected with them, do you know?”

“Oh, yes. I had the whole tale from Mrs. Pettindund one day. It seems that Carrie Mitchell is Mrs. Pettindund’s niece. Her father and mother died not long since, and
the girl then came here to earn her living. She pays no end of money for her board and lodging, and she certainly can’t get more than fifteen shillings a week—poor creature.”

“But this letter. However can she have got into a scrape with a blackguard such as this? You see he writes a fairly good hand. Some clerk, I suppose. I should like to have my fingers on his throat!”

“What shall we do with the letter, Arthur?”

“Burn it, by all means. As you say, it is impossible to return it. I wish heartily we could do something for the poor girl!”

“And yet I don’t see how we can,” returned Mark. “We mustn’t appear to know anything about this affair, of course.”

“Such a beautiful face she has,” said Arthur; “but looks so terribly pale and ill. No wonder! I shouldn’t be surprised if Mrs. Pettindund turned her out of the house as soon as she finds this out. I have very little faith in her charity.”

“Well, if she does that,” said Mark, “we might be able to help her; but I really don’t see what we can do now.”

“Nor I,” added Arthur, sadly.

Throughout the day his thoughts were busy with this discovery. It did not occur to him for a moment that the girl herself might possibly be to blame. He could feel nothing but tender pity for her, passionate indigna-
tion against the heartless brute who had cast her off when she most needed his help.

For several days he did his best to catch sight of her, after listening at his door for several hours in hope of hearing her come up stairs.

One morning, just as he was returning from work through the night, he had his wish. As he entered the house he saw Carrie ascending the stairs with a large can of water, which seemed beyond her strength to lift. He ran forward at once, and begged to be allowed to help her.

As he looked into her face he saw she was crying. Not knowing how to express anxiety or condolence, he pretended not to observe her distress, and contented himself with carrying her can to her door. She thanked him in a low voice, always keeping her face averted.

Troubled beyond expression by the girl's sufferings, Arthur, instead of going at once to bed, paced his room for nearly an hour, vainly endeavouring to devise some method of giving her assistance.

Mark Challenger was already gone to business, so that there was no one at hand with whom he could take counsel. Emotions such as he had never felt surged within his heart. The sight of Helen Norman had but a short time ago been sufficient to exalt him to regions of enthusiastic rapture; but his love for
Helen, if love it were, had been a pure devotion of the spirit, a sentiment which called into play the highest energies of his intellect, the noblest impulses of his heart to the exclusion of all ignobler feeling.

But now it was the senses that had sway over him. His blood coursed hot through his veins, his pulses throbbed. One moment he burned with vehement anger at the unknown author of the poor girl’s troubles, becoming conscious of a depth of resentful ferocity in his nature, the existence of which he could not have believed; the next, his being seemed to melt with excess of passion, as he thought of Carrie’s beautiful face and form, and dwelt with unutterable tenderness upon the vision of her tear-reddened eyes, her pale cheeks, her feeble step. He suffered physically; it was as though some force were straining at his heart-strings, making him pant for breath.

Once or twice he was on the point of casting aside all doubts and hesitations, and of going to speak to her at her own room-door and to offer her what help he could—in the shape of money. But a sense of shame and of respect for her feelings retained him. Still he could do nothing but pace the room, now quite unconscious of the weariness which had possessed him when he entered the house, and dreaming of nothing less than of sleep. The contest forced groans from his heart;
he pressed his hands fiercely together upon his forehead, as if to force himself into calmness.

Just then he fancied he heard a voice speaking on the stairs. Starting to the door he opened it softly, and listened.

He was not mistaken. Someone was knocking loudly at a door below, and calling—“Carrie! Carrie!”

Then there was a pause, during which an answer seemed to come from within, though it was not audible.

“Ain’t you well?” asked the voice again, which Arthur now recognised as that of Mrs. Pettindund’s daughter. “We’re just going. You’ll be late.”

Again no reply seemed to come from within, after which the girl who had spoken ran downstairs.

Still Arthur listened intently. Presently he heard a heavier step ascending the stairs, and, leaning over the banisters, he could perceive Mrs. Pettindund’s portly person. The landlady also stopped before Carrie’s room, and knocked loudly.

The key turned, and the door opened.

Arthur leaned forward still more, and listened with his utmost power of attention. He saw nothing dishonourable in so doing, under the circumstances; or, perhaps, more properly speaking, he merely obeyed an instinct, and did not think about it at all.
“And so you can’t go to work, eh?” asked the woman, in a tone of repulsive coarseness.

A reply was made in so low a voice that it was inaudible.

“And d’ye think I didn’t know all about it long since?” returned Mrs. Pettindund, who seemed to be standing half in, half out of the room. “Well, all I’ve got to say is you’ve made yer bed and you must lay in it. How d’ye think ye’re goin’ to live if you don’t go to work, eh?”

Arthur could hear a sob for the only reply.

“Yer don’t think I’m sich a fool as to keep yer, eh?” pursued the kindly-hearted landlady. “An’ lose the good name o’ th’ouse an’ all? If you do, you’re mistaken, that’s all as I’ve got to say t’yer.”

The listener’s straining ears could just catch the answer.

“You won’t turn me out of doors, aunt?” pleaded the girl’s sobbing voice. “Won’t you let me stay till it’s over, and then work and pay you all back?”

“A likely joke that, too! You pay me back! Catch yer doin’ of it! I tell you, you leave this ’ouse to-day, an’ there’s no two ways about that. D’ye ’ear?”

“But you’ve always been kind to me, aunt!” sobbed Carrie. “Won’t you have some pity? If I’ve done wrong, I’m sorry
for it; and I shall have to suffer for it all my life. You've been kind to me till now, aunt; don't be so cruel as to turn me out. I've no home to go to."

"What I 'ave been, an' what I'm goin' to be now, is two very different things," returned Mrs. Pettindund, in her coarse, gin-thickened, over-fed voice, and always with that inimitable ferocity of the true London lodging-house keeper. "I'll trouble yer to pay me twelve-an'-sixpence, too, as soon as you get it; so you'd best go to work to-day, if it's only for the money. I'll have no —— i' my 'ouse, an' so you 'ave it straight."

Mrs. Pettindund, exercising her discretionary powers in the matter of English orthoepy, pronounced the last word "strict." And, having delivered herself thus, she slammed the door to, and turned to go down stairs.

Guided by the irresistible impulse of the moment, Arthur darted down the stairs. As soon as Mrs. Pettindund saw him he beckoned to her to follow him.

With a look of surprise upon her pursy and somewhat bloated face, she ascended to his room, and entered it after him. Arthur closed the door.

"I have been listening to you for the last few minutes, Mrs. Pettindund," he said, with as much of contemptuous anger in his voice as it was capable of expressing.

"An' ye're goin' to give notice?" re-
turned the landlady. "Just what I expected!"

"No, that's not my intention," pursued Arthur. "At all events, not just yet. I only want to ask you whether you really mean to turn that unfortunate girl into the streets in her present state?"

"Why not? Of course I mean it," returned the woman, with a look of the utmost surprise.

"You mean to do so, knowing that she has not a friend in London, perhaps not in the world—you, who are a mother, and living in comfort? You really mean that?"

"And why not, I say? I s'pose I can do as I like in my own 'ouse? Eh?"

Arthur surveyed her for a moment with a gaze of the most extreme disgust and detestation.

"You say—why not?" he said, at length. "But I should like to know, why? Whatever can be your reason for acting so cruelly—so mercilessly?"

"I don't see as I'm bound to give you a reason for all I do, Mr. Golding," answered the woman, with a snarl. "But if yer want to know so much, I'll just ask yer if it's reasonable I should keep a girl in the 'ouse, who can't pay no rent or money for her food, and isn't likely to do for Lord knows how long to come?"

She had modified the impertinence which
at first rose to her tongue, probably remembering that Arthur was very regular in his payments, and gave no trouble.

"And that is your sole reason? For the sake of a few shillings a week you will turn your relative out of doors when most she needs tenderness and care—turn her into the streets to beg, and starve, and very likely die?"

"I've nothing to do with all that. That's her own look out. If she hadn't done what she oughtn't there'd a' been no trouble come to her. She's made her own bed, and she must lay in it."

Not a sign of womanly pity, of human feeling even, could Arthur discern in Mrs. Pettindund's face.

He saw that to appeal to her feelings was totally vain. It only remained to appeal to her avarice.

"How much has she been paying weekly for board and lodging?" he asked.

"Twelve-an'-six, an' little enough, too. That's only because she's a sister's child."

"If I pay you this twelve-and-six each week," said the young man, after a moment's reflection, "will you allow her to remain in the house till she is able to earn her own living again?"

Mrs. Pettindund fell back several paces, in her amazement.

"Then it's you, after all, Mr. Golding,"
she said, "as 'as been an' got Carrie into this scrape? I couldn't have believed it of yer!"

"Keep your insults to yourself, woman!" exclaimed Arthur, with sudden passion, exasperated beyond endurance at having a crime attributed to him which he so much detested.

"And you keep yourn to yourself, Mr. Golding," retorted the other. "Woman, indeed! And why else, I should like to know, should you offer to keep the girl?"

"Never mind my reasons," returned Arthur, abruptly. "I make an offer—will you accept it?"

"D'yer mean what yer say, Mr. Golding?"

"Of course, I do. Be quick and reply. If you are not willing I dare say I can find another lodging for her."

Mrs. Pettindund looked alarmed.

"Well, I don't mind," she answered. "But I must always have it in advance, you know."

"So I suppose. When is Miss Mitchell's rent-day?"

"To-day, Friday."

"Then I shall pay you the next week's money at once. Sit down there and write me a receipt."

Mrs. Pettindund scrawled on a piece of paper, which Arthur gave her, for several minutes. Then she handed it to him.
"Received one week's rent for first floor back for C. Mitchell from Mr. Golding. Also for one week's bord. In advance. 12s. 6d. "Oct. 26. M. PETTINDUND."

"Very well," said Arthur, smiling at the form. "Then, you understand, she is to live here just as she has been doing."

"I understand," said the woman. "Is that all, Mr. Golding?"

"Not quite. You are to promise me that you will not let Miss Mitchell know that I am doing this. You understand? If I find that she knows, I shall cease to pay, and offer to find another lodging for her."

"But what shall I say to her about her rent?"

"Say that you will allow her to repay you when she is able. Anything except the truth."

The idea of representing herself to a lodger in such a very benevolent light, was so completely new to Mrs. Pettindund, that she held her fat sides and laughed heartily.

"Well, well, I'll do as yer wish, Mr. Golding," she puffed. "Is that all?"

"That's all at present."

The landlady left the room and hurried downstairs. That same night she related to all her family that Carrie Mitchell had been led astray by Mr. Golding, that the girl was only about a month off her confinement, and that Mr. Golding had undertaken to pay all
her expenses henceforth. But at the same time she strictly exacted that this latter piece of news should be kept secret from Carrie herself. For she had no doubt whatever that intimate relations existed between the girl and her protector, and that the latter would at once know if his conditions had been broken. Why he should have made such conditions she was wholly incapable of understanding. In truth Mrs. Pettindund's philosophy contained the key to very few problems save those of arithmetic in as far as was required for the calculation of her weekly income.

This matter settled, Arthur flung himself on the bed for a few hours' rest, his whole frame aglow with tremulous delight. To be able to have served that poor, pale-faced, yet beautiful girl, and to have done so, moreover, at the cost of some sacrifice, was a joy of almost fierce intensity. At this time he was earning thirty-five shillings weekly. Out of this he paid four shillings rent, and the remaining thirty-one he had hitherto distributed thus: ten-and-sixpence for food (being eighteen-pence a day), five shillings his weekly subscription at the club, half-a-crown for minor personal expenses; the remaining thirteen shillings were always put aside to form a fund for clothing and unexpected requirements. They just covered Carrie Mitchell's rent, and for the present his clothing
would have to look after itself. In the midst of all manner of delightful fancies, in which he saw the future open before him, rich with he knew not what vague joys and blessings, Arthur fell asleep.

His light slumber was broken by Mark Challenger, who had come home during the dinner hour. He heard Mark pause at his door, listening for any indication of his being awake, and he called to him to enter. Nothing was at this moment more foreign to Arthur's mind than the faintest vanity as regarded his act, but for all that he could not help instantly revealing it to his companion at once. The words overflowed, as it were, from his heart. The secret would not be held down. He felt bound to seek for some associate in his joy.

Mark, who was a man of some fifty years old, smiled curiously as he listened to his young friend's narrative. But at the end of it he looked rather concerned.

"But," he said, "I was just going to propose to you that the club should do this. I fancy we could muster enough weekly. We haven't many calls on us at present. You'll rob yourself. You won't have enough to live on."

"Trust me, Mr. Challenger," answered Arthur, with a boyish gaiety seldom seen in his manner. "I shall take no harm. I wouldn't have allowed the club to do this
for anything. And what's more, I beg you won't say a word of it to any one."

"I'll do as you like, Arthur," returned Mark, with some reluctance. "But it isn't really right that you should have the burden all on your own shoulders. Come, let me pay half. I can afford it easily."

"Not a penny! So we won't talk about it any more."

Shortly after, Mark went to his dinner, looking rather puzzled and grave. Arthur, however, finding it impossible to rest longer, took down one of Mr. Tollady's books and applied himself to study. A piece of bread, cut from a loaf which he kept in his cupboard, was quite sufficient for his dinner. He felt just now as if he should never be hungry again.

The rest of October, and half a dreary November slid rapidly away. Whenever he was at home, Arthur listened at his door for signs of Carrie, but he neither heard nor saw her. At length he was almost tempted to believe that Mrs. Pettindund had in reality fulfilled her threat of sending the girl away, and was now taking his money under false pretences. He accordingly called the woman into his room one day to make enquiries. He learned that Carrie kept herself closely shut up, and would not even come out to eat; all her meals had to be taken to her. This was the truth, as he found the same evening; for
on going into the back yard purposely to look up at her window and discover if her room was lighted up, he saw her form leaning out over the window-sill. On hearing his step she instantly withdrew, and closed the window.

It might have been nearly a week after this, that, as he was lying awake in bed one night, his thoughts wandering he knew not whither, but always returning to the pale, beautiful face of Carrie Mitchell, he suddenly thought he heard a noise, just as if something had been slipped under his door. It was past midnight, and the house had long been in perfect silence. Listening intently he heard another noise, this time in the house below, which he knew to be the slamming of the front door. The absolute darkness of his room would not allow him to see whether anything had really been pushed into his room. He concluded it must have been fancy; perhaps the scratching of a mouse. Yet the slamming of the door had been unmistakable; and who could be going out at this time of night? On the other hand, it might have been somebody entering, one of the Pettindunds, or a lodger out late. These suppositions, however, did not quiet his mind. He was sleepless and uneasy, and an indefinite fear was beginning to oppress his mind, a fear bred, perhaps, of the silence and gloom. From thinking of the noises his thoughts again took their own way, and suddenly con-
ducted him back to Adam and Eve Court in Whitecross Street. He saw himself sleeping alone in the desolate room where his father had died, and, strangely enough, he almost convinced himself that he could hear children's voices, singing,

There is a happy land, far, far away!

He listened till the very silence seemed to throb around him, till he heard the beating of his heart. Then once more his thoughts reverted to Carrie Mitchell, and again came the vague fear. This was intolerable. He jumped out of bed and struck a light, thinking that he would read till he wearied himself out. With the first gleam of the candle something glittered close to the door; it was a piece of paper. For a moment he stood almost terrified; why, he knew not; but his nerves were so excited that the least thing proved too much for his fortitude. Then he picked up the paper with trembling fingers. He saw that it was written upon, and the writing was this:

"I have heard that you have been paying my rent. My aunt is always telling me of my fault, and she has told me of this at last. I can't thank you enough for your great, great kindness; but I can't stay any longer. My aunt and my cousin are too cruel to me; they are always telling me of my fault. I couldn't go without thanking you; I don't know why
you did the kindness for me; no one else has any pity. Please excuse my writing. I never had enough schooling to learn to spell properly. Carrie Mitchell."

The handwriting was extremely bad, so bad in places as to be almost undecipherable, and the orthographical errors were very abundant. I have chosen to correct the latter fault, lest the letter should excite amusement. It excited a far different feeling in Arthur Golding, as he read it by the candle-light. A dead weight seemed suddenly to fall upon his heart and press the very life out of it. He turned deadly cold, and trembled excessively.

The first thought was to dress hastily and run into the street after the fugitive. He remembered the slamming of the door, which he now saw must have announced her departure. But that had been at least half an hour ago; it would be vain to pursue her now. His anguish was unspeakable; only in this moment did he fully realise the powerful hold upon him which his passion had gained. He pressed the letter to his lips and kissed it madly. He read it over and over a hundred times, dwelling upon the words of gratitude to himself with a mixture of delight and pain, which amounted almost to frenzy. "I knew it!" he exclaimed aloud, forced to give utterance to his anguish in sounds. "I knew that she was good as well as beautiful. Curses
on the villain that wronged her, and the base wretches who have driven her from house and home!" The tears rushed irresistibly to his eyes as he noticed the bad writing and spelling. The pathos of the last sentence touched him deeply; he read it over and over again, sobbing as he did so. He flung himself upon the bed, still holding the note in his hand, and buried his face in the pillow. Never before had he suffered from grief so intense.

The candle burned down to the socket, and the room was once more left in darkness. Arthur had sunk into an uneasy sleep, and this, with the intervals of half-consciousness, lasted till six o'clock. At that time it was Mark's habit to call him, and he accordingly came and knocked at the door. At the sound Arthur at once started to his feet.

"Why, you are up!" exclaimed Mark, entering with a candle. "But, good Heavens! What's the matter with you, Arthur? Are you ill?"

Arthur held out the letter, but did not speak. Mark read it, and looked at the young man with curious pity.

"Damn them all," he exclaimed, alluding to Mrs. Pettindund and her daughters. "Whatever will become of the poor thing? But you mustn't take on so terribly, Arthur. Is she so much to you as all that?"

"Oh, can't you see? Don't you know?" cried Arthur. "Couldn't you guess how
much she was to me? It will kill me if I do not find her again!"

Mark, with a look of concern on his wrinkled features, did his utmost to calm the young man by assurances of their being able to discover Carrie, assurances in which, however, he had not himself much faith.

"At all events," he concluded, "we won't stay another day with these abominable brutes. I'll lose a morning's work and go and find rooms for both of us."

"No, no," returned Arthur. "We must stay here, in any case. She may return; most likely she will return. She can have no money at all. Whatever will she do?"

"Yes, yes," returned Mark, "I think she is pretty sure to come back. But don't put yourself out so terribly, Arthur. I can't bear to see you so. Have you been up all night?"

"No," groaned Arthur, throwing himself upon a chair, and covering his face with his hands. "I think I have slept—I don't know—I can't remember anything."

"Now don't, don't, there's a good fellow," said Mark. "Wash your face and come out with me. It's a fine morning for November. Come, that's right. We'll go and have some breakfast presently, and in the meantime we'll talk the matter over."

After some persuasion Mark induced his friend to dress and accompany him out. It
was just becoming light as they issued into the street; but the air was bitterly cold.

"I think we shall have snow," said Mark, looking up to the sky, where stars were still dimly glistening here and there.

Arthur shuddered. He thought of Carrie out in this terrible season, with no one to look to for shelter or a crust of bread.
CHAPTER XII.

CHRISTMAS IN-DOORS AND OUT.

When Christmas Day was as yet a fortnight off, notes of preparation began to sound through the house in Gower Place. There was anxious reckoning-up of resources and eager devising of extra and unwonted means of supply, in order that the season might lack nothing of its due celebration. Let us see how matters stood, what chances there were of the god of gluttony and surfeit being gladdened with an appropriate sacrifice.

In the first place several of the members of the family were enrolled in the "goose club;" that is to say, they had each paid fourpence a week at a neighbouring public-house during the last half year, in acknowledgment of which patronage the landlord supplied each of them with a Christmas goose. Then Mrs. Pettindund and two of her daughters were in the "grocer's club;" that is to say, they had each paid the sum of threepence weekly since the month of May, in return for which they now rejoiced in the receipt of two pint bottles of port wine, of one or two large plum cakes, and of sundry pounds of tea, coffee and sugar. (It is curious, bye-the-by,
how incapable the working classes, as a rule, are of keeping their own savings. The public-house landlord, or the grocer, or the benefit society is quite welcome to a few shillings a week, provided they return occasionally something like a tenth of what they have received). These provisions were all very well as stop-gaps, but in the serious business of the feast they went for nothing. Accordingly, in each of the three weeks immediately preceding Christmas, Mrs. Pettindund had, with the utmost efforts, succeeded in putting aside the sum of one pound out of her regular receipts. That money would go towards supplying joints, and would not be any too much. Then, the eldest Miss Pettindund had paid repeated visits of late to a pawnbroker’s shop at no great distance, in the course of which sundry coats and trousers, sheets and blankets, boots, watches, rings, necklaces, bracelets, &c., had become converted into a very respectable little sum of current cash. But neither was this sufficient, for it must be remembered that the Pettindunds took a serious view of the obligations of the season; anything less than deep carousal from Christmas Eve to the morning of the first day of January would have been desecration in their eyes. Accordingly Mrs. Pettindund herself paid a visit to a familiar loan office, where she procured, without difficulty, on the security of her house and
furniture, the sum of fifteen pounds. And now at length, when this last sum had been carefully put away in the tea caddy, together with the three pounds before mentioned, and the harvest reaped at the pawnbroker's, the family quietly rested till the arrival of Christmas Eve. This pause was absolutely necessary. It was like the diver taking a long breath before he springs into the water, like the athlete reposing his sinews for a moment before he tries an enormous effort of strength.

Early on the eventful day which precedes Christmas the Pettindund family was stirring to some purpose. To-day were to be baked an utterly incalculable number of mince-pies, together with half a dozen very large plum-puddings, destined to be eaten cold on the morrow. The plum-pudding, the weight of which I dare not guess at, was now made and received its first boiling, but that would have to be reboiled on the following day. To-day were to be roasted some six or seven ducks, these also to be eaten cold on Christmas and the ensuing days. The turkey would not be boiled, of course, till to-morrow, and till then were reserved the two ponderous masses of beef, which, on account of their size, would be entrusted to the tender care of the baker. This morning, too, Mrs. Pettindund, happening to be quenching a momentary thirst at the public-house, purchased, as it were, en
passant, a quart bottle of brandy and two similar sized bottles of the beverage known as "Old Tom."

"Now mind yer don't keep my Moggie a waitin' when she comes for the liquor to-night an' to-morrow," was Mrs. Pettindund's parting injunction to the landlord; to which the latter replied with a wink of each eye, and the exclamation, "All serene!"

That evening—Christmas Eve—only some two or three friends were expected. They arrived between eight and nine o'clock, and began by satisfying their hunger. I shall not endeavour to find a name for this meal and those that follow. At this period such purely factitious distinctions were lost sight of by the Pettindunds; the tables were spread, and folks ate, all day and night. This evening, however, the mirth was kept within moderate bounds. All present knew by experience the folly of wasting one's energy in mere preliminaries. To be sure Mr. Pettindund got very drunk and passed the night on the kitchen hearth-rug, but that was a matter of course, an event which occurred so repeatedly that no one took any notice of it. By three o'clock in the morning the house was at rest.

At ten on the following morning—Christmas morning—the earliest guests began to appear. The very first to arrive was Jim Glibbery. Jim was a carter, and as good as
engaged to the eldest Miss Pettindund; so that his arrival excited no particular attention, he being regarded as one of the family. Jim took a seat by the kitchen fire, despatched Moggie for a pot of "six ale," and undertook to watch that the saucepans on the fire did not boil over. When Mr. and Mrs. Tudge and the three little Tudges came in, however, it was a different thing. Here there was a grand reception. The visitors were shown into the best room and all the Pettindunds crowded to greet them. Mr. Tudge was, in fact, a very well-to-do oilman, and so could not be neglected. It was this gentleman's habit to flirt jestingly with the eldest Miss Pettindund, to the vast exasperation of his wife. Accordingly when this object of his affections entered the room, he bestowed a sounding smack upon her lips, and in return received no less sounding a smack on each ear, one from the maiden herself, one from the angry Mrs. Tudge.

"Well, I'm damned!" he exclaimed, without paying the least attention to these marks of favour, "here's Sarah with a new dress on! 'Ev yer wet it, Sarah, eh?"

"Not yet, Mr. Tudge," replied the damsel, with a becoming leer at herself in a glass hard by.

"Then, damn me!" cried Mr. Tudge, "where's that Moggie o' yours? Here, Moggie, young 'un. Run for two pots of
‘four ale’ with a quartern of Old Tom in it! D’ye ’ear? Here’s a two bob piece, and mind yer bring the right change.”

The uninitiated reader must be informed that the “wetting” of a new garment means drinking the health of its wearer. Before many minutes Moggie returned with the prescribed compound in a huge tin can, into which each individual dipped his or her glass till it was all finished. But by this time numerous other visitors had arrived. Prominent among these was young Mr. Spinks, a grocer’s counterman, who had an eye upon another Miss Pettindund. He was always the funny man of the party. As he entered the room he struck an attitude and exclaimed in a stagey voice—

“Bring forth the lush!”

“Ain’t got none!” screamed his Miss Pettindund. “Just finished!”

“So! Then, Moggie, run and get me a ’alfporth o’ four ’alf, and blast the hexpense!”

This jest was received with perfect shrieks of laughter, which continued to be excited by sallies of the same nature till the house was quite full of visitors, and at length dinner was ready. Then indeed for a time there was silence, save for the unceasing clatter of knives and forks and the audible evidences of mastication; it would be difficult to say which of these sounds predominated. The two
masses of beef disappeared like tall grass before the scythe of a sturdy mower. If any guest was incommode owing to Mrs. Pettindund's inability to carve quickly enough, he amused himself with half a duck or a considerable fraction of turkey till his turn came. Those who were so unfortunate as to have been beyond reach of these *entrees*, solaced themselves with mince pies and celery alternately. Poor Moggie's life became a burden to her. Her duty it was to see that every guest's glass was kept filled, in the execution of which she rapidly emptied two large cans, ordinarily used for carrying up water into the lodgers' bed-rooms. When these contained no more she hurried for a fresh supply, and on her return was roundly cursed for having been so long. Mr. Spinks went the length of throwing a turkey's leg-bone at the unfortunate child's head, and was loudly applauded for the ingenuity of the joke.

Gorged into silence, the guests at length leaned back in their chairs, and for a few minutes amused themselves only with picking their teeth. It was the preparation for an outburst of enthusiasm. When, after a few minutes, two Misses Pettindund struggled in under the weight of a mountain of plum-pudding, which had been drenched with brandy and then set on fire, each person in the room arose and gave utterance to a yell
which must have been heard in Tottenham Court Road. The cry seemed to have aided the process of digestion; the capacity of all appeared renewed. By this time ale was no longer in request, but bottles of spirits circulated round the table, and Moggie was at hand with a kettle of boiling water. The scene now baffles description. Every one talked and nobody listened. Most of the men swore, not a few told disgusting stories, a few interchanged expletives or even blows, the women shrieked and squabbled indiscriminately. At this period Mrs. Pettindund, happening to go downstairs into the kitchen, caught Moggie—who had had nothing to eat all day, bye-the-by—in the act of demolishing some fragments of duck which had been left. With a howl of rage and a curse which it would defile the very ink to trace, she caught up the nearest object, which happened to be an empty bottle, and hurled it at the child. Luckily her aim was not very steady, and Moggie was only bruised on the shoulder. With a yell of pain, the wretched child darted past her mother and up into the street, where she waited out of sight till she thought the incident had been forgotten.

And so the short day darkened into night. Shutters were now closed, and blinds drawn down, and two or three rooms prepared for dancing. The fact that these rooms were only about twelve feet square was no obstacle.
The eldest Miss Pettindund then began to hammer a waltz on the piano, which had been carried out in the hall in order that its sounds might penetrate as far as possible, and dancing forthwith commenced. Before long the house seemed to shake and quiver to its foundations. Here a couple, whirling themselves into insensate giddiness, would fall with a heavy crash upon the floor, and two or three other couples stumbling over them, the whole room would become a mass of struggling, kicking and cursing humanity, if the latter word be not grossly inappropriate. At one point two young men became obnoxious to each other in consequence of their attentions to the same young woman. From expostulations they proceeded to recriminations, and thence rapidly to blows. Vain were the efforts of the bystanders to separate them. Unable long to stand, from the excess of liquor they had imbibed, the two rolled in each other's embraces from end to end of the room. They bit, they scratched, they tore, they kicked, had not their wonted vigour been somewhat enfeebled, one of them would without doubt have been killed. In a few minutes their faces were indistinguishable from streaming blood, their waistcoats were rent open, their collars and neck-cloths were scattered to the winds. At length they were both overpowered by pure weight of numbers, Mrs. Tudge, together with three stout women,
fairly falling upon the one, and Mrs. Pettindund with all her daughters actually sitting upon the other. Most of the men present were enraged at this result. Their ferocity was excited, and they longed for the sight of blood. They satisfied themselves, however, with the anticipation of the match being fought out on the morrow when there would be no women to interfere.

Matters had been once more brought to a pacific state, and Miss Pettindund had recommenced to hammer upon the piano, when she suddenly stopped.

“What is it?” yelled half a dozen voices.

“A knock at the door,” was the reply.

“Fire away! I’ll go.”

And she accordingly went and opened the door. Outside in the black street a fierce snowstorm was raging. The girl’s breath was stopped by the blast which blew into her face as she held the door and peered out to see who it was. A tall woman’s figure, clad in a ragged black dress which only showed here and there through the cleaving snowflakes, and carrying some kind of bundle in a large shawl, was all that Miss Pettindund could discern.

“Why it’s a beggar!” she exclaimed, indignantly. “Get away with yer! We’ve enough to do to make our own living, these hard times, without givin’ to beggars. Now, you be orff!”
The woman stepped forward, reaching out with one long, bare arm, and saying something which the fierce blasts of wind and the riot within the house rendered inaudible.

"I've nothink to say to yer!" shrieked Miss Pettindund; and she was on the point of exerting her whole strength to slam to the door, when the beggar actually advanced into the hall.

"Sarah! Don't you know me?" she cried, in a hoarse voice.

As the light from the hall-lamp fell upon her face, Miss Pettindund saw that it was Carrie Mitchell. With a horrified scream she ran into the front parlour, calling out—"Ma! ma!"

"What is it, child?" screached Mrs. Pettindund, in reply. "Ugh! who's gone an' left that front door open? I'm froze to death. Whatever's the matter, Sarah?"

"Oh, my God, ma!" cried the young lady. "Here's a go! Come and look here!"

In a moment, a dozen people had crowded into the hall, and were gazing with astonishment on the tall figure, half white, half black, from whom the melted snow was running like a stream on to the floor.

"What the devil's all this about?" blustered Mr. Tudge. "Here, get you out o' this 'ere 'ouse!"

"Aunt!" cried the intruder, struggling to make herself understood with a voice which
exposure to the weather had made so hoarse and feeble that it could scarcely be heard. "Aunt! let me in!—Let me sit in the kitchen! My baby will be frozen to death!"

"Oh, God! she's got a baby!" screamed all the Misses Pettindund together.

"What! Carrie Mitchell!" exclaimed Mrs. Pettindund. "She a comin’'ere in that way! Well, I'm blowed! Isn’t it like her impudence! Now, come, trot! I've nothing to do with people of your class. Go somewhere else, and don't come to 'spectable 'ouses. You know well enough where to go, trust you! I ain't got nothin' for yer, I tell yer; go!"

One cry of despair came from the lips of the outcast, but even that was scarcely heard amid the yell of approval with which the guests greeted Mrs. Pettindund's determination. The latter, never blest with a very good temper, became a fiend when under the influence of drink. Laying a rude hand upon her niece's shoulder, she pushed her violently into the street, and slammed the door fiercely behind her.

"There!" she exclaimed, "that's how I treat them kind o' people!—Ha, ha, ha!"

The mirth was resumed, and sped on fast and furious. In five minutes the incident had been altogether forgotten. The piano rang out its discordant waltzes, polkas and gallops, and again the very house rocked and
reeled. Soon it was midnight, at which hour Mrs. Pettindund proclaimed that supper was ready. Accordingly the guests once more crowded round the table. Cold provender was there in abundance, and, in addition, the two younger Misses Pettindund had just completed the broiling of some half-dozen pounds of beef-steak, which, smoking in reeking onions, made a dish at which the guests cheered. An hour was spent in the consumption of supper, after which music and dancing recommenced. All the time, be it understood, the supply of liquids had been unfailing. Shortly before the time at which the public-house closed, Moggie had refilled all the largest vessels, the contents of which, it was hoped, would suffice to bring the merriment to an end. And so they did. Towards half-past three, signs of abatement began to manifest themselves; by four o'clock several guests were fast asleep, either on the floor or on chairs. About this hour, the movement of departure began. The party, led by Mr. Spinks, went off arm-in-arm, howling, "We won't go home till morning." Mr. Tudge staggered into the street, with difficulty supported between his wife and eldest child; bevies of young damsels, who were far from quite steady upon their feet, rushed out into the snow-storm with shrieks and laughter which made the night re-echo; the two young men who had fought went off
with the young woman who had been the cause of the combat, and, before they had reached the end of the street, quarrelled again, came to blows, and wallowed together in the snow, whilst the female with them yelled like a vulture over a field of battle. Neither of the gentlemen reached their home that night; for the cries of the woman attracting one or two policemen, they were both dragged away to the police-station, and there allowed to sleep off the effect of their carouse. By five o'clock, there was silence throughout the house of the Pettindunds.

During the morning, Mark Challenger had been visiting some friends, but, as the short afternoon drew on towards night, he returned, and, before entering his own room, knocked at Arthur’s door. Summoned to enter, he did so, but the moment he opened the door, such a tremendous shouting, yelling and screaming sounded from the rooms below, that Arthur started to his feet in sudden anger.

“Good God!” he exclaimed, “this is intolerable! Have they got half the inhabitants of the Zoological Gardens to dinner downstairs? Every five minutes I hear such a hideous roaring that I am almost driven mad. I have a headache to begin with.”

“You may well ask whether they are beasts,” replied Mark. “As I came along the passage, the front-room door was open,
and I never set eyes on such a scene in my life. There must be twenty people there, and I'm quite sure they're all drunk. I had only time to notice one thing, and that was old Pettindund at one side of the table, and another man opposite to him, holding a goose, or something of the kind, by its legs, and ripping it in two between them!"

"Brutes!" replied Arthur, in a tone of disgust. "Do not such blackguards as these give good cause to the upper classes to speak of us working men with contempt? I warrant they waste as much money to-day in guzzling and swilling as would give twenty or thirty poor starving wretches a good dinner for a week to come. Mr. Challenger, I think I must leave this house. I do indeed. If this sort of thing is to go on all through Christmas week, as no doubt it will, I shall be driven mad. I seem to have become irritable of late, and nervous."

"I have thought of the same thing," returned Mark. "I don't feel justified in giving such people money for them to make beasts of themselves with. Shall we look out for another place to-morrow?"

"Let us do so, by all means. I want to get into new scenes. I shall hardly know myself if I am here much longer. I must forget everything that has happened here, and begin anew; that is the only way. I am fast losing all taste for every healthy kind of
occupation. I can't read, I have no pleasure in speaking at the club, or in hearing others speak. This state of affairs will never do. I cannot live so any longer!"

"Have you had any dinner, Arthur?"

"No, indeed I haven't. I haven't felt hungry yet; is it dinner time?"

"It's nearly four."

"Nearly four? Then I suppose I must eat something. Luckily I have a loaf of bread and a bit of cheese in the cupboard here. Come and share with me, Mr. Challenger."

"Thanks; I had my dinner nearly three hours ago."

"You had! Then I must eat alone. And do talk to me about something, if you please. There must be a spider inside my skull, eating up whatever little brains there are, and spinning cobwebs in their place. Look! Gibbon's History has always been one of my chief delights, and yet I couldn't get through half-a-dozen pages to-day."

He ate his bread and cheese for some minutes in silence, then, filling a glass of water, held it up before drinking.

"It's Christmas Day," he said, "and we mustn't entirely forget to keep it. I won't drink your health in wine, Mr. Challenger, lest I should be too much like those shouting fools downstairs. So here it is in water."

"And none the less sincere for that, I
know, Arthur. Do you know what I’ve been thinking? We really ought to go and see poor John Pether to-day."

"So we ought; so we ought. I’m very glad you thought of it. When did you see him last?"

"A little more than a week ago. He didn’t seem very well then; had a bad cold, and wasn’t much in the mood for talking. I’m afraid he’s gradually starving to death."

"I wish to goodness," exclaimed Arthur, "that we could find some way of helping him!"

"Yes, but how is it to be done? Whenever I’ve hinted at it lately, he’s got quite fierce and angry. I don’t know what will become of the poor fellow."

"Come, let’s go to him at once," said Arthur, hastily finishing his meagre repast. "I’m afraid he’s having a terribly lonely day of it."

Accordingly, in a few minutes they departed, hurrying out unnoticed through the noise and confusion of the lower part of the house. At that moment, some half-dozen people were engaged carrying the piano into the passage, whilst in the front parlour Mr. Tudge was standing on a chair, singing in a voice which shook the walls, a song wherein frequent reference was made to "Sairey Jane an’ me," amid unceasing plaudits from the other guests. Once in the street, Arthur and
his companion struggled on in the gathering darkness, bending forward against the fierce storm of wind, sleet and snow. Snow lay thick upon the streets, and clung to the fronts of the houses, filling the corners of the windows, and heaping itself up wherever it could find a hold. Already the street-lamps were lit, and threw their dim light upon the comfortless scene, whilst streaks of pale grey still held a place amid the else uniform gloom of the sky. There were not many people about, and the few vehicles which went past made no noise. It was a desolate evening.

After casting a glance down Gower Street, where the lamps seemed to converge in a limitless perspective, the two friends walked quickly along University Street into Tottenham Court Road, where a walk of ten minutes brought them into Charlotte Place. They both cast a glance at the old shop, over which still stood Mr. Tollady's name, and Arthur sighed. The shutters were up, and the whole house showed no sign of life. Its desolation seemed heightened by contrast with the house next to it, all the windows of which gleamed with lights, whilst from within proceeded a tumult scarcely less than that the companions had left behind them.

"The shop isn't taken yet, is it?" asked Arthur, as they paused for a moment in front of it.
Mark shook his head.
"I suppose its owner has satisfied his base-
nature by getting possession of it," returned
Arthur, "and now he cares little if it rots to-
pieces."

They arrived before the umbrella-mender’s
shop and knocked. After waiting several
minutes without reply, they knocked again.
Again they waited a long time, but at length
heard a key turning in the lock. The door
was partially opened, and John Pether, only
showing his head, asked who had come to
disturb him.

"It is only us, John," said Mark Chal-
lenger. "You’ll let us in, won’t you?"

No sign of pleasure passed over John’s
dark countenance, but he opened the door a
little wider and admitted the two. They
found the shop quite dark, but a candle was
burning in the room behind it, the door of
which stood open. John, who, they saw,
was naked all but his shirt, led the way into
the lighted room, and there got into bed,
whence he had come to open the door. As
he lay with his head resting on the pillow,
his eyes turned up towards the ceiling, his
appearance was almost ghastly. His face
was the colour of parchment, wrinkled and
treased with hundreds of deep lines, and
amid its pallor, the red stain upon his cheek
showed with hideous distinctness. He paid
no attention to his visitors, but lay at times.
shivering slightly, and moving his lips as if talking to himself.

"You're not well, John," said Mark Challenger, after one or two uneasy glances at Arthur. "Have you been in bed all day?"

"Why not?" asked the other, in a hollow voice which sounded almost fierce. "It's a holiday, isn't it. Haven't I a right to take a holiday as well as rich people?"

"That you have, John," returned Mark, endeavouring to soothe his friend. "Aye, and a better right, too. The rich have holiday all the year round—curse them!—but you have to work hard for what little rest you have. And it's the same with Arthur and me, John. You don't think us enemies, do you?"

"Enemies!" exclaimed Pether. "No; you never did me harm."

"You ought to have a doctor to see you, Mr. Pether," put in Arthur. "You look terribly ill."

"Doctor! How am I to pay a doctor?"

"Oh, if you haven't the money just now, Mr. Challenger and I will do that gladly, and you shall pay us back when you can. Do let us do something for you, Mr. Pether. It is dreadful to see you so lonely in your suffering."

"There it is!" cried the man, half rising on his elbow. "There it is! You want to
make a beggar of me, to make me feel my poverty, to know even better than I do that I am a miserable wretch. You'll tell me to go into the workhouse next! I don't want your money. It isn't friendship to offer it me; it only makes me mad—mad—mad! Look here; I have been reading a newspaper to-day. Do you know how many paupers there are in London? About seventy-thousand! Do you want me to make one more? I have held out these many years, and why shouldn't I hold out a few months more? It's coming, I tell you; I know it's coming. I can feel it coming by the trouble in my mind, like I can feel an east wind coming by the pains in my body. A few months and we shall have no lack of food. These seventy-thousand paupers shall be dressing themselves in the garments of the rich, and warming their frozen limbs in the blood which shall stream like water along the streets! I feel it's coming!"

Arthur shrank back before the man's violence, but kept his eyes fixed upon him. In his excitement John Pether had now fully risen, and his almost bald head, his ghastly features, his straggling beard, and his open shirt, which displayed his bony and hairy chest, gave him the appearance of a man in delirium. Neither Arthur nor Mark spoke in reply, and presently he again lay down and fixed his eyes upon the ceiling; and then
his lips began to move, and he spoke as if unconscious of any one being present.

"I have been thinking of my mother today," he said. "She was tried and found guilty of murder, but her execution was put off because she was with child. I was born in prison, and then she was hanged."

Arthur shuddered with horror as he remembered where and when he had heard this before. Mark Challenger sat with his forehead resting on his hands, and showed no sign of attention. Probably he had heard it too often. After a few minutes of silence, John Pether continued to speak, still as if to himself only.

"I was brought up in the workhouse, and suffered cold, and hunger, and cruelty. Then they made me apprentice to a master who starved and beat me. One day he caught me taking a halfpenny which had dropped on to the floor. I thought I could buy a piece of bread with it, and the temptation was too strong. He had no mercy, and I was sent to prison. Oh, God! When I came out, I begged for days, sleeping at night in dark archways or in cellars with thieves and murderers. I prayed men to give me work, but they only threatened me with the gaol. One night I went to drown myself. It is a rare death, drowning. You feel the water, at first deadly cold, grow warmer and warmer, and a kind of music in your ears
lulls you to sleep. I thought I might have drowned myself in peace, but I was saved and forced back to life."

Arthur listened eagerly to hear more of this strange and terrible history, but the speaker's lips ceased to move, and he was silent. So quiet was the house, that shouts from the revellers on the opposite side of the street could be distinctly heard. Arthur sat watching the breath of the sick man, which rose in a cloud through the freezing atmosphere of the room. At length Mark Challenger rose.

"And you won't let us do anything for you, John?" he asked.

John Pether started, look round, then shook his head with an impatient frown.

"Then we will leave you," said Mark.

"Try to sleep John; you are tired. Do you sleep well at night?"

There was no reply, and Mark beckoned to Arthur to leave the room. The latter was obeying, with much inward reluctance, when John Pether suddenly turned on his side and tried to check him with his hand.

"You remember what you swore?" he asked, in a hollow voice.

"I do," replied Arthur, pressing the other's hand.

"The time is coming," returned Pether.

"A few months yet, and our chance will show itself. I feel it coming."
He then once more averted his face as the two friends left the room and passed out through the dark shop.

"Aye," said Mark Challenger, sadly, as soon as they were in the street, "I fear John Pether's time is coming. He has had an awful life. Perhaps it wouldn't be much kindness to try and make it longer."

"He seems mad," returned Arthur. "It is scarcely safe that he should be left alone."

"Poor fellow!" sighed Mark, and they walked on in silence.

They had taken a short cut which brought them into Tottenham Street. The night had grown still more boisterous, and the snow lay very deep upon the ground. Hurrying arm-in-arm in the direction of Tottenham Court Road, they shortly passed by the Prince of Wales's Theatre. As they were going beneath the portico Arthur saw what appeared to be a woman's form crouching far back in the darkness against the steps to one of the entrances. Touched with pity at the thought of a human being preparing to spend a terrible night in such a place, he pointed her out to Mark, and they stopped. The woman, seeing them, rose to her feet and staggered forward. She carried something in her arms, pressed against her bosom. In a hoarse voice, expressive of agony unutterable, she begged of them to give her enough to pay for a night's lodging.
“Is that a child you have in your arms?” asked Arthur, unable to discern clearly in the darkness.

The woman stepped out of the shadow of the portico. A gleam from a gas-lamp on the other side of the street illumined her form, as she lifted her shawl and discovered a young child’s face. As she did so, Mark Challenger plucked Arthur by the sleeve.

“Don’t you see who it is?” he whispered hurriedly.

Arthur looked into the woman’s face, and at once in the ghastly pale and worn features recognised the face of Carrie Mitchell. She had no covering to her head but a coarse handkerchief, tied around it. Her long dark hair hung all dishevelled down her back, wet with melted snow. Her feet were bare, save for a pair of loose slippers which were no protection against the snow. Her countenance displayed no sign of intelligence; it was fixed in an unutterable expression of pain. She stood pointing at her child and muttering.

“Is your name Carrie Mitchell?” asked Arthur, overcome at once with emotions of anguish and joy.

She nodded, but continued to point to her baby.

“It is dead,” were the words that struggled from her frozen lips.

“Good God!” exclaimed Arthur. “What
shall we do? Mr. Challenger! What shall we do? Where can we take her?"

As he spoke the girl tottered and would have fallen had she not supported herself against one of the columns of the portico. Arthur sprang to her side and encircled her with one arm.

"There is a coffee-house at the end of the street," said Mark. "Perhaps they have a room to let there. I will go and see."

"Quick! Quick!" cried Arthur. "She's dying."

The girl seemed indeed either to be dying or to have fainted. Arthur placed her in a sitting position upon the steps at the theatre door, and commenced to chafe one of her hands. The other hand was still fixed tightly around the form of the dead child. She had once more opened her eyes with a deep sigh when Mark came running back.

"I have got a room," he cried. "Let us be quick. Can she walk?"

With difficulty the two supported her between them. It was a very small coffee-house, and at present empty of customers. Only a young girl was to be seen, who, with wide-staring eyes, watched the three enter, and led the way to a small bedroom on the first floor. The two friends were obliged to carry their charge up the stairs; she was quite incapable of walking up herself.

"We should have done better to take her-
to the Middlesex Hospital," said Mark, as they laid her, apparently lifeless, on the bed.

"No, no!" cried Arthur, "she shall not go to the hospital as long as I possess a penny. Now will you fetch a doctor? Where does the nearest doctor live?" he asked, turning to the girl who had accompanied them upstairs.

Information of a vague kind was given, and Mark hastened off on his errand.

"Light a fire here at once," cried Arthur. "Have you any spirits in the place?"

"We mayn't sell 'em," replied the girl.

"Will you run to the nearest public-house and get me some brandy?"

"I daren't leave," returned the girl. They're all out."

With a hurried exclamation Arthur took a glance at the form on the bed, and himself darted down the stairs and out of the house. In three minutes he returned with a small bottle of spirits. Hot water was forthcoming, and, whilst the girl was lighting the fire in the grate, he tried to administer a little of the mixture. But Carrie was now perfectly unconscious, and her teeth were fast set. Arthur was forced to content himself with chafing her hands and arms, and bathing her forehead with the brandy.

It seemed as if Mark had been gone an hour already. Arthur fretted and fumed with impatience, and his sufferings, as he saw
no sign of life returning to the girl's face, were intense. He was on the point of himself running in pursuit of aid when he heard footsteps upon the stairs, and Mark appeared, followed by a middle-aged man. The latter examined his patient forthwith, and looked serious.

"We had better remove her at once to the hospital," was his first remark. "Will one of you fetch a cab?"

Mark posted off again at his best speed.

"She is alive, isn't she?" asked Arthur, in an agony of apprehension. "Can't you bring her back to consciousness?"

"She is alive at present," replied the doctor, "but I shouldn't like to promise that she will be so long."

As he spoke he disengaged the dead child from her arms with some trouble.

"The child has been dead several hours," he remarked, laying it by the side of the mother. He then proceeded to attempt the latter's restoration. In a minute or two he was interrupted by a shout from the bottom of the stairs. The cab was waiting.

Arthur and the doctor carried the patient down stairs, and placed her in the cab. After that Arthur returned to fetch the dead child. With a hurried charge to his friend Mark to pay whatever might be wanted for the use of the room, and then to follow to the hospital, he jumped in with the doctor and they drove off.
Mark Challenger followed almost immediately, and found Arthur in a waiting-room, where there was a huge fire, waiting till he should hear at least that Carrie had shown signs of life. They sat side by side, occasionally speaking to each other in a low voice for more than two hours. At the end of this time they heard that the patient was doing well. Satisfied perforce with this gleam of hope, and having obtained permission to make an inquiry in the morning, Arthur left the hospital, and walked home with his friend.
CHAPTER XIII.

A TOWN IDYL.

Carrie lay ill in the hospital for nearly three weeks. Many a night did Arthur wander around the building till long after the clock had sounded twelve, ever and again pausing to gaze up at the window of the ward in which he knew she lay, picturing to himself, amid the silence of the dark streets, the beautiful face of the suffering girl lying with its background of rich dark hair upon the uneasy pillow. He liked to think of her as asleep, drinking deep of sweet and healthful rest after the misery of homeless days and nights, and the long agony of starvation in the streets. He never availed himself of the visitors' days to go and see her. It was extremely unlikely that she remembered his face, and to introduce himself to her by the memory of by-gone trouble would be the mere selfish gratification of his wishes. He knew that she continued to improve, and that was sufficient.

In the meantime he had succeeded in making an agreeable change in his occupation. The night-work to which he was subject in alternate weeks had grown extremely irksome
to him, and was producing an evident impression upon his health. Accordingly, he had seized the opportunity of a tempting advertisement by a celebrated firm of printers, and had been happy enough to obtain an excellent place in their office, where his work would only occupy him in the day-time, and where he would earn more than hitherto. He began to work at the new place only a few days before Carrie was ready to leave the hospital. For the latter event he immediately began to make preparations.

He and his friend Mark had kept their resolution of relinquishing their abode in the house of the Pettindunds. At the end of their week’s notice they had taken one large room in Huntley Street, at no great distance from Gower Place, where they for the present lived together, thus affecting a piece of economy very agreeable to both. In the same street Arthur now proceeded to look for a small furnished bedroom. Before long he found one precisely to his taste, at a low rent, and this he forthwith besoke, saying that its occupant would come and take possession of it in a day or two.

Arthur was now somewhat puzzled how to proceed. He knew that Carrie was in a deplorable condition as regards clothing, and scarcely saw how he could make good the deficiency. He was troubled, moreover, to discover some plan by which he could make
an offer of his assistance with suitable delicacy and then instal Carrie in her room without fear of endangering her reputation; the latter, especially, being a task which the fearful and wonderful complication of our social delicacies and pruderies renders always somewhat difficult. The world is so very slow to believe that connections other than of a certain sort can possibly exist between young people of different sex who see each other in private; it is so easy for corrupt imagination to picture situations completely familiar to themselves, so extremely difficult for them to conceive the existence of virtue and self-respect. After much reflection Arthur concluded that there was but one easily-practicable course; he must take his landlady into his confidence.

Mrs. Oaks was, as far as Arthur had hitherto been able to judge, a kind-hearted and motherly woman, not at all of the lodging-house-landlady type. She had several children, whose clean and respectable appearance had already struck Arthur as unusual under the circumstances, and as she had been a widow for several years she had no one but herself to consult upon a point of delicacy. She was, moreover, the only woman whom Arthur had at present any relations with. Arriving at a decision after a consideration of these various points, the young man re-
quested an interview with Mrs. Oaks. In plain, straightforward terms he explained to her Carrie's helpless and friendless position—suppressing, of course, all mention of the circumstances which had led to this—and declared his interest in her. He stated that he had already taken a lodging for her, and then went on frankly to declare the difficulties in which he found himself, and to request Mrs. Oaks' assistance, should she be willing to give it. The good woman had listened with some signs of doubt and misgiving to the commencement of this narrative, but, as Arthur progressed in it, his frank, generous expression of face and the hearty earnestness of his voice and manner won her over to fully believe in his good intentions. Possibly Arthur's handsome features had not a little to do with the eventual conquest. Always agreeable to look upon, they became, especially to a woman, quite irresistible when lighted up with emotion.

"What I should ask you to do, then, Mrs. Oaks," said Arthur, "if you should be willing to help me, would be this. I should like you to go and see Miss Mitchell, to judge from her appearance what clothing will be necessary for her, and then to buy it for her and let her have it. I have no idea of the cost of such things. I can spare five pounds, however; do you think that will be sufficient?"
“Well, sir,” returned Mrs. Oaks, “it’ll, at all events, get her enough to go on with.”

“Very good. Then I understand, Mrs. Oaks, you will not mind undertaking this troublesome business for me?”

“Lord, no!” returned the worthy woman. “I never grudge a little trouble if I see as I can do real good to a body. I’m sorry to say it isn’t so often I have it in my power.”

“I should, of course, wish you to consider the time you employ for me together with the rent at the end of the week,” added Arthur, after some little hesitation.

“Pooh! no such thing!” cried Mrs. Oaks. “Time’s not so over val’able to me as all that. If I go and see the girl, my eldest daughter ’ll buy all the clothing, and be glad of the job. She likes shopping, Lizzie does.”

“Then there is one more thing to speak of, Mrs. Oaks, and I have done troubling you. Would it be too much to ask you to let me see Miss Mitchell in your parlour for half an hour before she goes to her own lodging? As I told you, she scarcely knows me, and some sort of explanation will be necessary.”

“You’re welcome, sir,” returned the landlady, after a moment’s thought. “I have confidence in you.”

“I am glad to hear you say so, Mrs. Oaks,” said Arthur. “I can never sufficiently thank you for your kindness; I can-
not, indeed! When you see Miss Mitchell in the hospital, please do not mention my name. Say merely that a friend has sent you—a friend that will come to take her away on Saturday."

"Well, well," said Mrs. Oaks, laughing quietly. "I'll do as you wish. You mean to be kind-hearted, Mr. Golding. It isn't everyone as 'ud do all this."

"And it isn't everyone that would give such kind help to a stranger as you have promised, Mrs. Oaks," replied Arthur. "Once more, I thank you sincerely."

Everything went well, and at three o'clock on Saturday afternoon Arthur had a cab waiting before the Middlesex Hospital to take away the convalescent. As he stood in the waiting-room expecting Carrie's appearance, his heart beat fiercely in his bosom, he was almost choked with the varied emotions which struggled for the ascendancy within him. And when at length he saw her coming towards him, tall, graceful, still deadly pale, her thick hair done up tastefully yet simply, the plain garments which Mrs. Oaks had purchased for her giving her a fresh and neat appearance, her step evidently feeble, her eyes wandering in curious expectation, the rushing flood of deep tenderness and passion all but welled up from his heart into his eyes. He could not speak, but beckoned to her to follow him, and led her to the cab.
They drove off towards Huntley Street. Seeing the expression of doubtful recognition with which his companion regarded him, Arthur bent forward and asked if she remembered him.

"I—I think so," she stammered. "You lived at aunt's. I think it was you who paid my rent, wasn't it?"

"And who had a note put under my door when you went away," said Arthur, smiling.

The recollection of her sufferings, blended with her physical weakness and uncertainty of mind, was too much for Carrie. She burst into tears.

"Where are we going?" she sobbed.

"Where are you taking me? Not to aunt's?"

"No, no, we will not go there," said Arthur, taking one of her hands gently, and chafing it like the hand of a suffering child. "Are you afraid of me? Dare you trust me?"

But still she continued to sob, and made no reply. Arthur feared she would faint, and was glad when the cab at length stopped. There was a cheerful fire burning in the parlour, and Mrs. Oaks was there ready to pour out a cup of tea. After a few kind words to Carrie, the good woman went away and left the two to themselves.

Arthur waited till Carrie had in some de-
greeted herself, and then, sitting opposite her on one side of the fire-place, he told his story in a kind, soothing voice. He related how he had seen her suffering and had felt his sympathy keenly aroused, how this feeling had become yet stronger when on the evening of Christmas Day he had found her dying in the snow; how he had her taken to the hospital, and how, now that he hoped she would before long be quite restored to health, he desired nothing so much as to be allowed to serve her. He spoke not a word directly of his passion; natural delicacy withheld him. He merely represented himself as a sincere friend, and in conclusion he begged that she would not hesitate to use the room he had taken for her, and to accept of whatever assistance it was in his power to give.

She listened throughout as though she were in a dream, appearing to only half-understand what was said to her. When Arthur's voice had been silent for some minutes, she said, at length, with much hesitation—

"But how can I pay you back? I am too weak to work yet, and even when I do work I shall never get money enough to pay you back. I—I don't know that I understand what you mean?"

A vague look of apprehension marked her countenance. Arthur divined her thought
from this and the manner in which she spoke. He hastened to reassure her.

"And yet it is very simple," he said. "I want to be a sincere friend to you, that is the whole of the matter. As to paying me back, I never dreamt of it; that is out of the question. All I beg of you, is that you will let me see you occasionally and ask you whether you are comfortable. That is all."

"But why do you do this for me?" she continued to ask, looking dazed and still a little apprehensive. "You know so little of me. Why do you do it?"

"If I promise you that I will answer that question in a month's time, will that be sufficient?" asked Arthur in return.

The girl looked still more puzzled.

"But you will do what I wish, won't you?" urged Arthur, scarcely restraining himself from falling before her and declaring that he loved her madly. "You will let me provide for you, for the present? You won't refuse?"

"If I do refuse," returned Carrie, after a moment's thought, "I must go back to the workhouse. I have nowhere to go. I have no money."

"Then you accept?" cried Arthur, springing to his feet in delight.

"You are very kind," said Carrie, looking with a smile through her tears. "I don't know why you do it all for me. As soon as
I am strong I can earn my own living, but till then—"

"Not another word!" interrupted Arthur. "And you will let me see you sometimes? You will let me meet you somewhere in the evening, and see how you get on?"

"You are very kind to me," stammered Carrie, as her only reply.

"Then that's all. Now you shall go to your own lodging. I have arranged with them to wait upon you and buy whatever you want for your meals. You will be able to do that for yourself soon, but not just yet. I have one or two other things to get you, and those I shall send as soon as I can. But however shall you employ yourself? Do you like reading?"

"A—a little," replied Carrie, with hesitation.

"I must look for a few books then. Mrs. Oaks, that's my landlady here, is going to walk to the house with you. She's a kind woman, and you needn't be afraid of her. She only knows that you are a friend of mine. You won't have far to walk, only a few yards. And you will be careful of your health, won't you? Whatever you do, don't go out if it is cold or wet. I know you will take care; that is one of your ways of paying me back, mind."

He spoke thus standing, and with his hand on the door. It was agony to him to main-
tain such a calm and distant tone when his heart was burning in the desire to discharge itself of endless passion. He opened the door, but instantly closed it again.

"Your window looks into the street," he said. "If you see me waiting opposite about one o'clock on Monday, will you put your hat on and come to speak to me for a moment. I shall only come if it's fine."

"Yes, I will," she replied. "I will put my hat on so as to be ready, and watch."

"Only one thing more, then," said Arthur, taking a small purse from his pocket and handing it to her. "Let me know as soon as that is empty. You will, of course, pay the rent and everything else yourself. And now, good-bye for the present."

He held out his hand, and Carrie took it timidly. She seemed even yet to be uncertain as to his intention, and her dark eyes viewed him curiously and askance. He then opened the door and called Mrs. Oaks. That lady came up with her bonnet on, and at once set out with Carrie.

As the door closed behind them, Arthur hastened upstairs to his room, from the window of which he could watch them to the end of their walk. When at length Carrie and her guide completely disappeared, he sank upon a chair with a sigh, half of gladness, half of regret, and relapsed into deep thought.
As yet Mark Challenger knew nothing of all this. Arthur had feared that he would insist upon sharing in the charitable work, and he wished to have the whole delight of it for himself. But, now that it was completed, he saw no reason for further secrecy, and Mark was accordingly informed of everything the same evening.

"And what is to be the end of all this, Arthur, my boy?" he asked, gravely, as soon as the young man had completed his story.

"Who can tell?" returned Arthur, with a merry laugh.

"Who is to tell, if not yourself?"

"Ah!" sighed Arthur, "if it only depended upon me—"

Mark regarded his young friend with a shrewd look of inquiry.

"Well?" he asked.

"Why, cannot you guess?" cried Arthur, laughing. "Carrie would be my wife to-morrow."

"Your wife?" returned the other, as if relieved. "Well, well, there's no great harm in that. The world seems to have treated you fairly well, on the whole, Arthur; let's hope you'll never be worse off than you are now. I had a wife once, and a daughter. The one starved to death, and the other—well, well, I mustn't think of all that. It'll make me like poor John Pether, and I seem to have
been getting quieter in my mind of late. I can wish you nothing better than a good wife, Arthur, after all. But don't be in a hurry, my boy; don't be in a hurry."

Arthur laughed, and, humming a merry air, sat down to one of his favourite books.

And where was the memory of Helen Norman—of that sweet ideal which had once allied itself with all there was of noblest and most aspiring in Arthur Golding's nature? It had passed away with the use of those noble faculties and the aspirations towards which they tended; passed away, that is, as far as any active influence was concerned, though it still lingered as a sort of vaguely remembered joy—a background of dim and fading gold to the rich, warm image of the reigning delight.

The responsibilities Arthur had taken upon his shoulders were the reverse of light. He was now compelled to become, in all that concerned his personal expenditure, an absolute miser. Luckily, during the last few months, he had saved every penny he could, always in the hope of being one day able to devote them to Carrie's needs; but these resources were now already drained, and it was only by the exercise of the most pinching economy that he could hope to keep Carrie in those circumstances of comfort which, in his eyes, befitted her.

It was not only her food and lodging which
had to be paid for, but he must succeed in saving a little each week towards the purchase of clothing for her. As to her ever returning to the daily drudgery of the workroom and earning her own living, that he was determined not to suffer. Sooner would he divest himself of everything save the extremest necessaries.

Under these circumstances, there was one step he felt bound to take at once. He must relinquish his membership of the club. And this caused him the more pain because the club had of late been showing unmistakable signs of decadence. In fact, whilst no new members had joined it since Arthur, no less than six of the old ones had recently fallen off.

Enthusiasm, strongly sustained by example, can do much; but even Will Noble’s firmness and eloquence had failed to keep in their posts all those whom his strong persuasion had collected around him. The men were but unenlightened working men after all, and the temptation to find other uses for their money than that of self-denying charity were too strong for their unfortified natures. So it was with some sense of shame that Arthur attended the club meeting on Sunday, knowing that it would be his last.

When it was over, he took Will Noble’s arm and asked the latter to walk a short way
with him. Then he related the circumstances which would lead to his defection.

Will listened without any sign of annoyance.

"If only the other men could know all this, Golding," he said at length, "you could still stay with us, for you are doing nothing but what it is our aim to do. But that, of course, under the circumstances, wouldn't be agreeable. Well, I suppose we must lose you, old fellow; but that's no reason why you and I shouldn't meet and have our chats as usual, is it?"

"None in the world. I am only afraid lest you should think less of me for having given up useful work for private ends."

"If the ends were selfish," replied Noble, "I should certainly think less of you, Golding, I confess. But when I know they are the opposite, I should be a fool if I did so. I value your friendship more than ever for this bit of kindness to that poor girl. I have a plain and downright way of looking at things, and it has always seemed to me that the man who saves one fellow-creature, however poor and miserable, from a life of degradation, deserves the utmost respect. We have such a lot of windy clamour nowadays about doing good, but still so precious little of real individual effort. You talk of making this girl your wife. Well and good. You are the best judge in such a matter;
and you ought to know whether she will suit you. Marry her by all means, and make a good, honest woman out of her. If you succeed in doing that, I can tell you, Golding, the thought of it will bring you happiness to the end of your life."

They walked on for a little distance in silence.

"Bye-the-by, Noble," said Arthur at length, "I wonder you have never thought of marriage yourself. I know very well you have plenty of use for your money, and that you do as much good as a man in your position possibly could do. But don't you think of getting a home of your own one of these days?"

Will turned away his head, though the darkness would not allow his features to be observed.

"What if I had thought of it for a long time, Golding?" he said, with a nervous twitch of his arm, which Arthur felt.

"Why, I should be glad to hear it," returned the latter. "I suppose I mustn't venture to ask if the person is decided on?"

"Yes, you may ask." said Noble, with a laugh. "She has long been decided on; but is not so ready to come to a decision herself."

"What! Is it possible that a girl can hesitate to accept you, Noble—you, such a fine, generous, handsome fellow?"
"Hush, hush, hush!" interrupted the other, laughing still. "You make me feel uncomfortable. For all those imaginary qualities your friendship gives me, Lucy doesn't seem to care much for me. Well, well!"

He sent a sigh from his broad chest which showed that Will had sorrows of his own to occupy him occasionally, in addition to those of other people.

Arthur was silent, wondering curiously who this Lucy could be who played the coquette with such a man as Will Noble. His thoughts were interrupted by the latter's voice.

"Will you come with me some day, Golding, and see Lucy?" asked Will.

"I should be delighted," cried Arthur. "Does she live anywhere in this neighbourhood?"

"No, in the East End. We'll go some Sunday, if you like."

Very shortly after this they parted, Will taking his way homewards with a gloomier face than he usually wore, Arthur returning to dream all night of Carrie. He did not go home without first walking past the house in which he had established her and looking up at the window. It was quite dark; no doubt she was in bed and sleeping.

With many a fervent thought stirring in his heart, he sighed and walked slowly away.
At all events, he would see her on the morrow.

Monday was frosty and fine. Punctually to his time, Arthur stood on the side of the street opposite to Carrie's window. For a moment he saw her face there, and a minute afterwards she came out of the front door and walked quickly towards him. He thought she looked stronger already, and flattered himself that the slight glow on her cheeks was due to pleasure at seeing him. They walked side by side out of Huntley Street towards the more quiet neighbourhood of the adjoining squares.

"And how have you occupied yourself since I saw you on Saturday?" asked Arthur, stealing side glances at her face as they walked slowly on. "Has the time seemed long?"

"No, very short," was the reply.

Arthur had hoped she would have said the opposite. He felt that the time had so crept with himself.

"Indeed? What have you been doing, then?"

"Oh, I have been putting my things in order, and doing some sewing."

"Sewing? But had you needles and cotton?"

"Oh, yes. I went out on Saturday night and bought them."

Arthur felt a sudden feeling something.
like anger rise within him. She had gone out alone on Saturday night? He could not bear the thought. He would have liked to be able to lock her up from all the world, so intense was his passion, and, consequently, so acute his jealousy.

"Went out!" he cried. "But I begged you never to go out except when the sun was shining. I wonder you didn't catch your death of cold."

"Oh, I wasn't out long. I only went into Oxford Street and back."

"And how do you like your room?"

"It is very nice. I am very comfortable there. And the people are so nice. When I go to work again I'm sure I shall stay there."

"When do you think you will be able to go to work?" asked Arthur, inwardly irritated at the matter-of-course way in which she spoke.

"Oh, in a week or two. The landlady's eldest daughter goes to work, and she says she can get me a place with her."

Arthur fumed in his heart. Carrie seemed already quite changed from what she had been on Saturday. She was making friends already, and plans in which he had no part. He had never suffered so acutely in his life.

"Shall you be glad to get to work again?" he asked, with something of pique in his voice.
"I shan't be glad," replied Carrie, with a slight sigh. "But what else can I do?"

Arthur's equanimity was restored. After all she was dependent upon him. He had it in his power to relieve her from a disagreeable life.

"Well, well; we won't talk about that just yet," he replied, gaily. "What you have to do now is to get well as fast as possible. You are dreadfully pale yet."

They walked about the squares, talking thus, for nearly an hour. Then Arthur, looking at his watch, found that he had no time to lose. As it was, he had sacrificed his dinner for the sake of this conversation.

"Oh, must you go?" asked Carrie, in a rather sad voice.

"I must indeed. I must be at my work at half-past two. I shall have to run."

"And when shall I see you again?"

"Perhaps in two or three days," said Arthur, with a carelessness which he purposely affected.

"Not before that?" asked his companion, with evident disappointment. "I suppose you are very busy?"

"Well, suppose I said the same time tomorrow, if it is fine?"

"Oh, yes; I will be ready."

"But mind; if it rains or snows I shall not come. And you will promise me not to go out again to-day?"
"Yes."
"Then good-bye."
"Good-bye."

Arthur pressed her hand for a moment in both his own, and then forced himself to walk quickly away. At the first corner he turned. Carrie was still standing where he had left her, looking after him. He waved his hand, and went on with joy in his heart.

The fortnight which succeeded was one of internal perturbation such as paled Arthur's cheek, and gave his eye a restless, feverish look. With one or two exceptions, which he forced himself to make, he saw Carrie every day. Out of fear lest their regular appointments should be noticed from the house, he arranged that they should always meet at a certain spot in Torrington Square. Here he was, day after day, punctual to his hour, though it always cost him a hard walk and the sacrifice of his regular mid-day meal. He accustomed himself to satisfy his hunger with a few biscuits, which he ate as he walked, and often on reaching the square he was ready to faint with exhaustion. In his scrupulous delicacy and care for Carrie's reputation, he would not meet her after dark, but many a night he paced up and down Huntley Street, looking up at her window. As a rule, her light was burning there, and he imagined her sitting with her book or at her sewing. But once or twice her window
was dark all the evening, and he tortured himself with divining all manner of explanations, good and evil. On the following days he endeavoured to discover where she had been, though he never ventured to tell her plainly why he asked. Perhaps she would say that she had been sitting with her landlady, and with this explanation he had to satisfy himself, though jealousy seemed to eat at his very vitals.

Notwithstanding his frequent requests that she would not leave the house at night, she several times showed in conversation that she had done so. But as she became more accustomed to his character, Carrie grew more careful, and, even if she had transgressed his rule, took care not to let him know it. Arthur pressed his injunctions upon her ostensibly on account of her health, but in reality because it was agony to him to think of her walking about the streets without his company and protection. This occasional disregard of his wishes was unutterable pain to Arthur. He said to himself that she ought to do as he desired, if from mere gratitude alone. But these momentary irritations would rapidly pass away, and be succeeded by a long conversation, in which each strove to give the other pleasure, and succeeded. It was a dreadfully transparent business, this affectation of mere friendship between the two.
But Arthur had resolved that, till the month was up, he would not transgress these bounds, hard as it was to keep within them. He argued with himself that it was only fair to let Carrie become well acquainted with him before he asked her to become his wife. To present himself as a lover so soon would have appeared too like taking advantage of the gratitude she owed him. He was resolved that he would treat this friendless girl with as much consideration as if she had been the child of wealthy parents. In what else, he asked himself, does the character of a gentleman consist but in this according of courtesy to such as are not able to exact it?

The commencement of the third week was marked by a painful incident. On Saturday night Arthur had walked past Carrie’s window as usual, and had been troubled to see no light there. She had told him that she occasionally sat with the landlady and her daughter, and possibly she might be with them now. But an evil genius seemed to whisper suspicions in the lover’s ear. He resolved to watch the house for a time, and see whether she entered her room. It was now seven o’clock, and a raw, disagreeable evening, but weather was nothing to him. The fire that ceaselessly burned within him forbade his suffering from the inclement air. For several hours he walked perpetually up and down the street, and round the ad-
jacent streets, never daring to be out of sight of the window long, lest she should, during that time, enter her room and go to bed. As the evening went on, his anxiety increased. He worked himself up to fever-heat. Several times he had almost resolved to knock at the house-door, and ask to see her, but this his delicacy prevented. Was it possible she had gone to bed without a light? That supposition could not satisfy him. Eleven o'clock came, and, with a heart overwhelmed with bitterness, he was on the point of going away and demanding an explanation on the morrow, when he saw two female figures emerging from the darkness, and walking in the direction of the house he was watching. From the first sight he felt sure that one of these was Carrie. He recognised her tall figure and her walk, though it was impossible to discern features. The two were laughing and talking together also, and he persuaded himself that, as they drew near, he recognised her voice. Drawing back against the houses to escape notice, he saw them stop before Carrie’s house and enter. He had not been mistaken.

He went home and crept shivering into bed, but closed not an eye all night. Should he kill himself at once?—that was the question that rang unceasingly through his brain. Better to do so than suffer the internal torture that must be his lot if incidents such as
this were frequent. Where could Carrie possibly have passed the whole evening? Once or twice during that night of agony, he determined that he would continue to assist her till she could support herself, and then say good-bye to her for ever. A resolution likely of fulfilment! Between three and four, whilst Mark Challenger was sleeping peacefully in his bed, which stood at the other end of the room, Arthur rose and dressed; then paced the room till day-break in perfect silence. He felt that another such night would either kill him or make him raving mad.

He was to meet Carrie at ten o'clock on the following morning, and, if the weather proved fine, they were to take a walk. But the dawn which broke on Arthur’s eyes, as he sat in the cheerless room looking impatiently through the window for the first trace of daylight, was anything but promising. Thick, low, leaden-hued clouds kept back the morning till a late hour, and when first the street began to be visible, it was through a mist of hopeless, heart-breaking rain. The roofs opposite reflected the earliest rays of dawn in the dull, distorting mirror of dripping slates; the smoke which here and there began to show itself at the tops of the chimneys, faltered and sunk in a lifeless waver towards the ground; the feet of the passers-by on the pavement below, and the wheels of the
occasional vehicles, went splash, splash, splash, revealing to the ear a waste of melancholy pools and snow of old deposit trodden and rained into sump; the cries of the milkmen seemed to come from afar off through deadening layers of fog.

As soon as he saw Mark Challenger beginning to stir and wake, Arthur, despite the weather, quickly put on his hat and hastened out. To have been spoken to, questioned, sympathised with, would have been intolerable. He was in no mood for any company but his own. He walked past Carrie's house. The blind was down at her window, as at every other window, and the sight of it roused within him so fierce, yet so unreasoning an excess of bitterness, that he wrung his hands together, and could scarcely hold his voice from crying aloud. He hurried on, walking he knew not whither, unconscious of everything save the slow progress of time. He had eaten nothing since noon on the preceding day, but if he at all felt the pangs of hunger, he did not recognise them. By degrees it grew lighter, but still the thin, hopeless rain came down from the leaden sky. Already it was nine o'clock. It was impossible for it to clear up that morning.

Ten o'clock came, and Arthur was at the place of meeting, feeling sure that Carrie would not come, and yet unable to return home. He had waited half-an-hour, and was
on the point of moving slowly away, when he saw, at the further end of the square, a female form under an umbrella coming towards him. In a moment he saw that it was Carrie, and he ran to meet her.

"I suppose you didn't expect me?" she asked; then added, without waiting for an answer, "How queer you look in the face! Aren't you well?"

"I have had a bad night," returned Arthur, every limb trembling from physical weakness and the force of his emotions.

"I'm sorry to hear that. You shouldn't have troubled to come a dreadful morning like this."

"I always keep my promises, however difficult it may be," replied Arthur, with a steady gaze into her face. "But you don't look well. Did the landlady keep you up late again last night?"

"Oh, no," replied Carrie, carelessly.

"Did you pass the evening alone?" asked Arthur, affecting a like carelessness, though his eyes never moved from the girl's face.

"Yes. It was dreadfully lonely. I was sewing as usual."

"In your own room?"

"Of course. The people were all out somewhere last night."

Arthur stood aghast. Though he had already once or twice been tortured with a vague suspicion that Carrie was not always
truthful to him, he had never caught her in so direct an untruth.

"Then you never went out of the house?" he asked, still endeavouring, though with poor result, to hide the interest he had in the matter.

"Why should I?" returned Carrie, biting her lower lip, and slightly averting her head. "You know you told me not to go out after dark."

Arthur could restrain himself no longer. For a moment a fierce combat raged within him, then he spoke in a low, trembling voice.

"In that case, Miss Mitchell, how was it that I saw you enter the house with one of the landlady's daughters at nearly midnight?"

Carrie blushed involuntarily, but only for a moment. Then her eyes met Arthur's full gaze. She stammered, but made no articulate reply.

"Where were you last night?" pursued Arthur, still holding her with his eye. Her colour went and came, and suddenly she spoke with angry emphasis.

"Well, I was at the Oxford Music Hall, Mr. Golding, if you must know. And what harm? Am I never to move out of my own room? I wish you had to live all alone as I do, you'd soon be glad of a little amusement!"
Arthur's passion caught fire at the spark. He replied with trembling lips, cheeks deadly pale, and a tongue that stammered from anger.

"What harm? A great deal of harm that you should go where I do not wish you, where I will not have you go—at least, as long as you accept my help!"

He could have bitten off his tongue the next moment for speaking such words. But they were beyond recall. Whilst yet they were ringing in his ears, he saw Carrie turn passionately from him, and walk hastily away.
CHAPTER XIV.

SHADOWS.

Cursing himself for a hot-tempered fool, and a mean-spirited one to boot, Arthur walked round and round the adjacent streets for several hours. For a while, indignation at Carrie's behaviour struggled for place against anger at his own lack of gentleness and patience.

Oh, was it not cruel of her to act so towards him? Surely, surely it was only some momentary whim that had taken possession of her. He could not think she would deliberately plan to deceive him.

But then came the hot blast of jealousy to keep up the fire of indignation. She had gone out on Saturday night, and, above all places, to a music-hall, the resort of the most abandoned of both sexes, a place in which no woman who valued her reputation would care to be seen. Was it she who had proposed to go, or was it her companion, the landlady's daughter, who had persuaded her? In either case she was culpable.

But this mood soon spent itself, giving way to one of apprehension and self-reproach. He had allowed her to leave him in anger,
and who could tell what step she might take? The suddenness with which she had departed disclosed a hasty, impulsive temper, such a one as might lead to all manner of unconsidered follies.

Perhaps she would forthwith leave her lodgings and go where he had no means of discovering her. Clearly he must follow her to the house and see her there. Impossible to wait till to-morrow on the chance of her meeting him as usual. The anguish would be too unendurable.

He had turned in that direction, and was just entering Huntley Street, when, as he hurried on with his eyes on the pavement, he was stopped by a sudden hand upon his shoulder.

Looking up, he saw the short, stout figure of Mark Challenger before him.

"Where on earth have you been, Arthur?" he asked. "Why, I have been hunting for you all the morning. Are you ill, boy? Whatever is the matter with you?"

This sudden encounter seemed to recall Arthur to a sense of his physical suffering. He was wet to the skin, and exhausted with hunger. His eyes wandered over Mark's face as if he had not yet clearly recognised him.

The latter quickly seized his arm, and, in spite of a feeble resistance, forced him to walk quickly home. In their room Arthur found
a bright fire burning, and the table spread
with the simple breakfast they were in the
habit of taking together on Sundays. Mark
compelled him to change his clothes, after
which the warmth of the fire, combined with
the internal action of a strong cup of coffee,
soon restored him to physical strength.
As soon as he felt once more master of
his faculties he rose and was going out
again, with some muttered excuse, when
Mark once more caught him by the arm and
detained him.
"Now look here, Arthur," he said, "for
the present you don't budge. Dash my but-
tons! What's the good of my being some-
thing approaching three times your age, if
I'm not to exert a little friendly authority
now and then? There's something amiss, I
can see. Now can't you just tell me what it
is, and ease your mind?"
Arthur felt it would indeed ease him, but
he hesitated.
"Have you and Carrie been quarrelling?"
pursued Mark. "That must be it. Now,
tell me what's the matter, there's a good
lad."
Thus pressed, Arthur did at length confess
that there had been a little disagreement. To
confess the whole, even to Mark, he felt to
be impossible. Though the object of his love
might be lowered in his own eyes, he could
not bear that others should see her faults.
But he said enough to make Mark partly suspect the truth, and the latter shook his head and looked grave.

Then, by dint of questioning, he got Arthur to reveal the greater part of the circumstances, proceeding after that to reason with him, and to try to show how great a need of caution and deliberation there was in a matter which probably concerned the happiness of two lives.

But Arthur was an impatient listener, and scarcely replied to his friend's words. It was impossible for him to rest whilst he was yet uncertain about Carrie's movements. Very shortly he found an opportunity of leaving the room, this time unopposed by his friend, and hurrying into the street, he took the direction of Carrie's abode. Arrived opposite to it, he was rejoiced to see her face at the window. He motioned with his hand, and the face disappeared. A few minutes afterwards she herself appeared at the door, and walked across the street to join him.

It had now ceased raining, though the day continued as dark as ever. As Carrie drew near him, Arthur saw that her eyes were red, as if from crying, and immediately his heart went out to her in a gush of forgiving tenderness.

He took her hand as though they had not already met that morning, and together they walked on in silence.
"Will you forgive me for my angry words this morning?" asked Arthur, first breaking the silence in a timid voice, and without venturing to look into his companion’s face. "I did not know what I was saying."

"Will you forgive me for doing what you didn’t wish me to?" was Carrie’s low-voiced reply. "I am very sorry. I will not do it again."

They were near their favourite place of meeting in Torrington Square. At the moment only one or two people were in sight at the farthest end of the square, and the distant roll of vehicles was the only sound which broke the stillness of the dull January afternoon.

"Carrie!" whispered Arthur, grasping her hand as he walked on, and feeling that it trembled.

She looked into his face with a sweet smile and a questioning expression. He went on in low and eager tones—

"Will you give me the right to guard and protect you, not only from a distance, as a friend, but by your side, for the rest of your life? Will you be my wife?"

"Do you care so much for me?" asked Carrie, the sweet smile mingling with a light blush, so that she looked yet more beautiful.

"I have loved you ever since I knew you, dearest," he returned. "Can you care for me a little?"
"I can love you with all the love I have," she replied. "Is that enough?"

The word "love," uttered for the first time by her lips, smote upon the finest chords of Arthur's being, and left them throbbing with an intensity that almost deprived him of consciousness. He could only once more press her hand, when several people appeared turning the corner of the square, and coming towards them.

What had these innocent strangers done that Arthur should curse them in his heart with the bitterest of curses?

All the afternoon, all the dull, sad, dripping afternoon, till the lamplighter began to hurry on his blessed mission along the sloppy streets, did the two wander side by side, absolutely ignorant of the places they passed; listening to nothing but the sweet utterances of each other's lips, seeing nothing but the glad looks upon each other's faces. The day of unutterable gloom and misery had set in such an outbreak of glorious light as neither had ever known. What was it to them that the rain had recommenced with the coming night, that a chill, bitter wind had begun to rock the leafless boughs in the middle of the square? Other pedestrians hurried by with nipped faces and wet clothes, eager to reach the warmth and comfort of home; but for these two there was no home possessing anything like the
attraction of these hideous streets. When it rained they opened their umbrellas; but, finding them inconvenient, Carrie soon closed hers and made Arthur's suffice for both, availing herself of the chance to slip her little gloved hand delicately through Arthur's arm, where it was immediately pressed warm and tight against his throbbing heart.

Consideration for his companion was the only feeling capable of arousing Arthur from his delicious trance. At length he insisted upon her going home, and she, after much resistance, consented.

They were close to Huntley Street and to Carrie's abode when they passed the pitch-dark entrance to some mews.

"We had better say good-bye here," said Arthur. "Then you must run on home quickly."

He drew her gently beneath the archway, pressed her closely to his heart and kissed her.

"Will you always love me so, Arthur?" whispered Carrie, sighing with fulness of joy.

"Always, darling," he replied, fervently; "as long as I have breath."

They then parted, Carrie running quickly home, Arthur turning to walk by a round-about way. He did not feel ready to face his friend Mark at once. It was nearly eight
o'clock when he at length entered, and he was glad to find Mark absent. In his excitement he had forgotten that the latter would be at the club as usual.

That night Arthur said not a word of his happiness. On the following day he found time, however, to visit the Registrar's Office and to give notice of an intended marriage between himself and Carrie. Neither of them had parent or guardian, so the fact that they were both under age was of no consequence. At the end of three weeks the marriage could be performed.

Wholly wrapped up as he was in one subject, Arthur would have been in danger of entirely forgetting the aims and aspirations which had so lately been the sole guides of his life, had it not been for the friendship of William Noble. Greatly as Arthur could not but admire the latter, he had grown of late almost to dread the frequent meetings with him and the long, earnest conversations into which Noble never failed to draw him. The secret of this uneasiness lay in the feeling that Noble's daily life contained a reproach, a protest against the habit of mind into which his friend had fallen of late, though Noble's own words and manner implied nothing less than a reproachful feeling. William's life was one of steady, patient, unremitting toil; toil, moreover, thoroughly fruitful for himself and those with whom he came into con-
nection. The son of parents who had earned their daily bread by the coarsest manual labour, and who had been unable to give him any education beyond mere reading and writing, he had so wrought his way upwards by virtue of persistent labour, vitalised by a source of innate ability, that now, at the age of twenty-four, he found himself possessed of knowledge quite wonderful for a man in his position of life, and, what is better still, of an unflagging energy ever ready to operate in obedience to the dictates of a sound, healthy judgment, and a most tender, sympathetic, charitable heart. In the presence of this man Arthur felt his genius rebuked.

On the Saturday preceding his last week of surprise, Noble proposed that they should spend the following afternoon in a visit to the house of the young lady whom he had spoken of as "Lucy."

"But shall I be a welcome visitor?" asked Arthur, who could not help regretting a walk with Carrie. "A perfect stranger, you see—"

"Oh, you don't know them," interposed Noble, with a smile. "Mr. Venning, that's Lucy's father, is always glad to see me and any friend of mine. I have often spoken to him of you, and he is anxious to see you."

"But shall I not be in your way?"

"If you were likely to be, Golding, I shouldn't ask you," replied Noble, calmly.
"As I have told you, Lucy regards me—as yet—with nothing but friendship, and I always go there as a mere friend. Do you care to come?"

"Oh, yes, I shall be very glad indeed to come," replied Arthur, ashamed of his hesitation as soon as he saw that a refusal would really pain his friend.

So the same evening he was obliged to inform Carrie that he should only be able to spend the Sunday morning with her, and not the whole day, the reason being that he was obliged to visit a friend.

"A friend! What friend?" asked Carrie, sharply.

Arthur, to avoid further questioning, explained the circumstances in detail.

"And you would rather go to see strange people that you know nothing about than spend the time with me?" said Carrie, in a tone of annoyance.

"You know I would not rather do so, Carrie," replied Arthur. "I have explained the case to you. You must see that it is impossible for me to refuse."

"I don't see that it is. You could say that you were engaged. I can't do without you all day to-morrow. You must write and say you find you have another engagement."

"It is impossible to do so, Carrie," urged Arthur, in his quietest tone. "It would be unkind, it would be rude to do so."
"I'm sure I think it's much ruder to leave me," retorted the girl, separating herself some feet from his side as they walked along together. "You are getting not to care about me at all. That's the second thing you've refused me in one day. I asked you to take me to the theatre to-night, and you refused, and now you refuse to see me for a whole day."

"You shouldn't speak so, dearest," urged Arthur, drawing close to her again. "I don't refuse to see you for a whole day. I shall be with you all the morning, if it's fine; and then, if you like, I will see you when I come back at night. And as to the theatre, you know why I don't wish to take you. I can't afford to pay for a good place, and I don't choose that you should crowd in with a lot of vulgar people; it isn't nice."

It was not the first time that Arthur had adopted this tone in speaking to Carrie. In his attempt to exalt her nature above the level on which it had hitherto moved, he, the democratic agitator, the ardent sympathiser with the most miserable of poverty's victims, waxed quite aristocratic in his conversation. In his heart he would rather have seen Carrie fall into the most complete snobbishness on the subject of riches and rank than continue at rest among the sympathies with vulgar life with which she had grown up. At present his passion was too earnest to permit of his
playing the pedant, but already he looked forward to their marriage as affording him an opportunity of educating Carrie and rendering her, from an intellectual point of view, more worthy of his devotion.

After the above conversation they parted with rather less of their usual fervour.

"When shall I see you to-morrow morning, Carrie?" asked Arthur.

"Oh, I don't know," replied the girl. "The usual time, I suppose."

"Of course if it isn't fine you mustn't expect me."

"Very well. You will have all the more time with your friend."

So saying, Carrie walked off, and Arthur returned home miserable to the heart's core. Luckily it was fine on the following morning, and something like a reconciliation was patched up between them, but still Carrie could not part from her lover at noon without speaking with some bitterness of his "friends," and Arthur was not sorry to look forward to Will Noble's society as a relief from these petty troubles which yet gave him such exquisite pain.

As it was a clear, frosty afternoon the walk towards the East End was agreeable. Noble was in excellent spirits, probably because he was about to see Lucy, and talked in his most cheerful vein all the way. In reply to Arthur's request for some infor-
mation with regard to Mr. Venning, he told him that the latter was by trade a flute manufacturer, but not in very flourishing circumstances. His wife had been long dead and he had one child, Lucy, who was employed as a "fitter-on," or in some such capacity, in the show-rooms of a large East End millinery establishment. Hereupon he diverged into a eulogy of Lucy, speaking with delicate appreciation of her beauty, her modesty, her cleverness. Arthur was rather amused to see his friend under this new aspect, but at the same time it gave him pain. How unlike was his own passion to this calm, deep, persevering affection.

On arriving at the shop they of course found it closed, and knocked for admission at a side door. Mr. Venning himself replied to the summons, and forthwith led them into a small parlour. He was a middle-aged man, short in stature and with his left foot distorted, so that he walked very lame. In face he was somewhat care-worn, but his features wore a singularly sweet and amiable expression. In his eyes was a rather absent look, indicating that he was addicted to reverie. When he spoke his voice was low and musical. He wore neither beard nor moustache, the absence of these increasing the female cast of his countenance. His dress, though very plain and showing signs of poverty, was fastidiously neat, and Arthur
observed that his hands were of a wonderful delicacy.

"Mr. Golding," said Noble, as they all took seats in the little parlour, "is an intimate friend of mine, and I felt sure you would thank me for bringing him to see you. He has the same interests at heart as ourselves, Mr. Venning."

"I am always rejoiced to see any of William Noble's friends," returned Mr. Venning, looking at Arthur with his captivating smile, and speaking in a very quiet tone, which was still cordial. "And especially on Sunday afternoon when I have leisure to sit quietly at home. Next to the society of my good friends, Mr. Golding, I have no pleasure so great as that of sitting quite still and in perfect silence. Since two o'clock I have been holding a very pleasant conversation with the fire, its cracking seemed to make answers to my thoughts. How fond I am of the stillness of the Sunday! This street is never noisy, but on Sunday not a sound reaches this parlour."

In the low, sweet tones of the speaker's voice there was something singularly soothing, something which invited irresistibly to the same perfect calm of which he spoke. In making a reply, Arthur insensibly lowered his voice to the same pitch. Loud speech in this silent little room would have appeared profanation.
It is wonderfully quiet, indeed," he replied. "One could almost imagine he was in a little country town, such remote, peaceful places as I have read of, but, I am sorry to say, have never seen."

"Does it make you think of that?" inquired Mr. Venning, with a quick look almost of gratitude. "Now that is the very feeling it awakens in me. And that is why I love it so, this Sabbath stillness, for it reminds me of the village I was born in. That was a little place close by the River Don in Yorkshire. You have read Scott's 'Ivanhoe,' Mr. Golding?"

"Yes, O yes!" replied Arthur. It was one of the first books he had read with Mr. Tollady, and the mention of it awakened pleasant thoughts.

"Then you will remember Conisboro' Castle. It is now a grey old ruin, and within sight of that I was born. Our house was a very small one, and was quite overshadowed by a huge elm. Hush! I can almost fancy that I hear the low whistling of its leaves on a midsummer afternoon, when (lazy boy that I was) I used to lie at full length in the warm sunshine on the floor of my little bedroom, and read. I think it must have been those afternoons that gave me my liking for quiet solitude."

He sighed slightly, but the next moment broke into a quiet laugh.
"It is a happy thing for me," he said, without looking at either of his companions, "that I can think of those dear old times with nothing but pure delight, though I know so well that I shall never leave London again. It used to be my ambition to work hard and make money—just enough to live upon, no more—and then to go back to my native place with Lucy and, in our Father's good time, be buried in the dear old churchyard. But now I know it is impossible, and, as I am sure that everything that happens to us is for the best, I do not sorrow over it."

There was silence for a few moments, broken at length by Noble.

"I suppose Lucy has not returned yet?" he asked.

"No," returned Mr. Venning, looking up with a smile. "She is still at the Sunday-school. But she cannot be more than a quarter of an hour now. How does the club get on, William?"

Noble shook his head with a rather sad smile.

"There are only five of us left," he replied. "Several have left of late from unavoidable causes, but others, I am afraid, have grown tired of the work. The other societies, which have amusement and politics for their chief aims, have attracted several."

"Well, well," said Mr. Venning, "perhaps it is too much to expect. There are not
many that have your steady courage, William."

"Or perhaps it would be more correct to say," remarked Noble, "that the others are not so strongly impressed with the necessity of the work as I am."

As he spoke a light knock was heard at the outer door. Mr. Venning was to his feet.

"You recognise her hand, William?" he said, smiling. "She is so gentle, I don't think she could reconcile herself to strike even the door hard."

And he left the room, laughing in his quiet way. The next moment a light step sounded in the passage, and Lucy Venning entered the parlour. Very charming she looked in her simple walking attire, and the start and blush with which she noticed the presence of strangers were delightfully natural.

"You didn't tell me you had company, father," she said, turning to Mr. Venning with a tone of playful reproach.

"I quite forgot to mention it," replied her father, with a smile to the two young men. "One of my visitors, I fancy, is known to you, Lucy. This is Mr. Golding, a friend of William's."

Lucy offered her hand to Noble, and bowed to Arthur in a pleasant way.

"It is a very long time since we have seen
you, Mr. Noble," she said, without venturing, however, to meet his eye directly.

"I do not venture to disturb your Sundays too often," was Noble's reply, whilst the accession of colour to his cheek bespoke the pleasure with which he heard Lucy's regret.

"I'm sure it is anything but disturbing us," returned Lucy, affecting to have trouble in unbuttoning her glove. "We have scarcely another friend who comes to see us. You have of course asked these gentlemen to take a cup of tea with us, father?"

"I omitted to ask them, I am afraid, dear," replied Mr. Venning, whose eyes had been wandering with something of troubled interest between his daughter's face and that of William Noble. "But it was only because I took that for granted."

Noble and Arthur exchanged glances.

"We mustn't ask too much of your good nature, Miss Venning," said Noble.

"No, and therefore you mustn't ask Lucy to excuse you," put in Mr. Venning, with a quiet laugh. "Run up and take off your hat and cloak, Lucy, and I will see that the kettle boils."

With a smile at the visitors and a glance of affection at her father, Lucy left the room. In a very few minutes she returned, and proceeded to cover the round table with a white cloth. As she was engaged in placing the
tea things, the ringing of a bell in the street outside broke the silence.

"There is the crumpet-man," said Mr. Venning; "we must levy a contribution upon him this evening, Lucy."

A few minutes after Lucy was engaged in toasting crumpets, and, when they were done, all drew up to the table. The room was now the image of home comfort. The heavy green curtains had been drawn close before the window, and though the bright blaze of the fire rendered it almost needless, a large oil lamp stood in the centre of the tea-table. The furniture of the room was extremely simple, but Arthur had already noticed that in one corner stood a small piano, and he wondered whether father or daughter played. On the side over against the fire-place stood a very high, old-fashioned chest of drawers, the top covered with a white cloth, upon which were ranged a few carefully-kept volumes. On the mantel-piece, which was also high and old-fashioned, stood several quaint figures of wood. On the walls were several pictures, all representing quiet country scenes—without doubt the choice of Mr. Venning. As Arthur seated himself at the table, he experienced a sense of delightful comfort such as he had never known. It was the first time in his life that he had enjoyed the sight of such a truly home-like picture.

"A good class this afternoon, Lucy?"
asked Mr. Venning, as he passed the cups of tea to his visitors.

"Better than usual, father," replied Lucy. "I hadn't the least trouble with any of the children. Poor Nellie Wick was unable to come again. Her mother sent a note to say her cough was much worse to-day."

"Poor child! you must go and see her, Lucy."

"I did as I came from school; and Mr. Heatherley walked with me. Mr. Heatherley says he is very much afraid there is no hope for her. I fancy, father, if it were not for him, poor Mrs. Wick would have been in the workhouse long since."

"Mr. Heatherley is the clergyman whose chapel we attend, Mr. Golding," said her father. "He is a most excellent man, a man who does endless good in the neighbourhood, and all in the quietest way."

William Noble kept his eyes fixed on Lucy's face whilst her father was speaking, and for a moment she met his glance. Her face reddened slightly, and she turned away under the pretence of filling the tea-pot. There was a short silence which Noble himself broke.

"Does the lady you told me of—I forget her name—still continue to teach her evening school?" he asked, addressing himself to Mr. Venning.

"Miss Norman?" returned the latter.
“Oh, yes. And what is more, she has taken quite a fancy to Lucy. She makes quite a friend of her.”

Arthur started as he heard the name pronounced, and with difficulty concealed his surprise. Mr. Venning noticed something of it, and interpreted it into a desire for explanation.

“Miss Norman,” he said, accordingly, “is a very wealthy young lady, who spends nearly all her time in efforts to help the poor, Mr. Golding. She is a friend of Mr. Heatherley’s, and I think it was very likely at his suggestion that she began free evening-classes for young girls who have never been taught anything in their lives. She has nearly twenty pupils, hasn’t she, Lucy?”

“Twenty-one, father.”

“And Lucy is her assistant teacher,” went on Mr. Venning. “I should like you to hear Lucy speak of her as she sometimes does to me. You would both be as curious to see her as I am.”

“Indeed, father,” said the girl, earnestly, “she deserves everything I say, and much more. I am sure there can be very few rich ladies like Miss Norman. If there were, there would not be half so many poor. And she is so unpretending, you would think she was not at all above the poor girls she teaches. They are all passionately fond of her.”

Lucy paused suddenly, and blushed to find
the eyes of all three fixed upon her. In her enthusiasm she had spoken with a boldness very unusual in her. Arthur, who listened with eagerness to every word that was said, feared lest the conversation might turn to another topic, and was the first to speak.

"Does this lady live in the neighbourhood?" he asked, addressing Lucy.

"Oh, no," replied the latter, "she lives somewhere in the West End, and comes to this part nearly every day. I am afraid, father, she is doing too much. I have noticed her growing paler and more worn-looking of late. She has worked for half a year now without any rest. But nothing will keep her back when she thinks she can do good. You know, father, one of Mrs. Willing's children has got the small-pox, and all the neighbours are afraid to go into the house; but Miss Norman goes every day. I heard Mr. Heatherley begging her to leave the care of Mrs. Willing to him, but she said that her visits seemed to cheer the poor woman, and she could not bear to keep away."

"She would make Mr. Heatherley a good wife, wouldn't she, Lucy?" asked her father, smiling.

Lucy was then putting a piece of sugar into her father's tea-cup, and it suddenly dropped from the sugar-tongs into the saucer. She blushed and seemed embarrassed for a reply. Noble, whom none could exceed in
delicacy of apprehension, relieved her by introducing some other subject. Tea over, all made a circle round the fire, and Mr. Venning rendered the little circle cheerful with his conversation. He kept up a quiet, genial flow of talk which pleased at once by its agreeable naïveté and the unmistakable desire to please which manifested itself in every word. At times he was witty, at others he showed a sincere spirit of piety which excited involuntary reverence in his hearers. But of whatever he spoke, his words indicated the calm, clear mind, a sweet resignation flowing from the belief that everything in this world is arranged for the best, though the reason for so much suffering and wrong is often difficult to acknowledge.

"You are not going to send us away without any music, Mr. Venning?" asked Noble, when the clock upon the mantel-piece showed that it was nearly nine.

Mr. Venning looked with a smile towards his daughter, then turned to Arthur.

"You must not think, Mr. Golding," he said, "that because I earn my living by making musical instruments, I am a skilled musician. I now and then play a little, however, on the piano there, and Lucy sings to my accompaniment. William always tells us he has pleasure in our music, and with him we have no feeling of hesitation. But I scarcely know whether you—"
SHADOWS.

Arthur interposed with a request that they would by all means give him the pleasure of hearing them, and Mr. Venning accordingly took his seat at the piano. Lucy took a place at his side, and sang several simple hymns, compositions which, like the overwhelming majority of English devotional hymns, had no special merit, but which acquired the interest they naturally lacked by virtue of Lucy’s sweet voice and earnest feeling. Neither she nor her father used a book, and the performance had a perfectly spontaneous character which removed it altogether from the reach of criticism. William Noble’s face, as he listened to Lucy’s singing, expressed deep emotion. Arthur noticed that, after watching the girl’s features for a few minutes, he turned his eyes away and appeared to suffer keenly.

Very shortly after this the two friends left, Arthur receiving a warm invitation from Mr. Venning to repeat his visit as soon as possible. He walked on by Noble’s side in silence for some time; both too occupied with their very different thoughts to exchange words. Noble was the first to break the silence.

“I never can say whether these visits give me more pleasure or pain,” he said. “If I were to act upon my present feelings I should never go there again; but I know very well that to-morrow I shall have nothing but pleasant remembrances, and desires to see them both as soon as possible.”
"But why do you feel otherwise at present?" asked Arthur. "I really could see nothing but the utmost friendliness in Miss Venning's manner to you."

"Friendliness; aye, that is just it, Golding! It is real friendliness—but nothing more."

"Do you suppose, then, that she is attached to anyone else?"

"I will ask you another question," returned Noble. "Do you remember her dropping the lump of sugar at tea?"

"Yes! but what has that to do with the matter?"

"Ha, ha! You need a lover's eyes and ears to note those things, Golding. Why, it was at the moment when her father had said that Miss Norman would make the clergyman a good wife."

"And—you suppose she is in love with the clergyman?" asked Arthur, in surprise.

"I feel sure of it. I have noticed her too closely and too frequently to doubt it."

"But what sort of a man is this Mr. Heatherley?"

"I never saw him, but I understand that he is young, handsome, energetic, good-hearted; all, in short, that a man can be to please a girl of Lucy's disposition."

"But—excuse the question, Noble—wouldn't he consider Miss Venning rather below his station?"

"Lucy is below no one," said Noble, de-
cisively; “and what’s more, Heatherley is the man to recognise that. He is a Radical in politics and social views, and if he fell in love with the poorest girl on earth he would see nothing to prevent his marrying her.”

“But this Miss Norman,” urged Arthur—“isn’t that her name?—Mr. Venning seemed to hint at some connection with her? Do you think it possible?”

“I have not the least idea. Neither Miss Norman nor Mr. Heatherley is known to me. But I suppose it is not unlikely that a girl of her sympathies should make such a man her ideal. However, as I tell you, I know nothing of the matter.”

“I dare say you wouldn’t be sorry,” said Arthur, “to hear that Heatherley was disposed of in that direction?”

“I cannot say,” returned Noble, holding his head up as he walked. “I love Lucy Venning with all my heart, and should be glad to make her my wife because I feel sure she could marry no one who would be more devoted to her happiness. But if I find that her love for Heatherley continues, and that my position is hopeless, then I shall be glad if her love is returned. It would be selfish to feel otherwise.”

There were thoughts at that moment in Arthur’s heart which made this high-minded utterance sound to him like a rebuke. Their talk was on other matters during the rest of
the walk, and when at length they separated, Arthur said—

"Bye-the-by, I think I haven't told you that I am to be married to-morrow?"

"Told me!" returned his friend, in astonishment. "Of course you never did! What the deuce do you mean, Golding, by stealing a march on me in that way?"

Arthur laughed and held out his hand.

"Where is it to be?" asked Noble, who returned the other's grasp.

"Oh, at the Registry Office, of course. As you know, I am no great friend to the Church."

"And when will you introduce me to your wife?"

"When you like," said Arthur, carelessly. "We shall live in my present quarters, as Challenger insists on turning out and getting another place. He's always a good-hearted fellow."

"Well, every wish for your happiness, Golding," said Noble; "you deserve the utmost.

Upon this they parted, and Arthur walked slowly homewards with a vague heaviness at his heart.
CHAPTER XV.

AMENITIES OF FASHIONABLE LIFE AND FAITH.

The Waghorns returned to England towards the end of October, and forthwith took up their residence in a stately house in the neighbourhood of Regent's Park. The first intimation Helen Norman received of their presence in London was a personal visit. One day they drove up together in a brougham, and, as Mrs. Cumberbatch happened to be out, Helen had to receive them in solitary grandeur. It was not an enviable task, for, considering the terms on which she had last parted from Maud, she might reasonably be in doubt as to how she should behave towards her.

The commencement of the interview was formal. Mr. John Waghorn, respectable as ever, was profuse in expressions of interest. He feared that Miss Norman was not so well as when he had last seen her; certainly she looked somewhat pale. He feared she over-worked herself in her never-to-be-sufficiently-lauded philanthropic undertakings. Helen, in her turn, manifested absorbing interest in her visitors. Maud was looking wonderfully
well, and Mr. Waghorn appeared to enjoy something more than his usual robustness.

"And Mr. Gresham?" inquired the gentleman. "Have you heard from Mr. Gresham lately, Miss Norman?"

"We heard from Berlin about a fortnight ago," replied Helen. "Mr. Gresham was then in the enjoyment of good health."

"Would you believe it?" pursued Mr. Waghorn. "We became slightly acquainted, at Venice, with a gentleman who is one of Mr. Gresham's intimate friends, and who had left him not a fortnight before in Germany. That was the first intimation we had of his being on the Continent."

"Did he leave suddenly?" asked Maud, who was lolling back in a low easy-chair, going lazily over the patterns of the carpet with the end of her umbrella. She spoke in a somewhat affected and languid tone, and without looking up.

"Rather suddenly," replied Helen, somewhat at a loss for a reply.

"Ah, I feared his health would give way," put in Mr. Waghorn. "I sincerely hope, Miss Norman, that you may not experience a similar misfortune. Indeed you are too devoted. You do not consider yourself sufficiently."

"You don't live altogether alone, I suppose?" asked Maud, glancing up for a moment at Helen's face.
“No,” replied Helen. “An aunt of Mr. Gresham’s, Mrs. Cumberbatch, is living here now. I am sorry to say she is out at present.”

The conversation dragged on in this manner for some ten minutes, when Maud suddenly turned round towards her husband (she had been sitting with her back to him), and said—

“Don’t you think it would be as well to go on into Oxford Street, and call for me here when you come back?”

“Possibly it might, my dear,” replied Mr. Waghorn, with a slight cough and a quick glance at Helen. “You might perhaps ask, however, if Miss Norman is at liberty just now?”

Helen affirmed that she was entirely so.

“In that case I might do as you propose,” said Mr. Waghorn. “I shall perhaps be a little more than half-an-hour. I will say goodbye for the present, Miss Norman.”

And he withdrew with much grace of manner. The moment the door had closed upon him, Maud suddenly jumped up from her seat and, with a laugh of delight, flung her arms round Helen’s neck.

“Come, come and sit down by me, you dear old beauty!” she exclaimed, kissing her friend and laughing heartily between the kisses. “Here, on the sofa. Don’t be afraid of spoiling my dress. It was all I
"I don't know whether to call you a friend or an enemy, did you ever feel safe in speaking to Mrs. Waghorn?" "You, you," cried the other; "call me Maud. Let Mrs. Waghorn go to—the old gentleman, as far as we two are concerned, Helen. That name is a mere outward garment I put on occasionally for show. I like these sorts and scenes when I have company. If you love me, Patras."

"Helen, your friend, speaking, was made. All fears, and once
could do to keep from bursting into fits of laughter whilst that man was by—it was so absurdly comical to see you receiving us with that stately dignity which becomes you so well, and to hear you talking polite small-talk in a way which didn’t become you at all! Now confess, you didn’t know whether to treat me as a friend or an enemy, did you?"

"It is true," returned Helen, "that I scarcely felt safe in speaking to Mrs. Waghorn as I had once been used to talk to Maud Gresham. I can’t tell you how glad I am, Maud, to hear you speak in your old way."

"Yes, yes," cried the other; "call me Maud. Let Mrs. Waghorn go to—the old gentleman, as far as we two are concerned, Helen! That name is a mere outward garment, something I put on occasionally for show, as I do these silks and satins when I go out to pay visits. If you love me, Pallas, never a word of Mrs. Waghorn!"

Helen was pained to hear her friend speaking thus. It confirmed old fears, and once more clouded her countenance.

"Are you not happy in your marriage, Maud?" she asked, quietly.

"Happy? Oh, as the day is long! I have enough to eat and drink, a good house to live in, what I like to wear, and carriage to drive about to my friends. Why should I not be happy, O, goddess of wisdom?"
"But your husband, Maud. Does not Mr. Waghorn enter into your list of blessings?"

"What a delightfully innocent creature you are!" exclaimed Maud, passing her arm round her companion's waist. "Have you the felicity to think that a husband can by any possibility be a blessing? Now let us understand each other once for all. Waghorn is neither a blessing nor a curse to me, but something totally indifferent. He lives his life, and I live mine, and as long as that life of his doesn't encroach upon my peculiar privileges I have nothing to say to him good or bad. You understand?"

Helen looked into the speaker's face with pained surprise.

"Why bless you, Pallas!" cried Maud, "what is there in all this to trouble one's head about! Don't you know that this is marriage à-la-mode, the way in which every matrimonial establishment with any pretension to elegance is conducted?"

"I am very ignorant in such matters," returned Helen, "but it appears to me very dreadful."

"No doubt it does, my dear child. And to you it would be dreadful. But for me, who knew exactly what it would be like before I actually experienced it, I assure you it is the most natural thing in the world. You are as different from me and the million other women who resemble me, Helen, as chalk is
from cheese. Suppose I saw you suddenly seized with an infatuation for a man like Wagorn, and on the point of marrying him, do you know what I should do? I should hang upon you night and day till I had forced you to break off the engagement; I would let you have no peace; if I couldn't prevail otherwise, I would bring out one of the beautiful little pistols I carry about in my dressing-case and shoot the man that was to marry you. I would do anything rather than see you plunge into such a gulf of misery!"

"But why would you take such pains to save me from what you encounter yourself with your eyes open?"

"Because I have got brains to recognise a merit superior to my own, and a heart to cherish affection for an old friend. And that is what I want you to understand, Helen. Come, will you make a compact with me? Will you promise me that, however, you see me behave before other people, however much you learn to despise me, you will still keep one little corner of your heart open to me? Promise that you will come and see me often, and that you will let me come and see you. In all London I shall not have any one but you that I can really call a friend; I know very well I shall not. You must let me come and talk seriously for a few minutes with you when I am weary of chattering nonsense to a houseful of fools. Now will you promise me all this, Pallas?"
“But it seems very sad, Maud,” replied Helen, “that you should see so clearly into all your errors, and yet lack the resolution to correct them. Instead of making a friend of me in your tired-out moments only, why not let me be your friend at all times? Why not throw away all this affectation of giddiness—I am sure it can be nothing but affectation—and settle down to a steady useful life?”

“Why not? Why, because I am not Helen Norman, nor anything like her. That is the reason, my dear girl. You must not try to reason me out of my nature, Helen. The leopard can’t change his spots, you know. But upon my word I speak the truth when I say that I have a little bit of brain and a little bit of heart still available. Possibly they may be made to expand and grow with judicious watering. I won’t deliver any opinion on the point. Shall we be friends on these terms, Helen?”

“It is impossible for me to regard you otherwise than with kindness, Maud,” replied her companion; “but how can real friendship subsist under such circumstances as these?”

“Oh, never mind the name!” cried Maud, impatiently. “Let us call it enmity, if you will, provided you agree to live on these terms. Shall I whisper a secret into your chaste ear, Pallas. I feel within myself now and then possibilities of wickedness which would startle
you if I dared name them. How shall I combat these? You know already that I have no such thing as principle to fall back upon, and as to the world's opinion, well, that can be preserved under any circumstances by one who possesses a little tact. So the fact is, Helen, I must look upon you as my principle, personified. I must have this friendship of yours to stand fast upon if I feel that which it used to be the fashion to call the devil getting hold of me. Do you understand?"

Helen was on the point of replying when suddenly the door opened and admitted Mrs. Cumberbatch. Helen had to perform the ceremony of introduction, after which the conversation once more assumed a commonplace character. Mrs. Cumberbatch's sharp little eyes never ceased to examine Maud's; whilst the latter seemed to find amusement in "drawing out" her grand-aunt. The conversation was chiefly carried on between these two, as Helen was too much occupied in reflecting upon Maud's words to take much part in it. It was a relief to her when at length Mr. Waghorn reappeared. Once more the introductions had to be gone through, after which followed a few more polite commonplaces from each one present, and then Mr. and Mrs. Waghorn rose to depart. As Maud shook hands with Helen, she whispered—

"Remember."
Amenities of Fashionable Life and Faith. 383

Helen's thoughts followed the two home in their carriage, wondering greatly whether Maud had not exaggerated the indifference between herself and her husband. We, who are privileged to intrude into the most private recesses of the heart, need hesitate little to take a seat in the brougham of a lately-married couple and overhear their conversation.

"Where to now?" was Maud's question, as Mr. Waghorn, after giving directions to the coachman, entered and took his seat opposite her. She did not look at him as she spoke, but occupied herself in rustling over the leaves of a novel from Mudie's.

"To the Edwards's," replied her husband, with something of a scowl upon his face.

There was silence for a few minutes, and Mr. Waghorn was the first to break it.

"I want you to pay attention to me for a minute," he said, bending slightly forward.

"Well?" returned Maud, without raising her face.

"Look at me!" exclaimed the other, stamping his foot.

"I can hear quite well," persisted Maud, still rustling her pages.

"Look at me!" he almost shouted, clenching his fist; "or, by God—"

Maud raised her face for a moment, and it was rather pale. But she did not speak.

"I want you to understand one thing,"

went on Mr. Waghorn, satisfied with having forced her to submit, and preserving in his tone but little of that suave politeness which distinguished him in society. "You may be as damned sulky as you please when we're alone together; for that I don't care a snap. But when we're obliged to be seen in each other's company, I'll thank you to show me a little more politeness. Do you hear?"

"I can hear quite well, as I said before. If you wish the coachman to hear too, why not beg him to take a seat here for a few minutes? It would save you raising your voice, and I should feel somewhat safer with his protection to look to."

"If you give me any of your blasted impudence," returned Mr. Waghorn, his face livid with passion, "you'll have need for protection in earnest. You've heard what I said. Just heed it, or I'll make you!"

And so the colloquy ended. It was not the first of the kind that had taken place between the two. In all probability it would not be the last.

Mr. John Waghorn had not been altogether wrong when he said that Helen did not look so well as she had once done, and as the year drew to a close she continued to grow paler. Her eyes seemed to lose something of their wonted joyous brightness, and oftener showed instead a dull and fixed intensity of gaze which unmistakably denoted over-application.
For several months now she had been working with an energy which only a strong man would have been able to support long. Daily she spent many hours in her toil among the poor and miserable, breathing air charged with all manner of foulness, omitting no possible chance of making her work as complete as possible. As we have heard Lucy Venning testify, she would not allow herself to be withheld by any fear of evil consequences to her bodily health, penetrating into sickness—haunted homes where others were afraid to go, finding her sole reward in the increased opportunities for exertion which there lay before her. In several cases she had already spent whole nights watching by sick beds, fulfilling all the duties of a hospital nurse, and deriving a sense of pleasure from her increasing skill and knowledge. Then she had her school two nights of the week, on which she toiled with unceasing energy, for here she felt that she was making clearly visible progress, and every lesson well learnt, every good habit inculcated, cheered her on to renewed exertions. In addition to all this she never failed to spend some portion of the day in self-improvement, pursuing a course of severe technical study which she had laid out for herself. Most generally the early hours of the morning were spent thus, for she was never later than six in rising. So completely was her life one of stern self-

VOL. II.
sacrifice that, in her moments of calm reflec-
tion, she felt that she was growing to under-
stand something of the ascetic’s zeal, and 
asked herself with a smile whether she 
might not possibly develope into a veritable
ascetic, loving to toil merely for the sake of 
toiling and the sweetness of self-imposed 
pain? Indeed it is not at all unlikely that to 
the increasing sternness of her temperament 
was due the course of thought she pursued 
with regard to Maud. A year ago she 
would hardly have met Maud’s appeal as now 
she did. Her affection had become less 
effusive, her mind more used to stern combat 
with the bitterest problems of life.

Though severe application of any kind has 
a tendency to increase seriousness, it is only 
labour which has in it very much of the dis-
tasteful and disappointing that embitters the 
spirit. There was in Helen’s character far 
too much of genuine firmness, of exalted 
purpose, of inexhaustible sympathy to permit 
of her ever being soured by tasks of what-
ever distastefulness; and yet in all probability 
it was the circumstance of her having so 
often to encounter grievous disappointment, 
and experience deep disgust in the course of 
her work, which began by degrees to impart 
to her perseverance a character of grim stub-
bornness where there had at first been only 
cheerful persistence. Many times was she 
obliged to confess in her inmost heart that,
prepared as she had been to combat with horrors, her imagination had been far from encompassing the full extent of hideous suffering and wickedness which it was her daily lot to strive against. When she confessed to Mr. Heatherley that she was often brought to a pause by ingratitude, stubborn lack of confidence, and similar evils among the poor, she was only on the threshold of her labour; when she passed over from the old year to the new she had grown inured to these evils, and, as I have said, they were gradually converting her cheerfulness into stubbornness. On New Year's eve she spent several hours in reflection upon the past half-year, and the result of it was a night made sleepless by discontent and fear—fear for the future lest her bodily strength should give way or her resolution faint. She concluded that her aims had been too high, that she must cease to hope for such great results, and be content if she made any progress at all. The dispensary had now been open for three months, and was doing good work—there was certainly satisfaction in that. Then again when she thought of her school she obtained a glimpse of true encouragement. There was toil enough there, it is true, but not toil of such a hopeless and repulsive kind as that among nature petrified by long years of vice and crime. Among the bright young faces which met her each Tuesday and
Saturday night, Helen always recovered her cheerfulness and her hope, and it was in thinking of these and in making plans for their better instruction during the year to come that she at length sunk to sleep.

Her life at home was a very lonely one. With Mrs. Cumberbatch she had no sympathy whatever, and, though the latter frequently forced her society upon her, she regarded this as an infliction rather than a relief. From time to time she saw Maud, and listened, half in wonder, half in pain, to the strange revelation which that young lady seemed to delight in making of her own cynicism and frivolity, but it appeared so impossible to penetrate to any source of genuine feeling that Helen grew somewhat weary of these bizarre conversations. Very occasionally indeed she visited Maud’s house, but the certainty of finding it full of people who excited nothing but disgust in her soon led her almost entirely to cease these visits. To one of these, however, we must refer more in detail, seeing that it was the occasion of her meeting once more with very old acquaintances.

She had called rather early in the morning and was shown by the servant into the small drawing-room where she usually saw Maud in private. After she had waited nearly a quarter of an hour the door opened, but no one immediately entered. Helen could dis-
tinctly hear Maud's voice chattering to some one, and interrupting her chattering with bursts of laughter.

"Come," said Maud, at length, pushing the door wide open, "we shall be safe from interruption here. But mind, you mustn't tell me any more of those ridiculous stories. I shall positively die of laughing!"

Helen had risen to her feet, and, before she was herself perceived, saw Maud entering with her face turned back towards a tall and elegant looking young man, who was smiling as if highly pleased with himself. When Maud a moment after turned her head and perceived Helen, she started and went suddenly pale. Her discomposure only lasted for a second; then she advanced towards her visitor in her usual manner, with both hands extended.

"Why, however long have you been wait-ing?" she asked, in a tone of the utmost surprise. "No one told me you were here."

"I have only been here a very few minutes," replied Helen, somewhat disconcerted by a consciousness that the young man present was not entirely unknown to her, though she could not exactly recognise him.

"How desperately provoking!" pursued Maud, in the voice which she was wont, in private conversation with Helen, to term her "society voice." "Well, you are an early
visitor, but you see I have another still earlier. Of course you remember this gentleman?"

"I fear not," replied Helen, glancing slightly towards the young man.

"Oh, but I'm sure you must! It is such a very old friend."

"I have doubtless altered much since I last had the pleasure of seeing Miss Norman," here put in the gentleman referred to. "We met then, if I am not mistaken, in the Rectory at Bloomford."

Helen was now freed from her doubts, but surprise took their place. She could scarcely believe that in this tall, handsome, elegant, well-spoken gentleman she saw the eldest son of the Rev. Mr. Whiffle, who had given her so much amusement during the railway journey by his raw affectation of polite manners.

"I certainly thought I remembered your face, Mr. Whiffle," she said, extending her hand with the frank courtesy natural to her; "but till you spoke I could not decide upon your identity. I hope the elder Mr. Whiffle is quite well?"

"Oh, charming!" put in Maud, as she pointed to seats for her visitors. "Why I actually believe I never told you, Helen, but we attend St. Abinadab's—Mr. Whiffle's church, you know. You must really come with us some Sunday; you would be delighted."
“You are living in London at present, Miss Norman?” asked Augustus.

“Yes,” replied Helen, “I have lived here now almost a year.”

“I think I understood from my father that you had been in Germany for some time?”

“Yes, I was there two years.”

“Mr. Whipple, you must know, Helen,” put in Mrs. Waghorn, “is studying for the Church. Of course he could not adopt any other career, bearing in mind Mr. Orlando Whipple’s prominence. And the fact is he has inspired me with quite a zeal for ecclesiastical matters. The reason of his calling so early this morning was to make some arrangements with regard to a bazaar we are about to hold for the purpose of contributing towards the expense of wax tapers consumed in the church. You cannot conceive, Helen, how indispensable wax tapers are to the salvation of High Church souls. Other people’s souls may possibly be saved by the light of vulgar gas or even tallow-candles, but for us wax tapers are absolutely indispensable.”

Whilst Maud spoke, Augustus Whipple kept looking from her face to that of her friend, and at last a smile rose to his lips.

“Mrs. Waghorn is rather fond of speaking satirically,” he said. “Don’t you find it so, Miss Norman?”

“Upon my word, not in the least!” exclaimed Maud, willing to spare Helen, who
she saw hesitated how to meet such a question. "I really don’t think I even know the meaning of that word ‘satirical.’ But as I said, Helen, Mr. Whiffle is studying for the Church. I constantly impress upon him that he must not let his zeal lead him to too severe study. I really think he begins to show the result of sleepless nights. What do you think, Helen?"

"Mr. Whiffle appears to me to enjoy very good health," replied Helen, who was suffering extremely from the nature of the conversation.

"You think so? I’m afraid you are too indulgent to people who over-work themselves. You must know, Mr. Whiffle, that Miss Norman is a severe student, quite a blue-stocking."

At this moment a servant knocked and entered.

"The Rev. Mr. Whiffle wishes to know if he can see you, ma’am."

But apparently the Rev. Mr. Whiffle could not wait to receive the permission, for his voice was immediately heard close behind the servant, calling out in a tone which at once announced the fashionable clergyman.

"Oh, tell Mrs. Waghorn that I won’t detain her a moment. A matter of considerable importance. Am unable to wait very long, and regret that I cannot call at a later hour."
At the first sound of the voice Augustus Whipple and Mrs. Waghorn had at once started to their feet, interchanging a glance of something very like consternation. Scarcely had they risen when Mr. Whipple's form followed his voice, and he pushed into the room past the servant. He was dressed in the ordinary clerical suit, which indicated, however, in several places, that his old habit of personal negligence had not altogether deserted him. His ruddy hair, which had begun to grow much scantier than of old, still asserted its inherent stubbornness, and his eyes still had the droll wide-open expression which had marked them when their possessor was a curate at Bloomford. But in person he was becoming quite stout, and, whether it was due to the physical cause, or adopted as an appropriate indication of importance, he had acquired a habit of puffing between his sentences, which, bye-the-by, were spoken in a much louder and more consequential voice than of old. For all this, Helen would have known him anywhere, and at present his appearance afforded her such unutterable relief that she really felt glad to see him.

As Mr. Whipple's eyes fell upon his son and heir they became wider than ever, and he paused in the middle of a loud greeting to Mrs. Waghorn.

"What! You here, Gus!" he continued,
putting a gold-rimmed pince-nez upon his nose. "I had not the remotest knowledge of the fact that you were acquainted with Mrs. Waghorn! I protest, it is an entire surprise to me! Mrs. Waghorn, I rejoice to see you looking so wonderfully well. This is trying weather, dreadfully trying weather; I can scarcely remember such weather since first I entered The Church, and I dare not think how many years ago that is. Ha! But whom have we here? Upon my word, I believe I have once more the pleasure, the delight, of seeing Miss Helen Norman, the daughter of my dear departed rector! Miss Norman, how do you do? Really I am overjoyed to see you! Been to old Bloomford lately, Miss Norman?"

"I have not seen Bloomford since I last called upon you there, Mr. Whipple."

"You have not! Well, upon my word! Ah! there are sad goings on down at Bloomford, Miss Norman, very sad goings on, I assure you. During the period in which I enjoyed the inestimable honour of succeeding my dear departed rector in the incumbency of St. Peter's, I did my little utmost, Miss Norman, to establish a pure form of ritual, but I fear with little enduring result. I endured persecution, Miss Norman, which amounted to little less than martyrdom. You remember old Isaac Simpson, the retired tallow-chandler?"
“Very well,” said Helen, smiling at the recollection.

“Well, would you believe it? that man was churchwarden during a portion of my incumbency, and he made it the object of his life to thwart me in my endeavour to establish a pure form of ritual. I placed a cross upon the communion table, following what I consider to have been the practice of the primal Church. Old Simpson took the first opportunity of removing it. I replaced it; old Simpson took it away again! Can you believe, Miss Norman, that old Simpson, the retired tallow-chandler, would have the unspeakable audacity to beard a rector of the Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church as by law established in the performance of his ecclesiastical functions? I wrote a letter to the County Chronicle, wherein I spoke wrathfully, I confess, Miss Norman, and—can you believe it?—old Simpson was on the point of commencing an action for libel; fancy, an action against a clergyman of the Church of England; against a parson, persona ecclesiae. But I persevered unto the end, Miss Norman, and I won the victory. Old Simpson died—I discovered that he had never been baptised—I refused to read the Burial Service over him!”

“But those days are happily gone by, Mr. Whipple,” interposed Maud. “At St. Abinaday’s there are no such obstinate schismatics.
There we have the purest of rituals, absolutely free from adulteration. But oh! how thankful I am that you triumphed over that odious Simpson! How delightful to be able to refuse to read the Service! Oh! what an admirable Church is the Church of England!"

"Thank you, Mrs. Waghorn, thank you," replied Mr. Whifflle. "If all my congregation were as ardent as you, I should indeed have little to wish for, and could at any moment intone the Nunc Dimittis with a clear voice and a quiet conscience. But I grieve to say that there is yet a drop of bitterness in my otherwise overflowing cup. Would you believe it, Mrs. Waghorn? I have only this morning received this anonymous letter, doubtless from some ill-guided member of my flock."

He pulled out an enormous bundle of letters from an inside pocket, and, after rummaging over them for some minutes, at length hit upon the one he sought.

"Now let me read you a paragraph or two from this letter, Miss Norman," he said. "You will marvel at the audacity of this fellow. Bear in mind, always, Mrs. Waghorn, that this is addressed to a clergyman of the Church of England—nay to the Incumbent of St. Abinadab's. Hum—hum—hum— Ah! I will begin here. 'I beg to call your attention to the fact that on six
successive Sundays'—so and so, so and so, and &c.—'you have made use of lighted candles upon the communion table, where they were evidently not needed for the purposes of light.' The paltry fellow! He ought to be thankful to anyone who lightens the darkness of his perverted soul—ha! ha! ha! Now he goes on, observe, Miss Norman: 'Moreover, that you are in the habit of wearing unlawful ecclesiastical vestments, to wit, an alb, a chasuble, and a biretta.'—The audacity of this creature!—'Furthermore, that you illegally administer to your communicants wafer-bread. Again, I must remind you that to adopt the eastward position, as you habitually do, is unlawful, as also to make the sign of the cross towards the congregation, to omit kneeling during the Confession, and to have a cross upon the communion table.' And so on, and so on. And then he concludes—'I shall certainly esteem it my duty to make representation to the Bishop of these deviations from the ritual prescribed by the Church of England.'—The presumptuous blockhead! The fellow, Miss Norman, has the unparalleled impiety to assert that he is better acquainted than the Incumbent of St. Abinadab's with what is, and what is not, allowed by the Church! He positively includes in his letter a long argument on the subject, which I, of course, have not done him the honour to read
through, but in which I see mentions of the words Rubric, Common Prayer, and Reformation. Since he is so familiar with the Rubric, I should have imagined that his idiotship would have known that in the Rubric at the end of the calendar it is written: ‘that such ornaments of the Church and of the ministers thereof at all times of their ministration shall be retained and be in use as were in this Church of England by the authority of Parliament in the second year of the reign of King Edward VI.’—Ha, ha! Miss Norman, he’d better not come the Rubric over me! I imagine I know it as well as most men, as well as the ritual of the Church in the reign of Edward VI. ‘Unlawful’ and ‘illegal,’ forsooth! Where is the Act of Parliament to restrain me, I should like to know? Ha, ha, ha! An excellent joke!”

By this time Mr. Whiffe had talked himself completely out of breath, and into such a perspiration that he was obliged to wipe his face all over with an immense silk handkerchief.

But in the operation he was repeatedly overcome with his sense of amusement at the audacity of the letter-writer, and broke into little bursts of scornful laughter.

“But I entirely forgot to state the purpose of my visit, Mrs. Waghorn. Bye-the-by, Miss Norman, have you seen my pamphlet on ‘Religious Teaching in Public Schools’?”
"I am sorry to say I have not," returned Helen.
"Indeed! Of course, I need not ask you, Mrs. Waghorn?"
"I deeply regret it has never come into my hands," said Maud.
"Not!" cried Mr. Whiffle, elevating his fat hands in horror. "You astound me! Not seen my pamphlet? I must send you a copy this very day; I will send you half-a-dozen copies! And you, too, Miss Norman, I will send you as many copies as you like, to distribute among your friends. It is only signed 'O. W.' I should be loath, you know, to take undue advantage of my position as incumbent of St. Abinadab's. In controversy I always like to allow my adversaries fair play, you know, Miss Norman. O, Mrs. Waghorn, I know you will be delighted with the pamphlet. In it I preach an absolute crusade against the godless policy of our School Boards. Miss Norman, you must certainly attend St. Abinadab's next Sunday. I am preparing a sermon which I know will please you. Promise me you will come."

"If nothing occurs to prevent me, I shall have pleasure in doing so, Mr. Whiffle."
"Of course, of course! And, bye-the-by—but, upon my word, I am still forgetting the object of my visit, Mrs. Waghorn. Did it ever occur to you that—that one or two of my
portraits on the stalls at the bazaar might not be in bad taste? You see, it is so natural that the congregation of St. Abinadab's should like to possess a photograph of their minister. Suppose, you know, we sold them for half-a-crown a piece? I shouldn't wonder if they added materially to the profits."

"A delicious idea!" exclaimed Maud. "A perfectly dazzling idea! What a stupid creature I am that it never occurred to me before. Of course, it is the very thing—so tasteful, so delicate. And especially on Mrs. Whipple’s stall they will be appropriate."

"You think so? My very idea! I am overjoyed."

"Oh, I hope you will sit especially for the occasion."

"Will you believe that I have already done so—and in full canonicals? Upon my word, I believe I have one with me. Yes—no—yes, here it is!"

He produced a portrait and handed it to Mrs. Waghorn, and, skipping behind her like an excited child, peeped over her shoulder as she examined it.

"Do you think it good? Do you think it worthy of the incumbent of St. Abinadab's?" he asked breathlessly.

"Oh, delicious!" cried Maud. "How stately, how reverend! I vow I should have taken it for an archbishop if I had not known the features!"
"You would? No! You mean it? I am overjoyed! Miss Norman, pray what is your opinion?"

"I think it very like," and then, feeling that graceful condescension to human weakness required more than this, she added, "It is a very excellent portrait, indeed."

"I am delighted! I am entranced!" cried Mr. Whiffle, skipping about. "It is the happiest day since I entered The Church! Mrs. Waghorn, you shall have ten dozen for your stall. I'm sure you could easily dispose of that number, don't you think so?"

"Oh, ten times as many!" cried Maud, with enthusiasm.

"You shall have them!" exclaimed Mr. Whiffle. "But, I protest, I have been here nearly half an hour. I must run. Miss Norman, remember your promise for Sunday. You must come and see Mrs. Whiffle. Pray come and dine with us, any evening you like. Bye-the-by, Mrs. Waghorn, did you see my letter in the Times the other morning on that poisoning case, you know?"

"I did," returned Maud, "and was entranced with the argument."

"Oh, the mere thought of an odd moment!" exclaimed the clergyman. "But, good-bye all. Good-bye, Miss Norman, good-bye, Mrs. Waghorn; I will look in again very shortly. Gus, are you going my way?"
“I think not,” replied his son, somewhat coolly.

“Very well. Once more, good-bye all.”

And, clapping his soft hat on his head, he hastened from the room and from the house.

“I do believe that father of mine grows more absurd every day!” exclaimed Augustus, as soon as they were alone. “Didn’t you admire Mrs. Waghorn’s satirical replies, Miss Norman? I thought them admirable.”

“You disrespectful boy!” cried Maud. “You do not only venture to say that your father is absurd, but also that I openly ridicule him? I’m ashamed of you!”

At this Mr. Augustus and Maud laughed heartily in chorus. Helen rose, eager to be gone.

“Are you really going?” asked Maud, in a tone of purely affected regret. “Again, I am dreadfully sorry for having kept you waiting for me. Pray come again soon. Mr. Whipple, excuse me one moment.”

Helen, having bidden adieu to Augustus, left the room, and was followed into the hall by Maud.

“Come again to-morrow morning at the same time, there’s a good girl,” whispered the latter. “Forget all this nonsense. You ought not to have seen me in this mood at all.”
"Having seen you, Maud," returned Helen, "I sincerely wish I never had. Would it not be better if I ceased coming to you? I could not bear to be subjected to such an hour again."

"Pooh, pooh! Foolish child! I tell you, I am not in my grave mood, Pallas. I may regret it, but can't help it. Will you come to-morrow?"

"I fear I must not promise. I have much to do to-morrow."

"Well, well; whenever you like. Goodbye. Don't think too hardly of me, Helen. You know what power you have over me."

"I wish I felt that I had any," replied Helen.

And with these words they parted.

END OF VOL. II.