LITTLE MASTERPIECES
FICTION
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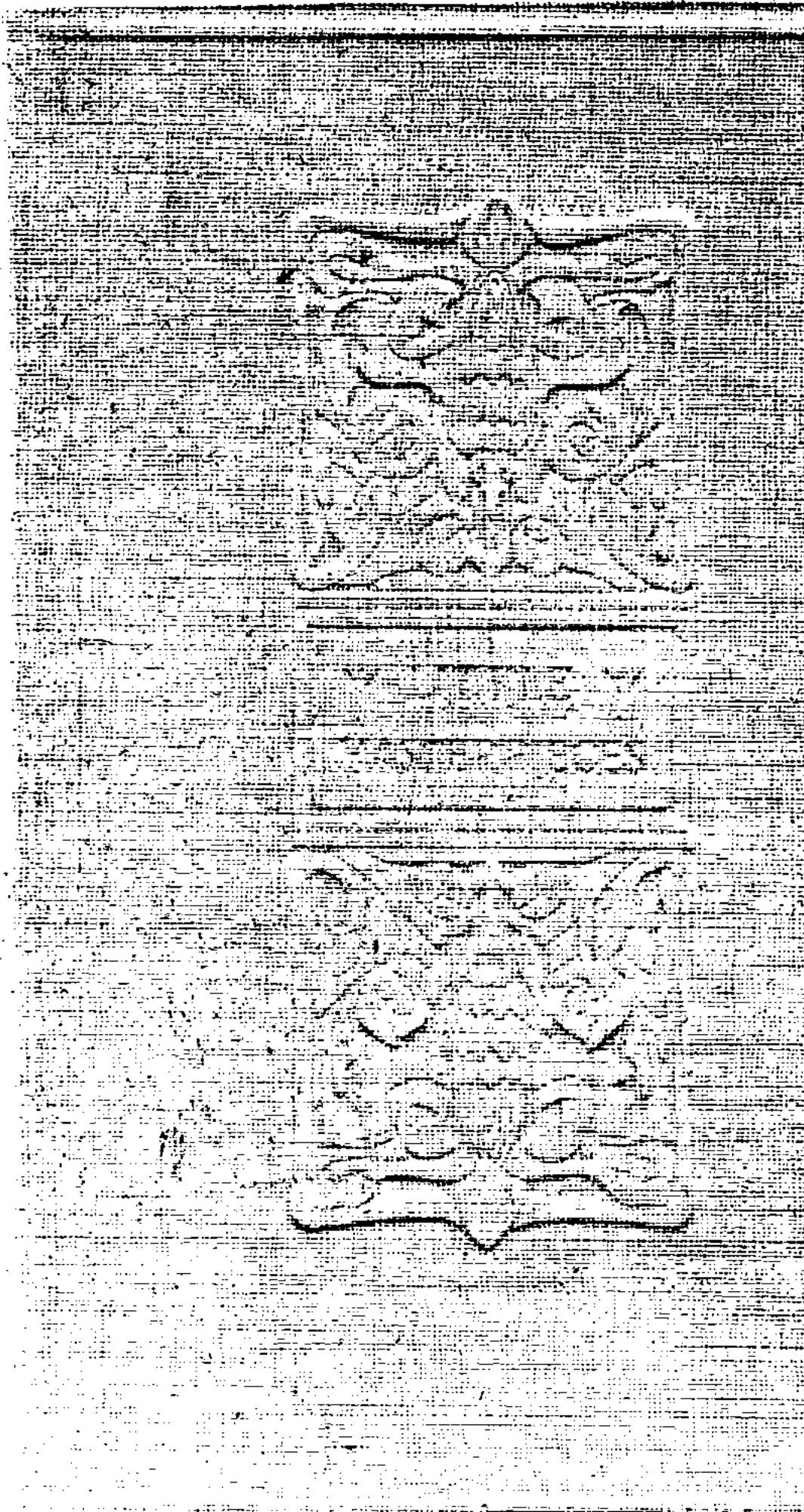

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Voltaire

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FICTION

Edited by

HAMILTON W. MABIE

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Library of
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JEANNOT AND COLIN

BY

FRANÇOIS MARIE AROUET DE VOLTAIRE

MANY trustworthy persons can vouch for having seen Jeannot and Colin when they went to school at Issoire in Auvergne, a town famous all over the world for its college and its kettles. Jeannot was the son of a dealer in mules, a man of considerable reputation; Colin owed his existence to a worthy husbandman who dwelt on the outskirts of the town, and cultivated his farm with the help of four mules, and who, after paying tolls and tallage, scutage and salt duty, poundage, poll-tax, and tithes, did not find himself particularly well off at the end of the year.

Jeannot and Colin were very handsome lads for natives of Auvergne; they were much attached to each other, and had little secrets together and private understandings, such as old comrades always recall with pleasure when they afterward meet in a wider world.

Their school days were drawing near their end, when a tailor one day brought Jeannot a velvet coat of three colours, with a waistcoat of Lyons silk in excellent taste to match. This suit of clothes was accompanied by a letter addressed

to Monsieur de La Jeannotière. Colin admired the coat, and was not at all jealous; but Jeannot assumed an air of superiority which distressed Colin. From that moment Jeannot paid no more heed to his lessons, but was always looking at his reflection in the glass, and despised everybody but himself. Some time afterward a footman arrived post-haste, bringing a second letter, addressed this time to His Lordship the Marquis de La Jeannotière; it contained an order from his father for the young nobleman, his son, to be sent to Paris. As Jeannot mounted the chaise to drive off, he stretched out his hand to Colin with a patronising smile befitting his rank. Colin felt his own insignificance, and wept. So Jeannot departed in all his glory.

Readers who like to know all about things may be informed that Monsieur Jeannot, the father, had rapidly gained immense wealth in business. You ask how those great fortunes are made? It all depends upon luck. Monsieur Jeannot had a comely person, and so had his wife; moreover, her complexion was fresh and blooming. They had gone to Paris to prosecute a lawsuit which was ruining them, when Fortune, who lifts up and casts down human beings at her pleasure, presented them with an introduction to the wife of an army hospital contractor, a man of great talent, who could boast of having killed more soldiers in one year than the cannon had destroyed in ten. Jeannot

took the lady's fancy, and Jeannot's wife captivated the gentleman. Jeannot soon became a partner in the business, and entered into other speculations. When one is in the current of the stream, one need only let one's self drift, and thus an immense fortune may sometimes be made without any trouble. The beggars who watch you from the bank, as you glide along in full sail, open their eyes in astonishment; they wonder how you have managed to get on; they envy you, at all events, and write pamphlets against you which you never read. That was what happened to Jeannot senior, who was soon styled Monsieur de La Jeannotière, and, after buying a marquisate, at the end of six months he took the young nobleman, his son, away from school, to launch him into the fashionable world of Paris.

Colin, always affectionately disposed, wrote a kind letter to his old schoolfellow, offering his congratulations. The little marquis sent him no answer, which grieved Colin sorely.

The first thing that his father and mother did for the young gentleman was to get him a tutor. This tutor, who was a man of distinguished manners and profound ignorance, could teach his pupil nothing. The marquis wished his son to learn Latin, but the marchioness would not hear of it. They consulted the opinion of a certain author who had obtained considerable celebrity at that time from some popular works which he had written. He was invited to

dinner, and the master of the house began by saying:

"Sir, as you know Latin, and are conversant with the manners of the court——"

"I, sir! Latin! I don't know a word of it," answered the man of learning; "and it is just as well for me that I don't, for one can speak one's own language better when the attention is not divided between it and foreign tongues. Look at all our ladies; they are far more charming in conversation than men; their letters are written with a hundred times more grace of expression. They owe that superiority over us to nothing else but their ignorance of Latin."

"There, now! Was I not right?" said the lady. "I want my son to be a man of wit, and to make his way in the world. You see that if he were to learn Latin it would be his ruin. Tell me, if you please, are plays and operas performed in Latin? Are the proceedings in court conducted in Latin, when one has a lawsuit on hand? Do people make love in Latin?"

The marquis, confounded by these arguments, passed sentence, and it was decided that the young nobleman should not waste his time in studying Cicero, Horace, and Virgil.

"But what is he to learn, then? For, I suppose, he will have to know something. Might he not be taught a little geography?"

"What good will that do him?" answered the tutor. "When my lord Marquis goes to visit

his country-seat, will not his postillions know the roads? There will be no fear of their going astray. One does not want a sextant in order to travel, and it is quite possible to make a journey between Paris and Auvergne without knowing anything about the latitude and longitude of either."

"Very true," replied the father; "but I have heard people speak of a noble science, which is, I think, called *astronomy*."

"Bless my soul!" rejoined the tutor. "Do we regulate our behaviour in this world by the stars? Why should my lord Marquis wear himself out in calculating an eclipse, when he will find it predicted correctly to a second in the almanac, which will moreover inform him of all the movable feasts, the age of the moon, and that of all the princesses in Europe?"

The marchioness was quite of the tutor's opinion, the little marquis was in a state of the highest delight, and his father was very undecided.

"What is my son to be taught, then?" said he.

"To make himself agreeable," answered the friend whom they had consulted; "for, if he knows the way to please, he will know everything worth knowing. It is an art which he will learn from her Ladyship, his mother, without the least trouble to either of them."

The marchioness, at these words, smiled graciously upon the courtly ignoramus, and said:

"It is easy to see, sir, that you are a most accomplished gentleman; my son will owe all his education to you. I imagine, however, that it will not be a bad thing for him to know a little history."

"Nay, madam, what good would that do him?" he answered. "Assuredly the only entertaining and useful history is that of the passing hour. All ancient history, as one of our clever writers has observed, is admitted to consist of nothing but fables, and for us moderns it is an inextricable chaos. What does it matter to the young gentleman, your son, if Charlemagne instituted the twelve Paladins of France, or if his successor had an impediment in his speech?"

"Nothing was ever more wisely said!" exclaimed the tutor. "The minds of children are smothered under a mass of useless knowledge, but of all sciences, that which seems to me the most absurd, and the one best adapted to extinguish every spark of genius, is geometry. That ridiculous science concerns itself with surfaces, lines, and points which have no existence in nature. In imagination a hundred thousand curved lines may be made to pass between a circle and a straight line which touches it, although in reality you could not insert so much as a straw. Geometry, indeed, is nothing more than a bad joke."

The marquis and his lady did not understand much of the meaning of what the tutor was saying, but they quite agreed with him.

"A nobleman like his Lordship," he continued, "should not dry up his brain with such unprofitable studies. If, some day, he should want one of those sublime geometricians to draw a plan of his estates, he can have them measured for money. If he should wish to trace out the antiquity of his lineage, which goes back to the most remote ages, all he will have to do will be to send for some learned Benedictine. It is the same with all the other arts. A young lord born under a lucky star is neither a painter, nor a musician, nor an architect, nor a sculptor, but he may make all these arts flourish by encouraging them with his generous approval. Doubtless it is much better to patronise than to practise them. It will be quite enough if my lord the young Marquis has taste; it is the part of artists to work for him, and thus there is a great deal of truth in the remark that people of quality (that is, if they are very rich) know everything without learning anything, because, in point of fact and in the long run, they are masters of all the knowledge which they can order and pay for."

The agreeable ignoramus then resumed his part in the conversation, and said:

"You have well remarked, madam, that the great end of man's existence is to succeed in society. Is it, forsooth, any aid to the attainment of this success to have devoted one's self to the sciences? Does any one ever think in select company of talking about geometry?

Is a gentleman ever asked what star rises to-day with the sun? Does any one at the supper-table ever want to know if Clodion the Long-Haired crossed the Rhine?"

"No, indeed!" exclaimed the Marchioness de la Jeannotière, whose charms had been her passport into the world of fashion, "and my son must not stifle his genius by studying all that trash. But, after all, what is he to be taught? For it is a good thing that a young lord should be able to shine when occasion offers, as my noble husband has said. I remember once hearing an abbé remark that the most entertaining science was something the name of which I have forgotten—it begins with a *B*."

"With a *B*, madam? It was not botany, was it?"

"No, it certainly was not botany that he mentioned; it began, as I tell you, with a *B*, and ended in *onry*."

"Ah, madam, I understand! It was blazonry, or heraldry. That is indeed a most profound science. But it has ceased to be fashionable since the custom has died out of having one's coat of arms painted on one's carriage doors; it was the most useful thing imaginable in a well-ordered State. Besides, that line of study would be endless, for at the present day there is not a barber who is without his armorial bearings, and you know that whatever becomes common loses its attraction."

Finally, after all the pros and cons of the

different sciences had been examined and discussed, it was decided that the young marquis should learn dancing.

Dame Nature, who arranges everything according to her own will and pleasure, had given him a talent which soon developed, securing him prodigious success; it was that of singing street ballads in a charming style. His youthful grace accompanying this superlative gift caused him to be regarded as a young man of the highest promise. He was a favourite with the ladies, and, having his head crammed with songs, he had no lack of mistresses to whom to address his verses. He stole the line "Bacchus with the Loves at play" from one ballad, and made it rhyme with "night and day" taken out of another, while a third furnished him with "charms" and "alarms." But inasmuch as there were always a few feet more or less than were wanted in his verses, he had them corrected at the rate of twenty sovereigns a song. And "The Literary Year" placed him in the same rank with such sonneteers as La Fare, Chaulieu, Hamilton, Sarrasin, and Voiture.

Her ladyship the marchioness then believed that she was indeed the mother of a genius, and gave a supper to all the wits of Paris. The young man's head was soon turned; he acquired the art of talking without knowing the meaning of what he said, and perfected himself in the attainment of being fit for nothing. When his father saw him so eloquent, he keenly regretted

that he had not had him taught Latin, or he would have purchased some high legal appointment for him. His mother, who was of more heroic sentiments, took upon herself to solicit a regiment for her son; in the meantime he made love—and love is sometimes more expensive than a regiment. He squandered his money freely, while his parents drained their purses and credit to a lower and lower ebb by living in the grandest style.

A young widow of good position in their neighbourhood, who had only a moderate income, was kind enough to make some effort to prevent the great wealth of the Marquis and Marchioness de La Jeannotière from going altogether, by consenting to marry the young marquis with a view to appropriating what remained. She enticed him to her house, let him make love to her, allowed him to see that she was not quite indifferent to him, led him on by degrees, enchanted him, and made him her devoted slave without the least difficulty. At one time she would give him commendation, and at another time counsel; she became his father and mother's best friend. An old neighbour suggested marriage. The parents, dazzled with the splendour of the alliance, joyfully fell in with the scheme, and promised their only son to their most intimate lady friend. The young marquis was thus about to wed the woman he adored, and by whom he was loved in return. The friends of the family congratulated

him; the marriage settlement was ready to be signed; the bridal dress and the nuptial hymn were both well under way.

One morning our young gentleman was on his knees before the charmer whom fond affection and esteem were so soon to make his own. They were tasting in animated and tender converse the first fruits of future happiness, settling how they should lead a life of perfect bliss, when one of his mother's footmen presented himself, scared out of his wits.

"Here's fine news which may surprise you!" said he; "the bailiffs are in the house of my lord and lady, removing the furniture. Everything has been seized by the creditors. There is talk of arresting people, and I am going to do what I can to get my wages paid."

"Let us see what has happened," said the marquis, "and discover the meaning of all this."

"Yes," said the widow, "go and punish those rascals—go, at once!"

He hurried homeward. When he arrived at the house, his father was already in prison, and all the servants had fled, each in a different direction, carrying off whatever they had been able to lay their hands on. His mother was alone, helpless, forlorn, and bathed in tears; she had nothing left her but the remembrance of her former prosperity, her beauty, her faults, and her foolish extravagance.

After the son had condoled with his mother for a long time, he said at last:

"Let us not despair. This young widow loves me to distraction; she is even more generous than she is wealthy, I can assure you. I will fly to her for help, and bring her to you."

So he returned to his mistress, and found her engaged in private conversation with a fascinating young officer.

"What! Is that you, my Lord de La Jeannotière? What business have you with me? How can you leave your mother by herself in this way? Go, and stay with the poor woman, and tell her that she shall always have my good wishes. I am in want of a waiting-woman now, and will gladly give her the preference."

"My lad," said the officer, "you seem pretty tall and straight; if you would like to enter my company, I will make it worth your while to enlist."

The marquis, utterly astounded and inwardly furious, went off in search of his former tutor, confided all his troubles to him, and asked his advice. He proposed that he should become, like himself, a tutor of the young.

"Alas! I know nothing; you have taught me nothing whatever, and you are the primary cause of all my unhappiness." And as he spoke he began to sob.

"Write novels," said a wit who was present; "it is an excellent resource to fall back upon in Paris."

The young man, in more desperate straits than ever, hastened to the house of his mother's

father-confessor. He was a Theatine monk of the very highest reputation, who had charge of the souls of none but ladies of the first rank in society. As soon as he saw him, the reverend gentleman rushed to meet him.

"Good gracious! My lord Marquis, where is your carriage? How is your honoured mother, the Marchioness?"

The unfortunate young fellow related the disaster that had befallen his family. As he explained the matter further the Theatine assumed a graver air, one of less concern and more self-importance.

"My son, herein you may see the hand of Providence; riches serve only to corrupt the heart. The Almighty has shown special favour to your mother in reducing her to beggary. Yes, sir, so much the better! She is now sure of her salvation."

"But, father, in the meantime are there no means of finding some help in this world?"

"Farewell, my son! A lady of the court is waiting for me."

The marquis almost fainted. He was treated after much the same manner by all his friends, and learned to know the world better in half a day than he had in all the rest of his life.

While thus plunged in overwhelming despair, he saw an old-fashioned travelling chaise, more like a covered tumbril than anything else, and furnished with leather curtains, followed by four enormous waggons, all heavily laden. In

the chaise was a young man in rustic attire; his round and rubicund face had an air of kindness and good temper. His little wife, whose sunburnt countenance had a pleasing if not refined expression, was jolted about as she sat beside him; and since the vehicle did not go quite so fast as a dandy's chariot, the traveller had plenty of time to look at the marquis, as he stood motionless, absorbed in his grief.

"Oh! good Heavens!" he exclaimed, "I believe that is Jeannot there!"

Hearing that name, the marquis raised his eyes, and the chaise stopped.

"'Tis Jeannot himself! Yes, it is Jeannot!"

The fat little man sprang to the ground with a single leap, and ran to embrace his old companion. Jeannot recognised Colin, shame showing in his face.

"You have forsaken your old friend," said Colin, "but be you as grand a lord as you like, I shall never cease to love you."

Jeannot, confounded and cut to the heart, amid sobs told him something of his history.

"Come into the inn where I am lodging, and tell me the rest," said Colin; "kiss my little wife, and let us go and dine together."

They went, all three of them, on foot, and the baggage followed.

"What in the world is all this paraphernalia? Does it belong to you?" inquired Jeannot.

"Yes, it is all mine and my wife's; we are just come from the country. I am at the head

of a large tin, iron, and copper factory, and have married the daughter of a rich tradesman and general provider of all useful commodities for great folks and small. We work hard, and God gives us His blessing. We are satisfied with our condition in life, and are quite happy. We will help our friend Jeannot. Give up being a marquis; all the splendour in the world is not worth a good friend. Return with me into the country. I will teach you my trade, which is not a difficult one to learn; I will give you a share in the business, and we will live together with light hearts in the little place where we were born."

Jeannot, overcome by this kindness, struggled between sorrow and joy, tenderness and shame. He said to himself:

"All my fashionable friends have proved false to me, and Colin, whom I despised, is the only one who comes to my rescue. What a lesson!"

Colin's example in generosity revived in Jeannot's heart the germ of goodness that the world had never quite choked. He felt that he could not desert his father and mother.

"We will take care of your mother," said Colin, "and as for your good father, who is in prison—I know something of business matters—his creditors, when they see that he has nothing more, will agree to an easy settlement. I will see to all that myself."

Colin was as good as his word, and succeeded in effecting the father's release from prison.

Jeannot returned to his old home with his parents, who resumed their former occupation. He married Colin's sister, who, being like her brother in disposition, rendered her husband very happy. And so Jeannot the father, and Jeannotte the mother, and Jeannot the son came to see that vanity is no true source of happiness.

THE DEATH OF OLIVIER BÉCAILLE

BY

ÉMILE ZOLA

I

IT was on a Saturday, at six o'clock in the morning, that I died, after three days' illness. My poor wife was bending over a trunk in which she kept her linen. When she rose and saw I was rigid, with eyes wide open, and had ceased to breathe, she ran to me, thinking that I had fainted. She felt my hands and face, and then, suddenly seized with terror, fell to sobbing:

"My God, my God! He is dead!"

I heard everything, but the sounds were faint, and seemed to come from afar. With my left eye I could perceive a confused light, in which objects were blurred and indistinct; my right eye seemed to be completely paralysed. A syncope of my entire being, with the suddenness of a stroke of lightning, had made me powerless. My will was dead; not a fibre of my nerves obeyed me. Only within my impotent, inert frame thought remained, slow and languid, but perfectly clear.

My poor Marguerite wept on her knees beside the bed, repeating brokenly:

"He is dead! My God! He is dead!"

Could this really be death, this curious state of torpor, this flesh stricken to rigidity, while the mind kept on working? Was this my soul, waiting a little in my brain before taking its flight? I had been subject to nervous attacks since childhood. Twice, while still young, a sharp fever had almost carried me off. They had become used to seeing me delicate and sickly; and I had myself forbidden Marguerite to send for a physician, when I had gone to bed on the morning of our arrival in Paris, in this little hotel in the Rue Dauphine. It was merely the fatigue of the journey which had exhaused my strength, and a little rest would soon set me up again. Nevertheless, I had felt myself in the grasp of dread anxiety. We had left our little country town in very straitened circumstances, having scarcely enough money to last until I should receive my first month's salary from the firm which had promised me a position. And now a sudden attack had stricken me down!

Could this then be death? I had imagined a night more dark, a silence more heavy. Even as a little child I was afraid of death. As I was delicate and people petted me pityingly, I came to believe that I should not live long and that I should be buried at an early age. And this thought of the earth filled me with a horror

that I could never accustom myself to, although it haunted me night and day. This fixed idea remained with me as I grew older. Sometimes, after days of reflection, I believed that I had overcome my fear. Oh, well! one dies, and that is the end; every one must die some day; nothing could be a more convenient or better arrangement. I became almost light-hearted; I looked death in the face. Then a sudden chill would freeze me, and I would grow dizzy, as if some giant hand had held me over a gloomy pit. It was the thought of the earth that had returned to me and swept away my reasoning. How many times, in the middle of the night, have I not jumped up in bed, my slumbers disturbed by some strange, poisonous breath, clasping my hands in despair and sobbing, "My God! my God! I must die!" My blood froze with fear; the necessity of death seemed to me even more abominable in the confused condition of my senses at the abrupt awakening. It was only with difficulty that I was able to go to sleep again; even sleep itself alarmed me, so much did it resemble death. What if I should sleep forever! What if I closed my eyes never to open them again!

I know not if others have suffered from this agony. For me it has poisoned existence. Death has stood between me and everything I have loved. I remember the happiest moments spent with Marguerite. During the first months of our marriage, when she slept at my side,

when I built up, thinking of her, dreams of the future, the fear of a last parting always entered in, to embitter my joy and destroy my hopes. We must part—it might be to-morrow, it might be within the hour. Despair fell upon me like a heavy weight; I asked myself what was the use of our mutual happiness, since it inevitably led to so cruel an end. Then my imagination would travel still farther. Who would be taken first—she or I? And either alternative brought the tears to my eyes as I unrolled the picture of our broken lives. Thus, during the happiest times of my existence, I have been attacked by sudden fits of melancholy which would be understood by no one. When good luck befell me my friends were astonished to see me gloomy. It was the thought of my annihilation which had suddenly crossed my joy. The terrible "What is the use?" sounded on my ears like a knell.

But the worst of this torment is that one endures it like some secret shame. One dare not tell of it. It often happens that both husband and wife, lying side by side, shudder at the same foreboding, after the light has been extinguished; yet neither speaks, because one does not speak of death any more than one would mention an obscene word. One fears it to the point of not naming it; one hides it as one hides one's sex.

While I pondered upon these things, my dear Marguerite went on sobbing, and it was hard for me to lie there, unable to calm her grief by telling her that I was not in pain. If death was

nothing more than this swoon of the flesh, I surely was wrong in fearing it so much. It was a state of selfish comfort and repose, from which cares were absent. My memory especially had assumed an extraordinary activity. My entire life passed rapidly before me, as though I were present at some spectacle which I had not seen before. It was a strange and curious sensation, and amused me much. It might have been some faint voice reciting my history.

There was a little country corner, near Guerande, on the road to Piriac, which entered my recollection. At the bend of the road a grove of pines hangs over a rocky slope. When I was seven years old I went there with my father, and in a tumble-down house ate pancakes with Marguerite's family—poor folk who led a hand-to-mouth existence selling fish. Then I recalled the school at Nantes, where I had grown up, between tiresome old walls, perpetually irritated by a desire for the sweeping horizon of Guerande, with the marshes stretching out from the lower town as far as the eye could reach, and the broad sea sparkling under the sky. Then came a black spot: my father died, I engaged with the management of a hospital as a servant, and began a monotonous existence, whose only excuse was my Sunday visits to the old house on the road to Piriac. Matters went from bad to worse, the fish brought almost nothing, and the country-side became poverty-stricken. Marguerite was no more than a child.

She liked me because I took her riding in a wheelbarrow. But later, when I asked her to marry me, I understood, from her frightened gesture, that she looked upon the idea with horror. Her parents had given their consent immediately; it would be a relief to them. She, submissive, did not say no. When she grew accustomed to the idea of being my wife she did not seem to be much displeased. On the day of our wedding, at Guerande, I remember that it rained in torrents, and, when we returned, that she went about in petticoats, because her dress had become soaked.

That is all my youth. We lived down there for some time. But one day, when I reached home, I found my wife in tears. She was tired of it and wished to go away. By the end of six months I had saved a little money, chiefly from the proceeds of extra work; and, as an old friend of my family had promised to find me a position in Paris, I took my dear little girl there, in order that she might weep no more. In the train she laughed. When night came, the seats of the third-class carriages being very hard, I took her upon my knees so that she might sleep comfortably.

But that was all past. Now, at this hour, I had just died on this meagre lodging-house bed, while my wife lay weeping on her knees before it. The white patch I perceived with my left eye paled little by little, but I clearly recalled the appearance of the room. To the left was the

wash-stand; to the right, the mantelpiece, in the centre of which a long, silent clock gave out the time as ten minutes past ten. The window opened on the Rue Dauphine, black and profound. All Paris passed by there, and such was the din that I heard the panes of glass rattle in their frames.

We knew no one in Paris. As we had hastened our departure, I was not expected until the following Monday at the offices of the firm. It was a strange sensation to feel one's self imprisoned in this room, still bewildered and confused by the fifteen-hours' railway journey and the noise of the Paris streets. My wife had attended to me with smiling gentleness, but I felt that she was alarmed. From time to time she went to the window and looked out into the street; then she returned quite pale, frightened by that vast Paris of which she knew not a single stone and which thundered so terribly. What was she to do if she could not awaken me? What would become of her in this immense city, alone, without assistance, thrown upon her own resources?

Marguerite had taken one of my hands which hung, inert, over the edge of the bed. She kissed it passionately and cried out repeatedly: "Olivier, answer me! My God! he is dead! he is dead!"

Death was not unconsciousness, then, since I could hear and reason. It was non-existence that had terrified me since my childhood. I imagined the disappearance of my being, the total destruction of what I was; and that for all

time, through centuries and still centuries to come, with no possibility of rebirth. Sometimes, when I found in a newspaper a date relating to the next century, I shuddered: I should certainly not be alive at that date; the thought of a year of the future that I should not see and in which I should be no more, filled me with anguish. Was I not the world, and would it not all crumble when I departed?

To dream of life in death—such had always been my hope. But this certainly could not be death. I should surely awaken presently. Yes, presently I should lean over and take Marguerite in my arms. What joy it would be to speak to each other again! And how much stronger would be our love! I would take two more days' rest and then I would go to my office. A new life would begin for us—a happier life and a wider. However, I was in no hurry. Just at the moment I was too weak. Marguerite was wrong to give way to such despair, but I lacked the strength to turn my head on the pillow and smile at her. Presently, when she came to me again, I would murmur very low, so as not to frighten her, while I kissed her cheek:

"I am only sleeping, dear child. Don't you see that I am alive, and that I love you?"

II

At the cries which escaped from Marguerite's lips, the door was suddenly opened, and a voice said:

"Why, what's the matter, neighbour? Another attack?"

I recognised the voice. It was that of an old woman, a Madame Gabin, who lived on the same floor as ourselves. Evidently sympathising with our lonely position, she had shown herself very obliging to us.

"My God! Is it the end?" she asked, lowering her voice.

I felt that she was approaching. She looked at me, touched me, then murmured gently:

"My poor child! My poor child!"

Marguerite, overcome, wept unceasingly. Mme. Gabin lifted her up and seated her in the wooden armchair near the mantelpiece, where she tried to console her.

"Come, you will get ill. You need not give way to despair just because your husband is gone. Certainly, when I lost Gabin, I felt like you do now; I went for three whole days without swallowing so much as a pinch of food. But that did no good; on the contrary, it only made matters worse. Come, for Heaven's sake, be sensible."

Little by little, Marguerite quieted down. Her strength was all gone; but now and again a fit of sobbing still shook her. In the meantime, the old woman took possession of the room, saying with rough kindness:

"Don't bother about anything. Neighbours must help one another. I see that your trunks are not yet quite unpacked, but there is linen in the chest of drawers, is there not?"

I heard her open a drawer. She must have taken out a napkin and spread is on the table. Then she struck a match, which made me think that she was going to light one of the candles on the mantelpiece to place near my head. I followed all her movements in the room, taking note of her slightest actions.

"The poor gentleman!" she murmured. "How fortunate that I heard you crying, my dear."

Suddenly the misty light that I could still observe with my left eye disappeared. Mme. Gabin had just closed my eyes. I had not felt the touch of her finger on my eyelids. When at last I understood, a chill began to creep down my backbone.

But soon the door opened. Dédé, Mme. Gabin's ten-year-old daughter, entered, calling out in a shrill voice:

"Mama, mama! I knew you would be here. Here is your bill—three francs and four sous. I took twenty dozen blinds."

"Hush! hush! don't say any more!" vainly repeated the mother.

As the little girl went on, her mother pointed to the bed. Dédé stopped, and, evidently alarmed, retreated toward the door.

"Is the gentleman sleeping?" she asked in a low voice.

"Yes; run away and play," replied Mme. Gabin.

But the child would not go. She seemed to

be looking at me with wide-open eyes, startled and vaguely understanding. Suddenly she was seized with a mad fear, and overturned a chair in her haste to get out of the room.

"He is dead! Oh, mama, he is dead!"

Deep silence reigned. Marguerite, half-lying in the armchair, wept no longer. Mme. Gabin still busied herself about the room. She began to mutter between her teeth.

"Children know everything nowadays. Look at that one. God knows I have brought her up properly! When she goes on an errand I count the number of minutes she is away, in order to be sure she is getting into no mischief. But that makes no difference; she knows everything; she knew at once what the matter was. And yet she has seen only one corpse, her Uncle François, and at that time she was only four years old. Oh, well! what can you expect? There are no more children now!"

She interrupted herself, and passed without pause to another subject.

"You know, little one, we must think of the formalities, the declaration to the municipality, and all the details of the funeral. But you are in no condition to attend to that. And I don't want to leave you alone. If you don't mind, I will go and see if Monsieur Simoneau is at home."

Marguerite did not reply. I heard all this conversation as from a great distance. It seemed to me at times as though I were flying, like subtle flame, in the air of the room, while

some stranger, a shapeless mass, rested inert on the bed. Nevertheless, I should have preferred Marguerite to decline the services of this Simoneau. I had seen him three of four times during my short illness. He occupied a near-by room, and had been very civil. Mme. Gabin had told us that he was in Paris merely temporarily, in order to collect some old debts of his father, who had just died in the provinces. He was a tall young man, handsome and strong. I detested him, probably because he always looked so well. He had visited us the evening before, and it had pained me to see him near Marguerite. She looked so pretty and so white at his side! And he had looked at her so fixedly, while she smiled at him, saying that he was very good to come so soon to ask after my health.

"Here is M. Simoneau," whispered Mme. Gabin, who returned.

He opened the door gently, and Marguerite, as soon as she saw him, again burst into tears. The sight of this friend, the only man she knew, opened her grief afresh. He did not try to console her. I could not see him; but in the shadows that surrounded me I made out his face, and I could perceive that he felt sorry at finding the poor woman in such despair. And how pretty she must have looked, with her loosened fair hair, her pale face, and her dear little childish hands burning with fever!

"I am entirely at your service, madame,"

murmured Simoneau. "If you will only let me take charge of everything——"

Her reply was confused and broken. But as the young man went out, Mme. Gabin accompanied him, and I heard her speak of money as she passed me. It would cost a great deal, and she feared that the poor thing hadn't a penny. However, one might ask her. Simoneau prevailed upon the old woman to be silent. He did not wish to trouble Marguerite. He then went to the municipality to arrange about the funeral.

When silence set in again, I asked myself how long this nightmare was going to last. I knew I must be alive, since I was aware of every movement about me. And I began to take exact account of my condition. It was evidently one of those cases of epilepsy of which I had so often heard. Even when quite a young child, at the time of my nervous illness, I had had syncopes lasting several hours. It was evidently an attack of this nature that held me rigid as the dead, and which deceived every one about me. But my heart would soon beat again, the blood would once more circulate in my veins, and I should awake and console Marguerite. While reasoning thus, I bade myself have patience.

Hours passed. Mme. Gabin had brought my wife some breakfast. Marguerite refused to eat anything. Then the noon hour struck. From the open window I heard the noise of the traffic in the Rue Dauphine. A light clink of

copper from the small table at the head of the bed apprized me that they were changing the candle. At last, Simoneau reappeared.

"Well?" ejaculated the old woman.

"Everything is settled," he replied. The funeral is for to-morrow at eleven o'clock. Don't be alarmed, and don't mention these things before that poor woman."

"The doctor for the dead has not been here yet," said Mme. Gabin.

Simoneau sat down near Marguerite, spoke a few encouraging words, and fell silent. The funeral was for the next day at eleven o'clock. The phrase reverberated in my brain like a knell. And this doctor who had not yet come—this doctor for the dead, as Mme. Gabin had called him—he would see in a moment that I was simply in a trance. He would do what was necessary to awaken me. I awaited him in frightful impatience. However, the day wore on. Mme. Gabin, in order not to waste her time, had finished her blinds. Furthermore, after having asked permission of Marguerite, she had brought back Dédé, because, as she said, she did not believe in leaving children long by themselves.

"Come in," she whispered, taking the little girl by the hand, "and don't be silly. Don't look toward that side of the room, or I shall be cross."

She forbade her to look at me, evidently thinking that the proper thing to do. Dédé probably

gave a glance occasionally in my direction, for I heard her mother slap her on the arm, saying, angrily:

"Keep your eyes on your work, now, or I'll send you away, and to-night the gentleman will come and pinch your feet."

Both mother and daughter sat down at the table. The noise of their scissors cutting the blinds reached me distinctly. It was probably a delicate piece of work, for they did not seem to make much progress. I counted their strokes, one by one, to deaden my increasing anguish.

So the only sound in the room came from the cutting of these scissors. Marguerite, overmastered by weariness, was probably asleep. Simoneau rose. The abominable thought that he might profit by Marguerite's slumber to touch her hair with his lips tortured me. I did not know this man, and I felt that he loved my wife. A laugh from little Dédé increased my irritation.

"What are you laughing at, little fool?" asked her mother. "I will put you out into the street. Come, what is it that makes you laugh?"

The child stammered. She had not laughed; she had only coughed. As for me, I imagined that she had seen Simoneau bend over Marguerite and that the action had seemed funny to her.

The lamp had just been lighted when some one knocked.

"Ah, here is the doctor," said the old woman.

It was, in fact, the doctor. He did not even excuse himself for being so late. Undoubtedly he had had many stairs to climb during the day. As the lamp lighted the room so feebly, he asked:

"The corpse is here?"

"Yes, sir," replied Simoneau.

Marguerite had risen, shivering. Mme. Gabin had sent Dédé out into the hall, for a child has no business to see such things; and she was trying to drag my wife toward the window, in order that she might be spared the sight. The doctor lost no time. I gathered that he was tired, impatient, and in a hurry. Did he touch my hand? Did he listen for my heart-beat? I do not know. But it seemed to me that he simply looked at me carelessly.

"Would you like me to hold the lamp for you?" suggested Simoneau obligingly.

"No; it is not necessary," said the doctor quietly.

What, unnecessary! This man had my life in his hands, and he considered it unnecessary to make a careful examination. But I was not dead! I wanted to cry out that I was not dead!

"Ah, at what time did he die?" he went on.

"At six o'clock this morning," replied Simoneau.

A furious revolt surged up within the terrible bonds which held me. Oh! the agony of being powerless to speak or move a muscle!

The doctor added:

"This heavy weather is bad. Nothing is so enervating as the first days of spring."

And then he went away. It was my life that had gone. Cries, tears, imprecations stifled me, lacerated my convulsed throat, from which not a sound escaped. Ah! the despicable man, of whom routine had made a machine, and who visited a deathbed with no more thought than to fulfil a simple formality! Why, he knew nothing, this man! Of what use was all his science, if he could not tell at once the difference between life and death! And he went away—he went away!

"Good-night, sir," said Simoneau.

There was a silence. The doctor had bowed to Marguerite, who had returned, while Mme. Gabin closed the window. Then he left the room; I heard his footsteps descending the staircase.

So this was the end. I was condemned. My last hope had vanished with that man. If I did not awake before the next day at eleven o'clock I should be buried alive. And the thought was so frightful that I lost consciousness. It was like a swoon in death itself. The last sound that struck my ear was the metallic click of scissors. The death vigil commenced. No one spoke. Marguerite had refused to sleep in the next room. She was there, half recumbent in the armchair, with her beautiful face pallid, her eyes closed, with the lids bathed in tears, while Simoneau gazed at her silent in the shadows.

III

I NEVER could find words to describe the agony I felt during the morning of the next day. It has remained to me like a horrible dream, in which my emotions were so strange and so distressed that it would be difficult for me to chronicle them accurately. What made my torture the more frightful was that I hoped at every moment for a sudden awakening. And the nearer the hour of the funeral approached, the more acute became my anguish. It was not until the next morning that I again became conscious of my surroundings. A grating sound cut short my sleep. Mme. Gabin had opened the window. It was probably about seven o'clock, because I heard the call of pedlars in the street, the shrill voice of a boy selling chickweed, another, hoarser voice offering carrots for sale. This noisy awakening of Paris soothed me at first; it seemed impossible that I could be buried in the earth, in the middle of all this stir and animation. Moreover, my memory corrected me. I recalled having seen a case similar to mine when I was employed in the hospital at Guerande. A man there had been unconscious for twenty-four hours; his sleep was so deep that it puzzled the doctors. Then, suddenly, he sat up, and at once was able to go about his business. I had already been asleep twenty-five hours, but if I awoke before ten o'clock it would be time enough.

I tried to find out the number of people in the room, and what they were doing. Little Dédé was evidently playing outside, for a childish laugh came in through the open door. Undoubtedly Simoneau had left; no sound that I could hear indicated his presence. Mme. Gabin's footsteps were the only evidences of life in the room. At last she spoke.

"My dear," said the old woman, "you should take it while it is hot. It will refresh you."

She addressed herself to Marguerite, and the tinkling noise of crockery on the mantelpiece apprised me that she was pouring out coffee.

"Yes, I needed that," she went on to say. "At my age, of course, it is nothing to sit up all night, but then it is so gloomy when there is misfortune in the house. Take some coffee, my dear; just a drop."

And she forced Marguerite to drink a cup of it.

"Now, doesn't that refresh you? You will need strength to sustain you through the day. If you are wise, you will go into my room and wait there."

"No, I will stay here," replied Marguerite firmly.

Her voice, which I had not heard since the evening before, touched me. She was changed, broken with grief. Ah, the dear creature! I felt in her presence a last consolation. I knew that she never kept her eyes away from me, and that she was shedding for me the tears of her

innermost heart. But the minutes passed. I heard, through the door, a noise that I could not at first understand. It sounded like the carrying in of some piece of furniture which knocked against the walls of the too narrow staircase. Then, on hearing the sobs of Marguerite break out afresh, I knew that it was the coffin.

"You have come too soon," said Mme. Gabin ill-humouredly. Put it behind the bed."

What time was it then? Nine o'clock, perhaps. So the coffin was already there. I could distinguish it in the heavy darkness, quite new, the wood still showing the marks of the planer's hands. My God! is everything going to end? Are they going to take me away in this box that lies at my feet?

There was left for me, however, one supreme joy. Marguerite, in spite of her weakness, desired to administer the last attentions to me. It was she who, helped by the old woman, dressed me with the tenderness of a sister and a wife. I felt that I was once again in her arms every time she passed a garment over me. She stopped, almost fainting under her strong emotion; she pressed me to her, bathing me with her tears. I would have returned her embrace, crying, "I live!" But I lay there powerless and remained stiff and stark.

"You are foolish to do that; it will all be lost," said Mme. Gabin.

Marguerite replied in a whisper.

"Let me alone. I want to dress him in the best things we have."

I knew then that she was clothing me as if for my wedding day. I still kept those garments, which I counted on wearing in Paris on special occasions. Then she fell back in the armchair, exhausted by the effort she had just put forth.

Suddenly Simoneau spoke. Probably he had just come in.

"They are downstairs," he murmured.

"Good; it is not too soon," replied Mme. Gabin, also lowering her voice. Tell them to come up; we must finish all this."

The old woman seemed to reflect. She continued:

"Listen, M. Simoneau; you must take her by force into my room. I don't want her to stay here. You will be doing her a service. Meanwhile, the affair will be over in a twinkling."

The words struck me to the heart. And what were my thoughts as I heard the frightful struggle that commenced! Simoneau had approached Marguerite, begging her to leave the room.

"For pity's sake," he implored, "come with me; spare yourself these useless pangs."

"No, no," replied my wife; "I will stay. I wish to stay until the last moment. Consider that I have only him in the world, and that when he is gone I shall be alone."

However, I heard Mme. Gabin, who was near the bed, whisper in the ear of the young man:

"Quick! take her away; carry her in your arms."

What, was Simoneau going to take Marguerite away like that! All at once she cried out. On a furious impulse, I would have jumped to my feet. But the springs of my being were broken; and I remained so rigid that I could scarcely even raise my eyelids to see what was going on in front of me. The struggle continued; my wife cowered among the furniture, crying:

"Oh! have mercy, have mercy, sir! Let me be! I don't want to go!"

He had evidently seized her with his strong arms, and she could utter only feeble remonstrances. He carried her out, the sobbing died away, and I almost imagined I could see them—he tall and robust, holding her against his breast, and she, exhausted, allowing herself to be carried wherever he wished to take her.

"Gracious! that was no child's play!" murmured Mme. Gabin. "Let us have it over, then, now that the coast is clear!"

In the jealous rage which consumed me, I looked upon this affair as an abominable abduction. I had not seen Marguerite since the day before, but I could still hear her voice; and now even that was at an end. They were about to take me away. A man had carried off my wife before I had even been put under the earth. And he was with her, behind the screen, consoling her, embracing her perhaps!

The door opened, and heavy feet stamped into the room.

"Hurry, hurry," continued Mme. Gabin, "or the poor lady will be back before you have gone." She spoke to strangers, whose only replies were grunts.

"I am not a relative, you understand—only a neighbour. I am making nothing out of all this. It is from pure goodness of heart that I am mixing myself up with their affairs. And it is no great fun, either. Yes, yes, I spent the night here. It was not so warm at four o'clock in the morning, I can tell you. But I was always foolish in that way."

At that moment they pulled the coffin into the middle of the room, and I understood. I was doomed, then, since my awakening did not come. My thoughts lost their clearness, everything whirled about me in a black mist, and I felt such utter weariness that the loss of my reasoning powers was welcome to me.

"They didn't spare the wood," said the hoarse voice of one of the undertaker's assistants. "The coffin is too long."

"Oh, well! he will be all the more comfortable," added another jokingly.

I was not heavy, upon which fact they congratulated themselves, for they had three flights of stairs to descend. Just as they lifted me by the shoulders and the heels, I heard Mme. Gabin fly into a sudden rage.

"Little rascal!" she cried. "Shove your nose

into everything, will you? Just wait until I get you alone."

It was Dédé, who had opened the door and was peering curiously through it. She wished to see them put the gentleman in the coffin. Two vigorous slaps resounded, followed by an explosion of sobs. And when the mother returned she talked about her daughter with the men who were arranging me in the coffin.

"She is ten years old. She is a good girl, you know, but very inquisitive. I don't often whip her, but she must obey."

"Oh!" said one of the men, "all children are like that. Whenever there is a corpse anywhere, they are always about."

I was placed comfortably enough, and I could have believed myself still in bed but for the pressure on my left arm, which was squeezed against the side of the coffin. It was as they said; I lay there at my ease, thanks to my slight build.

"Wait," cried Mme. Gabin, "I promised his wife to put a pillow under his head!"

But the men were in a hurry; they hurt me as they packed the pillow under me. One of them cursed because he could not find the hammer. They had left it below, and had to go down for it. The lid was put on, and I felt a shudder run through my whole body as two strokes of the hammer knocked in the first nail. It was all over; I had lived. Then the nails went in rapidly, one by one, while the hammer played its

lugubrious accompaniment. They might have been packers nailing down a box of dried fruit from the cool way in which they went about it. Gradually the sounds became duller and more prolonged, resounding curiously, as if the wooden box had been transformed into a musical box. The last word that struck my ear in that room on the Rue Dauphine was a remark by Mme. Gabin:

"Be careful, now, and look out for the staircase on the second floor; it is shaky."

My sensations as they carried me out were those of a man being rolled about in a choppy sea. But from that moment my recollections became very indefinite. I remember, however, that the only thing that occupied my mind, a stupid and mechanical preoccupation, was to speculate on the route we should take to the cemetery. I did not know a single street in Paris, and was ignorant of the location of the principal cemeteries, the names of which I had occasionally heard. But that did not prevent me from concentrating the last efforts of my intellect on the question as to whether we were turning to the right or to the left. The hearse jolted me over the pavement. About me the rumbling of vehicles and the rustling of the people on the footwalks were modified by the coffinwood into a confused clamour. At first I followed the route with a good deal of clearness. Then there was a stop, and I was taken out. I understood that we were at the church. But when the

hearse went on again I lost all perception of the streets through which we travelled. A chime of bells apprised me that we were passing a church; a softer and more continuous rumbling of wheels made me believe that we were driving down some promenade. I was like a condemned man being led to the gibbet, stupefied, awaiting the final blow which came not. They came to a stop, and took me out of the hearse; and there was a sudden silence. All the noises had ceased. I felt that I was in some deserted place, under trees, the wide heaven over my head. Several people seemed to be following the hearse; probably Simoneau and other guests of the house, for the sound of low talking reached me. A psalm was sung, and a priest murmured something in Latin. There were indefinite movements which lasted about two minutes. Then, suddenly, I felt that I was being lowered into the ground. Ropes scraped against the sides of the coffin, sounding like the strings of a double-bass viol. It was the end. A terrible shock, like the discharge of a cannon, reverberated over my head; a second shock, this time over my feet, convulsed me; another, so violent that I thought it would break the coffin, fell over my middle. And I fainted.

IV

How long did I remain there? I could not say. An eternity and a second are of equal duration

in oblivion. I was no more. Little by little, vaguely, the consciousness of being returned to me. I still slept, but I had begun to dream. A nightmare cut itself loose from the black canopy that covered my horizon. And this dream which I had was of the stuff that in my imagination had so often tortured me in my youth, at such times when, with a nature predisposed to horrible inventions, I almost enjoyed the atrocious pleasure of creating catastrophies for myself. I imagined that my wife awaited me somewhere—at Guerande, I think—and that I had taken the train to join her. As the train went through a tunnel, all at once there came a frightful crash, like a peal of thunder. Our train had not been injured, however, but the rock had caved in before and behind us, so that we found ourselves imprisoned in the centre of a mountain, the only outlets barred by great blocks of stone. Then began a period of frightful agony. There was no hope of relief; it would take a month to cut through the tunnel; the work, moreover, would require infinite precautions and extraordinarily powerful machinery. We were prisoners in a sort of cave without an entrance. Our death was merely a question of hours.

Often had my imagination played upon such a terrible fate. I used to vary the tragedy. Sometimes its actors were men, women, children, hundreds of people, a vast multitude which provided me with new episodes without end.

There would be, perhaps, provisions in the train, which would soon be exhausted, and then the miserable prisoners would fight with each other for the last morsel of bread. An old man would moan with pain as they beat him to the ground; or a mother would fight like a tiger to defend the half-dozen mouthfuls she had kept for her child. In my coach a young married couple lay clasped in each other's arms; they had lost hope and made no further efforts. The passengers alighted from the train and ran about wildly, like beasts in search of prey. All classes mingled; a very wealthy man, a high official, some one said, wept on the neck of a workman. For some time the lamps had been extinguished, and even the fires of the locomotive had gone out. In walking, one had to keep hold of the train, in order to avoid knocking one's head. Nothing could be more weird and awful than this train, sealed under the rocks, as though buried alive, with its passengers dying one by one. I revelled in the horrors of even the smallest details. Shrieks pierced the shadows. All at once a man whom no one had noticed fell fainting against my shoulder. I was suffering from cold and lack of air. Almost suffocated, it seemed to me as if an avalanche were rolling over my chest, as if the whole mountain were weighing me and bearing me down. Suddenly a shout of joy went up. For a long time we had imagined that we heard a low muffled sound from the other side of the rock. But help had not arrived from

that quarter. One of us had discovered a hole in the rock; and we hurried toward this hole, at the end of which we could perceive a blue spot as big as a man's hand. Oh, with what thankfulness we greeted that blue spot! It was the sky. We could distinguish the movements of black objects, undoubtedly workmen labouring for our deliverance. A wild shout leaped from every mouth: "Saved! Saved!" while trembling arms were lifted toward that little spot of pale blue.

It was the violence of this clamour that awoke me. Where was I? Still in the tunnel, undoubtedly. I found myself lying on my back, and I felt, at right and left, a hard substance which pressed my sides. I tried to raise myself, but severely bumped my head in the attempt. Did rocks enclose me on every side, then? And the blue spot had disappeared; the sky was no longer there, not even far away. I was gasping, and I ground my teeth with a shudder.

Suddenly I remembered. My hair stood on end with horror, and I felt the frightful truth run through me, from the feet to the head, like an icy current. Had I at last recovered from this syncope, which had confined me for many hours in the rigidity of a corpse? Yes, I could move, and I passed my hands along the boards of the coffin. One last proof remained to me: I opened my mouth and spoke, instinctively calling for Marguerite. I screamed, and my voice, reverberating in the pine box, sounded

so awful that it terrified me. My God! was it true, then? I could talk, cry out that I lived, and my voice would not be heard! I was a helpless prisoner under the earth!

I made a supreme effort to calm myself and think. Was there no way of getting out? My dream recommenced, and my brain was still so muddled that my imagination confused the air-hole with its spot of blue sky with the grave wherein I lay gasping. With eyes wide open, I tried to pierce the gloom. Perhaps I should see a nail, a crack, a glimmer of light! But there was only an impenetrable cloak of blackness. Then my head suddenly became clear, and I realised that I must act at once if I wished to save my life. At first the greatest danger seemed to lie in the increasing probabilities of suffocation. I had, undoubtedly, been able to go for a long time without air, thanks to the syncope which temporarily suspended my functions; but now that my heart beat and my lungs renewed their duties, I should be asphyxiated if I could not very soon escape. I suffered also from cold, and feared to be overtaken by that fatal stupor which attacks men who are caught in the snow.

While all the time repeating to myself that I must be calm, I felt gusts of madness mount to my brain. I strove to recall the details of a burial. Had I not heard that at Paris burials were made at a depth of six feet? How would it be possible to pierce such an enormous mass

of earth? Even if I could break the coffin, would not the earth run in, like fine sand, and fill my eyes and mouth? And that would still be death, an abominable death, drowned in dirt.

Nevertheless, I felt carefully about me. The coffin was large, and I could move my arms with ease. I could discover no crack in the wood. The planks, both to right and to left, were badly planed, but thick and tough. In passing my hand over the boards above my head, I discovered a knot in the wood, which gave way under pressure. Although I worked under great difficulties, I at last succeeded in shoving the knot through, and on the other side my finger met the earth. There was evidently no help that way. I even regretted having made the hole, fearing that the earth might come in. But another discovery soon took up my attention. In order to try to find a crack somewhere, I tapped the sides of the coffin with my hand. To right and to left the sound was heavy and echoless. But when I kicked lightly at the end of the coffin it seemed to me that the noise was more hollow. Of course, this might have been simply the greater resonance of the wood. Then I began to push, first with arms and then with the knees. The wood resisted. Finally I put the strength of my whole body into violent kicks, but there was not even a crack. My bones ached so that I cried out. It was at this moment that I lost my head.

Up to that time I had held out against a

vertigo, the gusts of rage that mounted to my head like fumes of wine. Above all, I was careful to repress my cries, for I knew that, if I cried out, I was lost. All at once I began to shriek, to yell. It was too much for me. I called for help in a voice that I did not recognise, protesting that I would not die. And I scratched the wood with my nails, twisting myself into convulsions like a trapped wolf. How long did this attack last? I do not know, but I still feel the implacability of the coffin that confined me; I still hear the storm of cries and sobs that shook me. In a last glimmering of reason, I tried to contain myself and could not.

A great exhaustion followed. I waited, in a sort of painful stupor, for death. The coffin was stone; I should never be able to breathe. This certainty of my failure left me faint, without courage to make a new attempt. Another pang, that of hunger, united with cold and suffocation to destroy me. I despaired. Soon this last torture became unendurable. With my finger I tried to draw pinches of earth through the knothole, and I ate this earth. I bit my arms, but I dared not draw the blood. My flesh tempted me, and I felt at it gluttonously. Ah, how I wished for death at that instant! All my life I had trembled at the idea of non-existence, and now I desired it—demanded it; nor could it be black enough. What childishness to rebel against this sleep without dreams, this eternity of silence and

gloom! Oh, to sleep like the stones, to return to dust, to be no more!

My hands mechanically continued their journey about the wood. Suddenly something pricked my left thumb, and the pain roused me out of my stupor. What was that? I felt again and found a nail—a nail that the undertaker's assistants had knocked in crookedly, and which had only entered one side of the coffin. It was very long and pointed. The head remained in the lid, but I felt it move under my hand. From that moment I had only one thought—to get that nail. I passed my right hand over my chest and commenced to work it sideways. It did not yield much, and the work was hard. I often changed my hands, for the left, narrowly hemmed in, quickly became tired. While I was thus occupied, a complete plan developed in my head. This nail would be my salvation. It was necessary to me. But would there still be time? Hunger tortured me, and at intervals I was compelled to stop working by an attack of dizziness which lèft my muscles powerless and my mind feeble. I had sucked up the drops of blood which ran from the scratch on my thumb. Then I bit my arm and drank the blood, spurred on by pain and revived by the warm and bitter wine that moistened my mouth. And I went at the nail again with both hands. This time I succeeded in extricating it.

From then dated my belief in ultimate success. My plan was a simple one. I pressed the point

of the nail into the wood of the coffin lid, and moved it lengthwise, backward and forward, so as to make a deep gash. My hands became numb, and I worked myself into a furious passion against my own weakness. After I had cut sufficiently deep into the wood, it was my plan to turn over on my stomach and raise myself on my knees. This I did, but, although the lid cracked, it did not break. The cut was not yet deep enough. I had to turn over again on my back and begin over afresh. At the second attempt the lid split from one end to the other. True, I was not saved yet, but hope filled my heart. I stopped pushing and remained motionless, fearing some fall of the earth that might smother me. My idea was to use the lid as a sort of shield, while I tried to tunnel through the earth. Unfortunately, this scheme presented great difficulties. Heavy clods of earth, detached from the general mass, clogged the boards so that I could not budge them. Dust was already getting into my mouth and eyes, and I was forced to keep my face downward. I never should be able to reach the light in this way. Fear was again taking possession of me, when—as I was stretching out to find some more comfortable posture—I fancied that the end of the coffin yielded to the pressure of my feet. I kicked vigorously with my heel, thinking that beyond that board of the coffin there might be an unoccupied grave.

All at once my feet shot out into the air.

My surmise was correct: a newly made grave was there. I had only a slender division of earth to push through in order to roll into it. Great God, I was saved!

For an instant I lay on my back at the bottom of the open grave, looking at the sky. It was night. Above, the stars twinkled out of a canopy of velvet. Occasionally the breeze would bring to me a taste of the softness of spring or the sweet smell of trees. Great God! I was saved, I breathed, I was warm, and I wept; and I sobbed, my hands devoutly raised toward infinity. Oh, but it was good to live!

My first thought was to direct my steps to the house of the cemetery's caretaker, so that he might send me home. But certain thoughts, still undefined, stopped me. I should terrify everybody. Why hurry, when I was master of the situation? I felt my limbs. With the exception of the slight traces of my teeth in my left arm, I was sound; and the fever caused by that injury gave me unlooked-for strength. Certainly I should be able to walk without assistance. So I took my time. All sorts of confused thoughts passed through my brain. I had felt, as I tumbled into the grave, spades left by the diggers, and with these I felt impelled to repair the damage that I had done, to fill in the hole, so that no one would know of my resurrection. At this time I had no definite plan; I merely thought it unnecessary to let my adventure be known, feeling a certain shame at

living when every one believed me dead. After half an hour's work, all traces of the hole had been effaced. Then I climbed out of the grave.

What a beautiful night! A deep silence reigned in the cemetery. The black trees seemed motionless shadows among the whiteness of the tombstones. As I sought my way out, I noticed that half the horizon flamed with light. Paris was there. I went in that direction, walking along an avenue, in the darkness of its trees. But I had not taken many steps before I had to stop, already fatigued; and I sat down on a stone bench. I found then that I was completely dressed, even to my boots, and that I only lacked a hat. How I thanked my dear Marguerite for the pious sentiment that had led her to dress me! The sudden memory of Marguerite brought me to my feet. I wished to see her.

At the end of the avenue a wall stopped me. I climbed on one of the tombstones, from which I gained the coping. On the other side of the wall I dropped. The shock was severe. For some minutes I walked along a wide, deserted street which skirted the cemetery. I knew nothing of my whereabouts, but I repeated to myself, with the obstinacy of a fixed idea, that I was going to Paris and to the Rue Dauphine. People passed me, but I did not even question them, mistrusting every one, and wishing to confide in nobody. I now remember that I was shaken by a heavy fever, and that my

mind was wandering. At last, as I turned into a great thoroughfare, I was seized with faintness, and fell heavily on the footwalk.

For three weeks I was unconscious. When at last I came to my senses, I found myself in a strange room. A man was there, tending me. He told me simply that he had found me, one morning, on the Boulevard Montparnasse, and had taken me home with him. He was an old doctor who had given up his practice. When I thanked him, he replied brusquely that my case had struck him as interesting, and that he wished to study it. Moreover, in the first days of my convalescence he would not allow me to ask him any questions. Later, he put some to me. For another week I kept to my bed, my mind being in such a state that I did not even try to remember anything, for memory was weariness and sorrow. I felt myself filled with shame and fear. When I was able to go out, I would see. Perhaps, in my delirium, I had murmured names; but the doctor never alluded to anything that I might have said. He was discreet in his charity.

However, the summer had arrived. One June morning I obtained permission to take a short walk. It was a glorious morning, one of those sunny days that give youth to the streets of old Paris. I walked slowly, asking at each corner for the Rue Dauphine. When I reached it I had difficulty in recognising the little lodging-

house where we had lived. A childish fear agitated me. If I suddenly appeared before Marguerite I feared that the shock might kill her. The best thing, probably, would be first to see the old woman, Mme. Gabin, who probably still lived there. But the idea of putting some one between us displeased me. I would stop at nothing. At the bottom of my heart there seemed to be a great void, as though created by some sacrifice made a long time since.

The house shone yellow in the sun. I recognised it from a little cheap restaurant on the ground floor, at which we had often eaten. I raised my eyes to the last window on the third floor to the left. It was wide open. All at once a young woman, not completely dressed, looked out. Behind her a young man approached, and kissed her on the neck. It was not Marguerite. I was not surprised. It seemed as though I had already dreamed that, as well as other things I was about to see.

For a moment I stood in the street undecided, wondering whether or not to go up and question the young lovers, who were still laughing in the sun. Then I thought it best to go into the little restaurant below. I could hardly be recognised: my beard had grown during my illness, and my face was lined. As I sat down at a table I saw Mme. Gabin, who had just entered, with a cup for two sous' worth of coffee. As she stood at the counter she gossiped with the proprietress. I listened.

"Well!" asked the woman, "has the poor little woman on the third floor decided yet?"

"What do you think?" replied Mme. Gabin. "Can she do better? And M. Simoneau has been so kind to her. He has wound up his father's affairs; he has a lot of money, and has offered to take her to the country with him to live with one of his aunts, who wants a companion."

The woman behind the counter giggled. I had buried my face in a newspaper, and my hands trembled.

"It will certainly end in marriage," Mme. Gabin went on. "But I give you my word of honour that I have seen nothing improper. The poor woman was mourning for her husband, and the young man conducted himself perfectly. However, they went away yesterday. After her term of mourning has expired, they will be able to do what they like."

Just then the door opened and Dédé came in.

"Aren't you coming up, mama? I am waiting. Come quick."

"Presently. Don't be in such a hurry!" said the mother.

The little girl remained, listening to the two women, with the precocious air of the Paris street-child.

"Well! After all," continued Mme. Gabin, "the husband was no match for M. Simoneau. I never liked him, the little whippersnapper. Always whining! And not a penny! No! a

husband like that is not much good for a woman with blood in her veins. Now as for M. Simoneau, there you have a man with money, and strong as a Turk."

"Oh!" interrupted Dédé, "I saw him myself, one day while he was shaving. He had hair on his arms!"

"Will you go!" cried the old woman, shaking her. "You are always sticking your nose where it ought not to be."

Then, concluding:

"Yes, the other did well to die. It was a fine piece of luck."

When I again found myself in the street I walked slowly and with difficulty. I did not suffer much, however. I even smiled when I saw my shadow in the sun. Certainly I was very thin; it was a singular idea for me to marry Marguerite. And I recalled how tired she was of Guerande, her fits of impatience, her dull and unhappy life. The dear creature was always so good. But I had never been her lover; it was a brother whom she mourned. Why should I disturb her life again? A dead man is not jealous. When I raised my head I saw the Luxembourg gardens before me. I went in and sat in the sun, lost in agreeable reveries. The thought of Marguerite was pleasant now. I imagined her in a little town in the country, very happy, much beloved, and much admired, grown still more beautiful, and with three sons and two daughters. Come! I was a fine fellow,

dead, and I would certainly not make the cruel mistake of coming to life.

Since that time I have travelled much, and lived in many lands. I am a commonplace man, who has worked and eaten like every one else. Death no longer terrifies me; but it seems that he does not want me now that I have no reason to live, and I am afraid he may have forgotten me.

THE WIND IN THE ROSE-BUSH

BY

MARY ELEANOR WILKINS

FORD VILLAGE has no railroad station, being on the other side of the river from Porter's Falls, and accessible only by the ford which gives it its name, and a ferry line.

The ferry-boat was waiting when Rebecca Flint got off the train with her bag and lunch-basket. When she and her small trunk were safely embarked, she sat stiff and straight and calm in the ferry-boat as it shot swiftly and smoothly across stream. There was a horse attached to a light country wagon on board, and he pawed the deck uneasily. His owner stood near, with a wary eye upon him, although he was chewing, with as dully reflective an expression as a cow. Beside Rebecca sat a woman of about her own age, who kept looking at her with furtive curiosity; her husband, short and stout and saturnine, stood near her. Rebecca paid no attention to either of them. She was tall and spare and pale, the type of a spinster, yet with rudimentary lines and expressions of matronhood. She all unconsciously held her shawl, rolled up in a canvas bag, on her left hip, as if it had been a child. She wore a settled

frown of dissent at life, but it was the frown of a mother who regarded life as a froward child, rather than as an everwhelming fate.

The other woman continued staring at her; she was mildly stupid, except for an over-developed curiosity which made her at times sharp beyond belief. Her eyes glittered, red spots came on her flaccid cheeks; she kept opening her mouth to speak, making little abortive motions. Finally she could endure it no longer; she nudged Rebecca boldly.

"A pleasant day," said she.

Rebecca looked at her and nodded coldly.

"Yes, very," she assented.

"Have you come far?"

"I have come from Michigan."

"Oh!" said the woman, with awe. "It's a long way," she remarked presently.

"Yes, it is," replied Rebecca, conclusively.

Still the other woman was not daunted; there was something which she determined to know, possibly roused thereto by a vague sense of incongruity in the other's appearance. "It's a long ways to come and leave a family," she remarked with painful slyness.

"I ain't got any family to leave," returned Rebecca shortly.

"Then you ain't——"

"No, I ain't."

"Oh!" said the woman.

Rebecca looked straight ahead at the race of the river.

It was a long ferry. Finally Rebecca herself waxed unexpectedly loquacious. She turned to the other woman and inquired if she knew John Dent's widow who lived in Ford Village. "Her husband died about three years ago," said she, by way of detail.

The woman started violently. She turned pale, then she flushed; she cast a strange glance at her husband, who was regarding both women with a sort of stolid keenness.

"Yes, I guess I do," faltered the woman finally.

"Well, his first wife was my sister," said Rebecca with the air of one imparting important intelligence.

"Was she?" responded the other woman feebly. She glanced at her husband with an expression of doubt and terror, and he shook his head forbiddingly.

"I'm going to see her, and take my niece Agnes home with me," said Rebecca.

Then the woman gave such a violent start that she noticed it.

"What is the matter?" she asked.

"Nothin', I guess," replied the woman, with eyes on her husband, who was slowly shaking his head, like a Chinese toy

"Is my niece sick?" asked Rebecca with quick suspicion.

"No, she ain't sick," replied the woman with alacrity. Then she caught her breath with a gasp.

"When did you see her?"

"Let me see; I ain't seen her for some little time," replied the woman. Then she caught her breath again.

"She ought to have grown up real pretty, if she takes after my sister. She was a real pretty woman," Rebecca said wistfully.

"Yes, I guess she did grow up pretty," replied the woman in a trembling voice.

"What kind of a woman is the second wife?"

The woman glanced at her husband's warning face. She continued to gaze at him while she replied in a choking voice to Rebecca:

"I—guess she's a nice woman," she replied. "I—don't know, I—guess so. I—don't see much of her."

"I felt kind of hurt that John married again so quick," said Rebecca; "but I suppose he wanted his house kept, and Agnes wanted care. I wasn't so situated that I could take her when her mother died. I had my own mother to care for, and I was school-teaching. Now mother has gone, and my uncle died six months ago and left me quite a little property, and I've given up my school, and I've come for Agnes. I guess she'll be glad to go with me, though I suppose her stepmother is a good woman and has always done for her."

The man's warning shake at his wife was fairly portentous.

"I guess so," said she.

"John always wrote that she was a beautiful woman," said Rebecca.

Then the ferry-boat grated on the shore.

John Dent's widow had sent a horse and wagon to meet her sister-in-law. When the woman and her husband went down the road, on which Rebecca in the wagon with her trunk soon passed them, she said reproachfully:

"Seems as if I'd ought to have told her, Thomas."

"Let her find it out herself," replied the man. "Don't you go to burnin' your fingers in other folks's puddin', Maria."

"Do you s'pose she'll see anything?" asked the woman, with a spasmodic shudder and a terrified roll of her eyes.

"See!" returned her husband with stolid scorn. "Better be sure there's anything to see."

"Oh, Thomas, they say——"

"Lord, ain't you found out that what they say is mostly lies?"

"But if it should be true, and she's a nervous woman, she might be scared enough to lose her wits," said his wife, staring uneasily after Rebecca's erect figure in the waggon disappearing over the crest of the hilly road.

"Wits that are so easy upset ain't worth much," declared the man. "You keep out of it, Maria."

Rebecca, in the meantime, rode on in the wagon, beside a flaxen-headed boy, who looked, to her understanding, not very bright. She

asked him a question, and he paid no attention. She repeated it, and he responded with a bewildered and incoherent grunt. Then she let him alone, after making sure that he knew how to drive straight.

They had travelled about half a mile, passed the village square, and gone a short distance beyond, when the boy drew up with a sudden "Whoa!" before a very prosperous-looking house. It had been one of the aboriginal cottages of the vicinity, small and white, with a roof extending on one side over a piazza, and a tiny "L" jutting out in the rear, on the right hand. Now the cottage was transformed by dormer windows, a bay window on the piazzaless side, a carved railing down the front steps, and a modern hard-wood door.

"Is this John Dent's house?" asked Rebecca.

The boy was as sparing of speech as a philosopher. His only response was in flinging the reins over the horse's back, stretching out one foot to the shaft, and leaping out of the wagon, then going around to the rear for the trunk. Rebecca got out and went toward the house. Its white paint had a new gloss; its blinds were an immaculate apple green; the lawn was trimmed as smooth as velvet, and it was dotted with scrupulous groups of hydrangeas and cannas.

"I always understood that John Dent was well-to-do," Rebecca reflected comfortably. "I guess Agnes will have considerable. I've got

enough, but it will come in handy for her schooling. She can have advantages."

The boy dragged the trunk up the fine gravel-walk, but before he reached the steps leading up to the piazza, for the house stood on a terrace, the front door opened and a fair, frizzled head of a very large and handsome woman appeared. She held up her black silk skirt, disclosing voluminous ruffles of starched embroidery, and waited for Rebecca. She smiled placidly, her pink, double-chinned face widened and dimpled, but her blue eyes were wary and calculating. She extended her hand as Rebecca climbed the steps.

"This is Miss Flint, I suppose," said she.

"Yes, ma'am," replied Rebecca, noticing with bewilderment a curious expression compounded of fear and defiance on the other's face.

"Your letter only arrived this morning," said Mrs. Dent, in a steady voice. Her great face was a uniform pink, and her china-blue eyes were at once aggressive and veiled with secrecy.

"Yes, I hardly thought you'd get my letter," replied Rebecca. "I felt as if I could not wait to hear from you before I came. I supposed you would be so situated that you could have me a little while without putting you out too much, from what John used to write me about his circumstances, and when I had that money so unexpected I felt as if I must come for Agnes. I suppose you will be willing to give her up.

You know she's my own blood, and of course she's no relation to you, though you must have got attached to her. I know from her picture what a sweet girl she must be, and John always said she looked like her own mother, and Grace was a beautiful woman, if she was my sister."

Rebecca stopped and stared at the other woman in amazement and alarm. The great handsome blonde creature stood speechless, livid, gasping, with her hand to her heart, her lips parted in a horrible caricature of a smile.

"Are you sick?" cried Rebecca, drawing near. "Don't you want me to get you some water?"

Then Mrs. Dent recovered herself with a great effort. "It is nothing," she said. "I am subject to—spells. I am over it now. Won't you come in, Miss Flint?"

As she spoke, the beautiful deep-rose colour suffused her face, her blue eyes met her visitor's with the opaqueness of turquoise—with a revelation of blue, but a concealment of all behind.

Rebecca followed her hostess in, and the boy who had waited quiescently, climbed the steps with the trunk. But before they entered the door a strange thing happened. On the upper terrace, close to the piazza-post, grew a great rose-bush, and on it, late in the season though it was, one small red, perfect rose.

Rebecca looked at it, and the other woman

extended her hand with a quick gesture. "Don't you pick that rose!" she brusquely cried.

Rebecca drew herself up with stiff dignity.

"I ain't in the habit of picking other folks's roses without leave," said she.

As Rebecca spoke she started violently, and lost sight of her resentment, for something singular happened. Suddenly the rose-bush was agitated violently as if by a gust of wind, yet it was a remarkably still day. Not a leaf of the hydrangea standing on the terrace close to the rose trembled.

"What on earth——" began Rebecca, then she stopped with a gasp at the sight of the other woman's face. Although a face, it gave somehow the impression of a desperately clutched hand of secrecy.

"Come in!" said she in a harsh voice, which seemed to come forth from her chest with no intervention of the organs of speech. "Come into the house. I'm getting cold out here."

"What makes that rose-bush blow so when there isn't any wind?" asked Rebecca, trembling with vague horror, yet resolute.

"I don't see as it is blowing," returned the woman calmly. And as she spoke, indeed, the bush was quiet.

"It was blowing," declared Rebecca.

"It isn't now," said Mrs. Dent. "I can't try to account for everything that blows out-of-doors. I have too much to do."

She spoke scornfully and confidently, with

defiant, unflinching eyes, first on the bush, then on Rebecca, and led the way into the house.

"It looked queer," persisted Rebecca, but she followed, and also the boy with the trunk.

Rebecca entered an interior, prosperous, even elegant, according to her simple ideas. There were Brussels carpets, lace curtains, and plenty of brilliant upholstery and polished wood.

"You're real nicely situated," remarked Rebecca, after she had become a little accustomed to her new surroundings and the two women were seated at the tea-table.

Mrs. Dent stared with a hard complacency from behind her silver-plated service. "Yes, I be," said she.

"You got all the things new?" said Rebecca hesitatingly, with a jealous memory of her dead sister's bridal furnishings.

"Yes," said Mrs. Dent; "I was never one to want dead folks's things, and I had money enough of my own, so I wasn't beholden to John. I had the old duds put up at auction. They didn't bring much."

"I suppose you saved some for Agnes. She'll want some of her poor mother's things when she is grown up," said Rebecca with some indignation.

The defiant stare of Mrs. Dent's blue eyes waxed more intense. "There's a few things up garret," said she.

"She'll be likely to value them," remarked Rebecca. As she spoke she glanced at the

window. "Isn't it most time for her to be coming home?" she asked.

"Most time," answered Mrs. Dent carelessly; "but when she gets over to Addie Slocum's she never knows when to come home."

"Is Addie Slocum her intimate friend?"

"Intimate as any."

"Maybe we can have her come out to see Agnes when she's living with me," said Rebecca wistfully. "I suppose she'll be likely to be homesick at first."

"Most likely," answered Mrs. Dent.

"Does she call you mother?" Rebecca asked.

"No, she calls me Aunt Emeline," replied the other woman shortly. "When did you say you were going home?"

"In about a week, I thought, if she can be ready to go so soon," answered Rebecca with a surprised look.

She reflected that she would not remain a day longer than she could help after such an inhospitable look and question.

"Oh, as far as that goes," said Mrs. Dent, "it wouldn't make any difference about her being ready. You could go home whenever you felt that you must, and she could come afterward."

"Alone?"

"Why not? She's a big girl now, and you don't have to change cars."

"My niece will go home when I do, and not travel alone; and if I can't wait here for her, in

the house that used to be her mother's and my sister's home, I'll go and board somewhere," returned Rebecca with warmth.

"Oh, you can stay here as long as you want to. You're welcome," said Mrs. Dent.

Then Rebecca started. "There she is!" she declared in a trembling, exultant voice. Nobody knew how she longed to see the girl.

"She isn't as late as I thought she'd be," said Mrs. Dent, and again that curious, subtle change passed over her face, and again it settled into that stony impassiveness.

Rebecca stared at the door, waiting for it to open. "Where is she?" she asked presently.

"I guess she's stopped to take off her hat in the entry," suggested Mrs. Dent.

Rebecca waited. "Why don't she come? It can't take her all this time to take off her hat."

For answer Mrs. Dent rose with a stiff jerk and threw open the door.

"Agnes!" she called. "Agnes!" Then she turned and eyed Rebecca. "She ain't there."

"I saw her pass the window," said Rebecca in bewilderment.

"You must have been mistaken."

"I know I did," persisted Rebecca.

"You couldn't have."

"I did. I saw first a shadow go over the ceiling, then I saw her in the glass there"—she pointed to a mirror over the sideboard opposite —"and then the shadow passed the window."

"How did she look in the glass?"

"Light and light-haired, with the light hair kind of tossing over her forehead."

"You couldn't have seen her."

"Was that like Agnes?"

"Like enough; but of course you didn't see her. You've been thinking so much about her that you thought you did."

"You thought *you* did."

"I thought I saw a shadow pass the window, but I must have been mistaken. She didn't come in, or we would have seen her before now. I knew it was too early for her to get home from Addie Slocum's, anyhow."

When Rebecca went to bed Agnes had not returned. Rebecca had resolved that she would not retire until the girl came, but she was very tired, and she reasoned with herself that she was foolish. Besides, Mrs. Dent suggested that Agnes might go to the church social with Addie Slocum. When Rebecca suggested that she be sent for and told that her aunt had come, Mrs. Dent laughed meaningly.

"I guess you'll find out that a young girl ain't so ready to leave a sociable, where there's boys, to see her aunt," said she.

"She's too young," said Rebecca incredulously and indignantly.

"She's sixteen," replied Mrs. Dent; "and she's always been great for the boys."

"She's going to school four years after I

get her before she thinks of boys," declared Rebecca.

"We'll see," laughed the other woman.

After Rebecca went to bed, she lay awake a long time listening for the sound of girlish laughter and a boy's voice under her window; then she fell asleep.

The next morning she was down early. Mrs. Dent, who kept no servants, was busily preparing breakfast.

"Don't Agnes help you about breakfast?" asked Rebecca.

"No, I let her lay," replied Mrs. Dent shortly.

"What time did she get home last night?"

"She didn't get home."

"What?"

"She didn't get home. She stayed with Addie. She often does."

"Without sending you word?"

"Oh, she knew I wouldn't worry."

"When will she be home?"

"Oh, I guess she'll be along pretty soon."

Rebecca was uneasy, but she tried to conceal it, for she knew of no good reason for uneasiness. What was there to occasion alarm in the fact of one young girl staying overnight with another? She could not eat much breakfast. Afterward she went out on the little piazza, although her hostess strove furtively to stop her.

"Why don't you go out back of the house? It's real pretty—a view over the river," she said.

"I guess I'll go out here," replied Rebecca. She had a purpose: to watch for the absent girl.

Presently Rebecca came hustling into the house through the sitting-room, into the kitchen where Mrs. Dent was cooking.

"That rose-bush!" she gasped.

Mrs. Dent turned and faced her.

"What of it?"

"It's a-blowing."

"What of it?"

"There isn't a mite of wind this morning."

Mrs. Dent turned with an inimitable toss of her fair head. "If you think I can spend my time puzzling over such nonsense as——" she began, but Rebecca interrupted her with a cry and a rush to the door.

"There she is now!" she cried.

She flung the door wide open, and curiously enough a breeze came in and her own gray hair tossed, and a paper blew off the table to the floor with a loud rustle, but there was nobody in sight.

"There's nobody here," Rebecca said.

She looked blankly at the other woman, who brought her rolling-pin down on a slab of pie-crust with a thud.

"I didn't hear anybody," she said calmly.

"*I saw somebody pass that window!*"

"You were mistaken again."

"I *know* I saw somebody."

"You couldn't have. Please shut that door."

Rebecca shut the door. She sat down beside the window and looked out on the autumnal yard, with its little curve of footpath to the kitchen door.

"What smells so strong of roses in this room?" she said presently. She sniffed hard.

"I don't smell anything but these nutmegs."

"It is not nutmeg."

"I don't smell anything else."

"Where do you suppose Agnes is?"

"Oh, perhaps she has gone over the ferry to Porter's Falls with Addie. She often does. Addie's got an aunt over there, and Addie's got a cousin, a real pretty boy."

"You suppose she's gone over there?"

"Mebbe. I shouldn't wonder."

"When should she be home?"

"Oh, not before afternoon."

Rebecca waited with all the patience she could muster. She kept reassuring herself, telling herself that it was all natural, that the other woman could not help it, but she made up her mind that if Agnes did not return that afternoon she should be sent for.

When it was four o'clock she started up with resolution. She had been furtively watching the onyx clock on the sitting-room mantel; she had timed herself. She had said that if Agnes was not home by that time she should demand that she be sent for. She rose and stood before Mrs. Dent, who looked up coolly from her embroidery.

"I've waited just as long as I'm going to," she said. "I've come 'way from Michigan to see my own sister's daughter and take her home with me. I've been here ever since yesterday —twenty-four hours—and I haven't seen her. Now I'm going to. I want her sent for."

Mrs. Dent folded her embroidery and rose.

"Well, I don't blame you," she said. "It is high time she came home. I'll go right over and get her myself."

Rebecca heaved a sigh of relief. She hardly knew what she had suspected or feared, but she knew that her position had been one of antagonism if not accusation, and she was sensible of relief.

"I wish you would," she said gratefully, and went back to her chair, while Mrs. Dent got her shawl and her little white head-tie. "I wouldn't trouble you, but I do feel as if I couldn't wait any longer to see her," she remarked apologetically.

"Oh, it ain't any trouble at all," said Mrs. Dent as she went out. "I don't blame you; you have waited long enough."

Rebecca sat at the window watching breathlessly until Mrs. Dent came stepping through the yard alone. She ran to the door and saw, hardly noticing it this time, that the rose-bush was again violently agitated, yet with no wind evident elsewhere.

"Where is she?" she cried.

Mrs. Dent laughed with stiff lips as she came

up the steps over the terrace. "Girls will be girls," said she. "She's gone with Addie to Lincoln. Addie's got an uncle who's conductor on the train, and lives there, and he got 'em passes, and they're goin' to stay to Addie's Aunt Margaret's a few days. Mrs. Slocum said Agnes didn't have time to come over and ask me before the train went, but she took it on herself to say it would be all right, and——"

"Why hadn't she been over to tell you?" Rebecca was angry, though not suspicious. She even saw no reason for her anger.

"Oh, she was putting up grapes. She was coming over just as soon as she got the black off her hands. She heard I had company, and her hands were a sight. She was holding them over sulphur matches."

"You say she's going to stay a few days?" repeated Rebecca dazedly.

"Yes; till Thursday, Mrs Slocum said."

"How far is Lincoln from here?"

"About fifty miles. It'll be a real treat to her. Mrs. Slocum's sister is a real nice woman."

"It is goin' to make it pretty late about my goin' home."

"If you don't feel as if you could wait, I'll get her ready and send her on just as soon as I can," Mrs. Dent said sweetly.

"I'm going to wait," said Rebecca grimly.

The two women sat down again, and Mrs. Dent took up her embroidery.

"Is there any sewing I can do for her?"

Rebecca asked finally in a desperate way. "If I can get her sewing along some——"

Mrs. Dent arose with alacrity and fetched a mass of white from the closet. "Here," she said, "if you want to sew the lace on this night-gown. I was going to put her to it, but she'll be glad enough to get rid of it. She ought to have this and one more before she goes. I don't like to send her away without some good under-clothing."

Rebecca snatched at the little white garment and sewed feverishly.

That night she wakened from a deep sleep a little after midnight and lay a minute trying to collect her faculties and explain to herself what she was listening to. At last she discovered that it was the then popular strains of "The Maiden's Prayer" floating up through the floor from the piano in the sitting-room below. She jumped up, threw a shawl over her nightgown, and hurried downstairs trembling. There was nobody in the sitting-room; the piano was silent. She ran to Mrs. Dent's bedroom and called hysterically:

"Emeline! Emeline!"

"What is it?" asked Mrs. Dent's voice from the bed. The voice was stern, but had a note of consciousness in it.

"Who—who was that playing 'The Maiden's Prayer' in the sitting-room, on the piano?"

"I didn't hear anybody."

"There was some one."

"I didn't hear anything."

"I tell you there was some one. But—*there ain't anybody there.*"

"I didn't hear anything."

"I did—somebody playing 'The Maiden's Prayer' on the piano. Has Agnes got home? I *want to know.*"

"Of course Agnes hasn't got home," answered Mrs. Dent with rising inflection. "Be you gone crazy over that girl? The last boat from Porter's Falls was in before we went to bed. Of course she ain't come."

"I heard——"

"You were dreaming."

"I wasn't; I was broad awake."

Rebecca went back to her chamber and kept her lamp burning all night.

The next morning her eyes upon Mrs. Dent were wary and blazing with suppressed excitement. She kept opening her mouth as if to speak, then frowning, and setting her lips hard. After breakfast she went upstairs, and came down presently with her coat and bonnet.

"Now, Emeline," she said, "I want to know where the Slocums live."

Mrs. Dent gave a strange, long, half-lidded glance at her. She was finishing her coffee.

"Why?" she asked.

"I'm going over there and find out if they have heard anything from her daughter and Agnes since they went away. I don't like what I heard last night."

"You must have been dreaming."

"It don't make any odds whether I was or not. Does she play 'The Maiden's Prayer' on the piano? I want to know."

"What if she does? She plays it a little, I believe. I don't know. She don't half play it, anyhow; she ain't got an ear."

"That wasn't half played last night. I don't like such things happening. I ain't superstitious, but I don't like it. I'm going. Where do the Slocums live?"

"You go down the road over the bridge past the old grist mill, then you turn to the left; it's the only house for half a mile. You can't miss it. It has a barn with a ship in full sail on the cupola."

"Well, I'm going. I don't feel easy."

About two hours later Rebecca returned. There were red spots on her cheeks. She looked wild. "I've been there," she said, "and there isn't a soul at home. Something *has* happened."

"What has happened?"

"I don't know. Something. I had a warning last night. There wasn't a soul there. They've been sent for to Lincoln."

"Did you see anybody to ask?" asked Mrs. Dent with thinly concealed anxiety.

"I asked the woman that lives on the turn of the road. She's stone deaf. I suppose you know. She listened while I screamed at her to know where the Slocums were, and then she said, 'Mrs. Smith don't live here.' I didn't

see anybody on the road, and that's the only house. What do you suppose it means?"

"I don't suppose it means much of anything," replied Mrs. Dent coolly. "Mr. Slocum is conductor on the railroad, and he'd be away anyway, and Mrs. Slocum often goes early when he does, to spend the day with her sister in Porter's Falls. She'd be more likely to go away than Addie."

"And you don't think anything has happened?" Rebecca asked with diminishing distrust before the reasonableness of it.

"Land, no!"

Rebecca went upstairs to lay aside her coat and bonnet. But she came hurrying back with them still on.

"Who's been in my room?" she gasped. Her face was pale as ashes.

Mrs. Dent also paled as she regarded her.

"What do you mean?" she asked slowly.

"I found when I went upstairs that—little nightgown of—Agnes's on—the bed, laid out. It was—*laid out.* The sleeves were folded across the bosom, and there was that little red rose between them. Emeline, what is it? Emeline, what's the matter? Oh!"

Mrs. Dent was struggling for breath in great, choking gasps. She clung to the back of a chair. Rebecca, trembling herself so she could scarcely keep on her feet, got her some water.

As soon as she recovered herself Mrs. Dent

regarded her with eyes full of the strangest mixture of fear and horror and hostility.

"What do you mean talking so?" she said in a hard voice.

"It *is there*."

"Nonsense. You threw it down and it fell that way."

"It was folded in my bureau drawer."

"It couldn't have been."

"Who picked that red rose?"

"Look on the bush," Mrs. Dent replied shortly.

Rebecca looked at her; her mouth gaped. She hurried out of the room. When she came back her eyes seemed to protrude. (She had in the meantime hastened upstairs, and come down with tottering steps, clinging to the banisters.)

"Now I want to know what all this means?" she demanded.

"What what means?"

"The rose is on the bush, and it's gone from the bed in my room! Is this house haunted, or what?"

"I don't know anything about a house being haunted. I don't believe in such things. Be you crazy?" Mrs. Dent spoke with gathering force. The colour flashed back to her cheeks.

"No," said Rebecca shortly. "I ain't crazy yet, but I shall be if this keeps on much longer. I'm going to find out where that girl is before night."

Mrs. Dent eyed her.

"What be you going to do?"

"I'm going to Lincoln."

A faint, triumphant smile overspread Mrs. Dent's large face.

"You can't," said she; "there ain't any train."

"No train?"

"No; there ain't any afternoon train from the Falls to Lincoln."

"Then I'm going over to the Slocums' again to-night."

However, Rebecca did not go; such a rain came up as deterred even her resolution, and she had only her best dresses with her. Then in the evening came the letter from the Michigan village which she had left nearly a week ago. It was from her cousin, a single woman, who had come to keep her house while she was away. It was a pleasant, unexciting letter enough, all the first of it, and related mostly how she missed Rebecca; how she hoped she was having pleasant weather and kept her health; and how her friend, Mrs. Greenaway, had come to stay with her since she had felt lonesome the first night in the house; how she hoped Rebecca would have no objections to this, although nothing had been said about it, since she had not realised that she might be nervous alone. The cousin was painfully conscientious, hence the letter. Rebecca smiled in spite of her disturbed mind as she read it. Then her eye caught the postscript. That was in a different

hand, purporting to be written by the friend, Mrs. Hannah Greenaway, informing her that the cousin had fallen down the cellar stairs and broken her hip, and was in a dangerous condition, and begging Rebecca to return at once, as she herself was rheumatic and unable to nurse her properly, and no one else could be obtained.

Rebecca looked at Mrs. Dent, who had come to her room with the letter quite late; it was half-past nine, and she had gone upstairs for the night.

"Where did this come from?" she asked.

"Mr. Amblecrom brought it," she replied.

"Who's he?"

"The postmaster. He often brings the letters that come on the late mail. He knows I ain't anybody to send. He brought yours about your coming. He said he and his wife came over on the ferry-boat with you."

"I remember him," Rebecca replied shortly. "There's bad news in this letter."

Mrs. Dent's face took on an expression of serious inquiry.

"Yes, my Cousin Harriet has fallen down the cellar stairs—they were always dangerous—and she's broken her hip, and I've got to take the first train home to-morrow."

"You don't say so. I'm dreadfully sorry."

"No, you ain't sorry!" said Rebecca, with a look as if she leaped. "You're glad. I don't know why, but you're glad. You've wanted to

get rid of me for some reason ever since I came. I don't know why. You're a strange woman. Now you've got your way, and I hope you're satisfied."

"How you talk."

Mrs. Dent spoke in a faintly injured voice, but there was a light in her eyes.

"I talk the way it is. Well, I'm going to-morrow morning, and I want you, just as soon as Agnes Dent comes home, to send her out to me. Don't you wait for anything. You pack what clothes she's got, and don't wait even to mend them, and you buy her ticket. I'll leave the money, and you send her along. She don't have to change cars. You start her off, when she gets home, on the next train!"

"Very well," replied the other woman. She had an expression of covert amusement.

"Mind you do it."

"Very well, Rebecca."

Rebecca started on her journey the next morning. When she arrived, two days later, she found her cousin in perfect health. She found, moreover, that the friend had not written the postscript in the cousin's letter. Rebecca would have returned to Ford Village the next morning, but the fatigue and nervous strain had been too much for her. She was not able to move from her bed. She had a species of low fever induced by anxiety and fatigue. But she could write, and she did, to the Slocums, and she received no answer. She also wrote to Mrs.

Dent; she even sent numerous telegrams, with no response. Finally she wrote to the postmaster, and an answer arrived by the first possible mail. The letter was short, curt, and to the purpose. Mr. Amblecrom, the postmaster, was a man of few words, and especially wary as to his expressions in a letter.

"Dear Madam," he wrote, "your favour rec'ed. No Slocums in Ford Village. All dead. Addie ten years ago, her mother two years later, her father five. House vacant. Mrs. John Dent said to have neglected stepdaughter. Girl was sick. Medicine not given. Talk of taking action. Not enough evidence. House said to be haunted. Strange sights and sounds. Your niece, Agnes Dent, died a year ago, about this time.

"Yours truly,

"THOMAS AMBLECROM."

WANDERING WILLIE'S TALE

(From "Redgauntlet")

BY

SIR WALTER SCOTT

YE maun have heard of Sir Robert Redgauntlet of that Ilk, who lived in these parts before the dear years. The country will lang mind him; and our fathers used to draw breath thick if ever they heard him named. He was out wi' the Hielandmen in Montrose's time; and again he was in the hills wi' Glencairn in the saxteen hundred and fifty-twa; and sae when King Charles the Second came in, wha was in sic favour as the Laird of Redgauntlet? He was knighted at Lonon court, wi' the King's ain sword; and being a red-hot prelatist, he came down here, rampauging like a lion, with commissions of lieutenancy (and of lunacy, for what I ken), to put down a' the Whigs and Covenanters in the country. Wild wark they made of it; for the Whigs were as dour as the Cavaliers were fierce, and it was which should first tire the other. Redgauntlet was aye for the strong hand; and his name is kenn'd as wide in the country as Claverhouse's or Tam Dalyell's. Glen, nor dargle, nor mountain, nor

cave could hide the puir Hill-folk when Redgauntlet was out with bugle and bloodhound after them, as if they had been sae mony deer. And troth when they fand them, they didna mak muckle mair ceremony than a Hielandman wi' a roebuck. It was just, "Will ye tak the test?" If not, "Make ready—present—fire!" and there lay the recusant.

Far and wide was Sir Robert hated and feared. Men thought he had a direct compact with Satan; that he was proof against steel, and that bullets happed aff his buff-coat like hail-stanes from a hearth; that he had a mear that would turn a hare on the side of Carrifra Gauns —and muckle to the same purpose, of whilk mair anon. The best blessing they wared on him was, "Deil scowp wi' Redgauntlet!" He wasna a bad maister to his ain folk though, and was weel aneugh liked by his tenants; and as for the lackies and troopers that raid out wi' him to the persecutions, as the Whigs ca'd those killing times, they wad hae drunken themsells blind to his health at ony time.

Now ye are to ken that my gudesire lived on Redgauntlet's grund; they ca' the place Primrose Knowe. We had lived on the grund, and under the Redgauntlets, since the riding days, and lang before. It was a pleasant bit; and I think the air is callerer and fresher there than onywhere else in the country. It's a' deserted now; and I sat on the broken door-cheek three days since, and was glad I couldna

see the plight the place was in; but that's a' wide o' the mark. There dwelt my gudesire, Steenie Steenson, a rambling, rattling chiel he had been in his young days, and could play weel on the pipes; he was famous at "Hoopers and Girders," a' Cumberland couldna touch him at "Jockie Lattin," and he had the finest finger for the backlilt between Berwick and Carlisle. The like o' Steenie wasna the sort that they made Whigs o'. And so he became a Tory, as they ca' it, which we now ca' Jacobites, just out of a kind of needcessity, that he might belang to some side or other. He had nae ill-will to the Whig bodies, and liked little to see the blude rin, though, being obliged to follow Sir Robert in hunting and hosting, watching and warding, he saw muckle mischief, and maybe did some, that he couldna avoid.

Now Steenie was a kind of favourite with his master, and kenn'd a' the folks about the castle, and was often sent for to play the pipes when they were at their merriment. Auld Dougal MacCallum, the butler, that had followed Sir Robert through gude and ill, thick and thin, pool and stream, was specially fond of the pipes, and aye gae my gudesire his gude word wi' the laird; for Dougal could turn his master round his finger.

Weel, round came the Revolution, and it had like to have broken the hearts baith of Dougal and his master. But the change was not a'thegither sae great as they feared, and other

folk thought for. The Whigs made an unco crawing what they wad do with their auld enemies, and in special wi' Sir Robert Redgauntlet. But there were ower mony great folks dipped in the same doings to mak a spick and span new warld. So Parliament passed it a' ower easy; and Sir Robert, bating that he was held to hunting foxes instead of Covenanters, remained just the man he was. His revel was as loud, and his hall as weel lighted, as ever had been, though maybe he lacked the fines of the Nonconformists, that used to come to stock his larder and cellar; for it is certain he began to be keener about the rents than his tenants used to find him before, and they behoved to be prompt to the rent-day, or else the laird wasna pleased. And he was sic an awsome body that naebody cared to anger him; for the oaths he swore, and the rage that he used to get into, and the looks that he put on, made men sometimes think him a devil incarnate.

Weel, my gudesire was nae manager—no that he was a very great misguider—but he hadna the saving gift, and he got twa terms' rent in arrear. He got the first brash at Whitsunday put ower wi' fair word and piping; but when Martinmas came, there was a summons from the grund-officer to come wi' the rent on a day preceese, or else Steenie behoved to flit. Sair wark he had to get the siller; but he was weel-freended, and at last he got the haill scraped thegither—a thousand merks; the maist

of it was from a neighbour they ca'd Laurie Lapraik—a sly tod. Laurie had walth o' gear—could hunt wi' the hound and rin wi' the hare—and be Whig or Tory, saunt or sinner, as the wind stood. He was a professor in this Revolution warld; but he liked an orra sough of this warld, and a tune on the pipes weel aneugh at a bye-time; and abune a' he thought he had gude security for the siller he lent my gudesire ower the stocking at Primrose Knowe.

Away trots my gudesire to Redgauntlet Castle, wi' a heavy purse and a light heart, glad to be out of the laird's danger. Weel, the first thing he learned at the castle was that Sir Robert had fretted himsell into a fit of the gout, because he did not appear before twelve o'clock. It wasna a'thegither for sake of the money, Dougal thought; but because he didna like to part wi' my gudesire aff the grund. Dougal was glad to see Steenie, and brought him into the great oak parlour, and there sat the laird his leesome lane, excepting that he had beside him a great ill-favoured jackanape, that was a special pet of his—a cankered beast it was, and mony an ill-natured trick it played; ill to please it was, and easily angered—ran about the haill castle, chattering and yowling, and pinching and biting folk, especially before ill weather, or disturbances in the state. Sir Robert ca'd it Major Weir, after the warlock that was burnt; and few folk liked either the name or the conditions of the creature—they thought there was

something in it by ordinar—and my gudesire was not just easy in mind when the door shut on him, and he saw himself in the room wi' naebody but the laird, Dougal MacCallum, and the major, a thing that hadna chanced to him before.

Sir Robert sat, or, I should say, lay, in a great armed chair, wi' his grand velvet gown, and his feet on a cradle; for he had baith gout and gravel, and his face looked as gash and ghastly as Satan's. Major Weir sat opposite to him, in a red laced coat, and the laird's wig on his head; and aye as Sir Robert girned wi' pain, the jackanape girned too, like a sheep's-head between a pair of tangs—an ill-faured, fearsome couple they were. The laird's buff-coat was hung on a pin behind him, and his broadsword and his pistols within reach; for he keepit up the auld fashion of having the weapons ready, and a horse saddled day and night, just as he used to do when he was able to loup on horseback, and away after ony of the Hill-fok he could get speerings of. Some said it was for fear of the Whigs taking vengeance, but I judge it was just his auld custom—he wasna gien to fear ony-thing. The rental-book, wi' its black cover and brass clasps, was lying beside him; and a book of sculduggery sangs was put betwixt the leaves, to keep it open at the place where it bore evidence against the goodman of Primrose Knowe, as behind the hand with his mails and duties. Sir Robert gave my gudesire a look as if he

would have withered his heart in his bosom. Ye maun ken he had a way of bending his brows that men saw the visible mark of a horse-shoe in his forehead, deep-dinted, as if it had been stamped there.

"Are ye come light-handed, ye son of a toom whistle?" said Sir Robert. "Zounds! if you are——"

My gudesire, with as gude a countenance as he could put on, made a leg, and placed the bag of money on the table wi' a dash, like a man that does something clever. The laird drew it to him hastily. "Is it all here, Steenie, man?"

"Your honour will find it right," said my gudesire.

"Here, Dougal," said the laird, "gie Steenie a tass of brandy downstairs, till I count the siller and write the receipt."

But they werena out of the room when Sir Robert gied a yelloch that garr'd the castle rock. Back ran Dougal—in flew the livery-men —yell on yell gied the laird, ilk ane mair awfu' than the ither. My gudesire knew not whether to stand or flee, but he ventured back into the parlour, where a' was gaun hirdie-girdie—naebody to say "come in" or "gae out." Terribly the laird roared for cauld water to his feet, and wine to cool his throat; and "Hell, hell, hell, and its flames," was aye the word in his mouth. They brought him water, and when they plunged his swoln feet into the tub, he cried out it was

burning; and folk say that it *did* bubble and sparkle like a seething cauldron. He flung the cup at Dougal's head, and said he had given him blood instead of burgundy; and, sure aneugh, the lass washed clotted blood aff the carpet the neist day. The jackanape they ca'd Major Weir, it jibbered and cried as if it was mocking its master. My gudesire's head was like to turn: he forgot baith siller and receipt, and downstairs he banged; but as he ran, the shrieks came faint and fainter; there was a deep-drawn shivering groan, and word gaed through the castle that the laird was dead.

Weel, away came my gudesire wi' his finger in his mouth, and his best hope was that Dougal had seen the money-bag, and heard the laird speak of writing the receipt. The young laird, now Sir John, came from Edinburgh to see things put to rights. Sir John and his father never gree'd weel. Sir John had been bred an advocate, and afterwards sat in the last Scots Parliament and voted for the Union, having gotten, it was thought, a rug of the compensations; if his father could have come out of his grave he would have brained him for it on his awn hearthstane. Some thought it was easier counting with the auld rough knight than the fair-spoken young ane—but mair of that anon.

Dougal MacCallum, poor body, neither grat nor graned, but gaed about the house looking like a corpse, but directing, as was his duty, a' the order of the grand funeral. Now, Dougal

looked aye waur and waur when night was coming, and was aye the last to gang to his bed, whilk was in a little round just opposite the chamber of dais, whilk his master occupied while he was living, and where he now lay in state, as they ca'd it, weel-a-day! The night before the funeral, Dougal could keep his awn counsel nae langer: he came doun with his proud spirit, and fairly asked auld Hutcheon to sit in his room with him for an hour. When they were in the round, Dougal took ae tass of brandy to himsell and gave another to Hutcheon, and wished him all health and lang life, and said that, for himsell, he wasna lang for this world; for that, every night since Sir Robert's death, his silver call had sounded from the state chamber, just as it used to do at nights in his lifetime, to call Dougal to help to turn him in his bed. Dougal said that, being alone with the dead on that floor of the tower (for naebody cared to wake Sir Robert Redgauntlet like another corpse), he had never daured to answer the call, but that now his conscience checked him for neglecting his duty; for, "though death breaks service," said MacCallum, "it shall never break my service to Sir Robert; and I will answer his next whistle, so be you will stand by me, Hutcheon."

Hutcheon had nae will to work, but he had stood by Dougal in battle and broil, and he wad not fail him at this pinch; so down the carles sat ower a stoup of brandy, and Hutcheon, who

was something of a clerk, would have read a chapter of the Bible; but Dougal would hear naething but a blaud of Davie Lindsay, whilk was the waur preparation.

When midnight came, and the house was quiet as the grave, sure aneugh the silver whistle sounded as sharp and shrill as if Sir Robert was blowing it, and up gat the twa auld serving-men and tottered into the room where the dead man lay. Hutcheon saw aneugh at the first glance; for there were torches in the room, which showed him the foul fiend in his ain shape, sitting on the laird's coffin! Ower he couped as if he had been dead. He could not tell how lang he lay in a trance at the door, but when he gathered himself he cried on his neighbour, and getting nae answer, raised the house, when Dougal was found lying dead within twa steps of the bed where his master's coffin was placed. As for the whistle, it was gaen anes and aye; but mony a time was it heard at the top of the house on the bartizan, and amang the auld chimneys and turrets, where the howlets have their nests. Sir John hushed the matter up, and the funeral passed over without mair bogle-wark.

But when a' was ower, and the laird was beginning to settle his affairs, every tenant was called up for his arrears, and my gudesire for the full sum that stood him in the rental-book. Weel, away he trots to the castle, to tell his story, and there he is introduced to Sir John,

sitting in his father's chair, in deep mourning, with weepers and hanging cravat, and a small walking rapier by his side, instead of the auld broadsword that had a hundredweight of steel about it, what with blade, chape, and basket-hilt. I have heard their communing so often tauld ower, that I almost think I was there mysell, though I couldna be born at the time.

"I wuss ye joy, sir, of the head seat, and the white loaf, and the braid lairdship. Your father was a kind man to friends and followers; muckle grace to you, Sir John, to fill his shoon—his boots, I suld say, for he seldom wore shoon, unless it were muils when he had the gout."

"Ay, Steenie," quoth the laird, sighing deeply, and putting his napkin to his een, "his was a sudden call, and he will be missed in the country; no time to set his house in order: weel prepared Godward, no doubt, which is the root of the matter, but left us behind a tangled hesp to wind, Steenie. Hem! hem! We maun go to business, Steenie; much to do, and little time to do it in."

Here he opened the fatal volume. I have heard of a thing they call Doomsday Book—I am clear it has been a rental of back-ganging tenants.

"Stephen," said Sir John, still in the same soft, sleekit tone of voice—"Stephen Stevenson, or Steenson, ye are down here for a year's rent behind the hand, due at last term."

Stephen. "Please your honour, Sir John, I paid it to your father."

Sir John. "Ye took a receipt then, doubtless, Stephen, and can produce it?"

Stephen. "Indeed I hadna time, an it like your honour; for nae sooner had I set doun the siller, and just as his honour Sir Robert, that's gaen, drew it till him to count it, and write out the receipt, he was ta'en wi' the pains that removed him."

"That was unlucky," said Sir John, after a pause. "But ye maybe paid it in the presence of somebody. I want but a *talis qualis* evidence, Stephen. I would go ower strictly to work with no poor man."

Stephen. "Troth, Sir John, there was naebody in the room but Dougal MacCallum, the butler. But, as your honour kens, he has e'en followed his auld master."

"Very unlucky again, Stephen," said Sir John, without altering his voice a single note. "The man to whom ye paid the money is dead; and the man who witnessed the payment is dead too; and the siller, which should have been to the fore, is neither seen nor heard tell of in the repositories. How am I to believe a' this?"

Stephen. "I dinna ken, your honour; but there is a bit memorandum note of the very coins—for, God help me! I had to borrow out of twenty purses—and I am sure that ilka man there set down will take his grit oath for what purpose I borrowed the money."

Sir John. "I have little doubt ye *borrowed* the money, Steenie. It is the *payment* to my father that I want to have some proof of."

Stephen. "The siller maun be about the house, Sir John. And since your honour never got it, and his honour that was canna have ta'en it wi' him, maybe some of the family may have seen it."

Sir John. "We will examine the servants, Stephen; that is but reasonable."

But lackey and lass, and page and groom, all denied stoutly that they had ever seen such a bag of money as my gudesire described. What was waur, he had unluckily not mentioned to any living soul of them his purpose of paying his rent. Ae quean had noticed something under his arm, but she took it for the pipes.

Sir John Redgauntlet ordered the servants out of the room, and then said to my gudesire, "Now, Steenie, ye see you have fair play; and, as I have little doubt ye ken better where to find the siller than any other body, I beg, in fair terms, and for your own sake, that you will end this fasherie; for, Stephen, ye maun pay or flit."

"The Lord forgie your opinion," said Stephen, driven almost to his wit's end—"I am an honest man."

"So am I, Stephen," said his honour; "and so are all the folks in the house, I hope. But if there be a knave amongst us, it must be he that tells the story he cannot prove." He paused, and then added, mair sternly: "If I understand

your trick, sir, you want to take advantage of some malicious reports concerning things in this family, and particularly respecting my father's sudden death, thereby to cheat me out of the money, and perhaps take away my character, by insinuating that I have received the rent I am demanding. Where do you suppose this money to be? I insist upon knowing."

My gudesire saw everything look sae muckle against him that he grew nearly desperate; however, he shifted from one foot to another, looked to every corner of the room, and made no answer.

"Speak out, sirrah," said the laird, assuming a look of his father's—a very particular ane, which he had when he was angry: it seemed as if the wrinkles of his frown made that selfsame fearful shape of a horse's shoe in the middle of his brow—"speak out, sir! I *will* know your thoughts. Do you suppose that I have this money?"

"Far be it frae me to say so," said Stephen.

"Do you charge any of my people with having taken it?"

"I wad be laith to charge them that may be innocent," said my gudesire; "and if there be any one that is guilty, I have nae proof."

"Somewhere the money must be, if there is a word of truth in your story," said Sir John; "I ask where you think it is, and demand a correct answer?"

"In hell, if you *will* have my thoughts of it,"

said my gudesire, driven to extremity—"in hell! with your father, his jackanape, and his silver whistle."

Down the stairs he ran, for the parlour was nae place for him after such a word, and he heard the laird swearing blood and wounds behind him, as fast as ever did Sir Robert, and roaring for the bailie and the baron-officer.

Away rode my gudesire to his chief creditor, him they ca'd Laurie Lapraik, to try if he could make onything out of him; but when he tauld his story, he got but the warst word in his wame—thief, beggar, and dyvour were the safest terms; and to the boot of these hard terms, Laurie brought up the auld story of his dipping his hand in the blood of God's saunts, just as if a tenant could have helped riding with the laird, and that a laird like Sir Robert Redgauntlet. My gudesire was by this time far beyond the bounds of patience, and while he and Laurie were at deil speed the liars, he was wanchancie aneugh to abuse Lapraik's doctrine as weel as the man, and said things that garr'd folks' flesh grue that heard them; he wasna just himsell, and he had lived wi' a wild set in his day.

At last they parted, and my gudesire was to ride hame through the wood of Pitmurkie, that is a' fou of black firs, as they say. I ken the wood, but the firs may be black or white for what I can tell. At the entry of the wood there is a wild common, and on the edge of the common a little lonely change-house, that was keepit

then by a hostler-wife—they suld hae ca'd her Tibbie Faw—and there puir Steenie cried for a muchkin of brandy, for he had had no refreshment the haill day. Tibbie was earnest wi' him to take a bite o' meat, but he couldna think o't, nor would he take his foot out of the stirrup, and took off the brandy wholly at twa draughts, and named a toast at each—the first was, the memory of Sir Robert Redgauntlet, and might he never lie quiet in his grave till he had righted his poor bond-tenant; and the second was, a health to Man's Enemy, if he would but get him back the pock of siller, or tell him what came o't, for he saw the haill world was like to regard him as a thief and a cheat, and he took that waur than even the ruin of his house and hauld

On he rode, little caring where. It was a dark night turned, and the trees made it yet darker, and he let the beast take its ain road through the wood; when, all of a sudden, from tired and wearied that it was before, the nag began to spring, and flee, and stend, that my gudesire could hardly keep the saddle; upon the whilk, a horseman, suddenly riding up beside him, said, "That's a mettle beast of yours, freend; will you sell him?" So saying, he touched the horse's neck with his riding-wand, and it fell into its auld heigh-ho of a stumbling trot. "But his spunk's soon out of him, I think," continued the stranger, "and that is like mony a man's courage,

that thinks he wad do great things till he come to the proof."

My gudesire scarce listened to this, but spurred his horse, with "Gude e'en to you, freend."

But it's like the stranger was ane that doesna lightly yield his point; for, ride as Steenie liked, he was aye beside him at the selfsame pace. At last my gudesire, Steenie Steenson, grew half angry, and, to say the truth, half feared.

"What it is that ye want with me, freend?" he said. "If ye be a robber, I have nae money; if ye be a leal man, wanting company, I have nae heart to mirth or speaking; and if ye want to ken the road, I scarce ken it mysell."

"If you will tell me your grief," said the stranger, "I am one that, though I have been sair misca'd in the world, am the only hand for helping my freends."

So my gudesire, to ease his ain heart, mair than from any hope of help, told him the story from beginning to end.

"It's a hard pinch," said the stranger; "but I think I can help you."

"If you could lend the money, sir, and take a lang day—I ken nae other help on earth," said my gudesire.

"But there may be some under the earth," said the stranger. "Come, I'll be frank wi' you; I could lend you the money on bond, but you would maybe scruple my terms. Now, I can tell you that your auld laird is disturbed in

his grave by your curses, and the wailing of your family, and if ye daur venture to go to see him, he will give you the receipt."

My gudesire's hair stood on end at this proposal, but he thought his companion might be some humorsome chield that was trying to frighten him, and might end with lending him the money. Besides, he was bauld wi' brandy, and desperate wi' distress; and he said he had courage to go to the gate of hell, and a step farther, for that receipt.

The stranger laughed.

Weel, they rode on through the thickest of the wood, when, all of a sudden, the horse stopped at the door of a great house; and, but that he knew the place was ten miles off, my father would have thought he was at Redgauntlet Castle. They rode into the outer courtyard, through the muckle faulding yetts, and aneath the auld portcullis; and the whole front of the house was lighted, and there were pipes and fiddles, and as much dancing and deray within as used to be in Sir Robert's house at Pace and Yule, and such high seasons. They lap off, and my gudesire, as seemed to him, fastened his horse to the very ring he had tied him to that morning when he gaed to wait on the young Sir John.

"God!" said my gudesire, "if Sir Robert's death be but a dream!"

He knocked at the ha' door just as he was wont, and his auld acquaintance, Dougal

MacCallum, just after his wont, too, came to open the door, and said, "Piper Steenie, are ye there, lad? Sir Robert has been crying for you."

My gudesire was like a man in a dream; he looked for the stranger, but he was gane for the time. At last he just tried to say, "Ha! Dougal Driveower, are ye living? I thought ye had been dead."

"Never fash yoursell wi' me," said Dougal, "but look to yoursell; and see ye tak naething frae onybody, neither meat, drink, or siller, except just the receipt that is your ain."

So saying, he led the way out through halls and trances that were weel kenn'd to my gudesire, and into the auld oak parlour; and there was as much singing of profane sangs, and birling of red wine, and speaking blasphemy and sculduddry, as had ever been in Redgauntlet Castle when it was at the blythest.

But, Lord take us in keeping! what a set of ghastly revellers they were that sat round that table! My gudesire kenn'd mony that had long before gane to their place, for often had he piped to the most part in the hall of Redgauntlet. There was the fierce Middleton, and the dissolute Rothes, and the crafty Lauderdale; and Dalyell with his bald head and a beard to his girdle; and Earlshall, with Cameron's blude on his hand; wild Bonshaw, that tied blessed Mr. Cargill's limbs till the blude sprung; and Dumbarton Douglas, the twice-turned traitor baith to country and king. There was the Bluidy

Advocate MacKenyie, who, for his worldly wit and wisdom, had been to the rest as a god. And there was Claverhouse, as beautiful as when he lived, with his long, dark, curled locks, streaming down over his laced buff-coat, and his left hand always on his right spule-blade, to hide the wound that the silver bullet had made. He sat apart from them all, and looked at them with a melancholy, haughty countenance; while the rest hallooed, and sung, and laughed, that the room rang. But their smiles were fearfully contorted from time to time; and their laughter passed into such wild sounds as made my gudesire's nails grow blue, and chilled the marrow in his banes.

They that waited at the table were just the wicked serving-men and troopers that had done their work and cruel bidding on earth. There was the Lang Lad of the Nethertown, that helped to take Argyle; and the bishop's summoner, that they called the Deil's Rattle-bag; and the wicked guardsmen, in their laced coats; and the savage Highland Amorites, that shed blood like water; and mony a proud serving-man, haughty of heart and bloody of hand, cringing to the rich, and making them wickeder than they would be; grinding the poor to powder, when the rich had broken them to fragments. And mony, mony mair were coming and ganging, a' as busy in their vocation as if they had been alive.

Sir Robert Redgauntlet, in the midst of a'

this fearful riot, cried, wi' a voice like thunder, on Steenie Piper to come to the board-head where he was sitting, his legs stretched out before him, and swathed up with flannel, with his holster pistols aside him, while the great broadsword rested against his chair, just as my gudesire had seen him the last time upon earth—the very cushion for the jackanape was close to him, but the creature itsell was not there; it wasna its hour, it's likely; for he heard them say as he came forward, "Is not the major come yet?" And another answered, "The jackanape will be here betimes the morn." And when my gudesire came forward, Sir Robert, or his ghaist, or the deevil in his likeness, said, "Weel, piper, hae ye settled wi' my son for the year's rent?"

With much ado my father gat breath to say that Sir John would not settle without his honour's receipt.

"Ye shall hae that for a tune of the pipes, Steenie," said the appearance of Sir Robert. "Play us up, 'Weel hoddled, Luckie.'"

Now this was a tune my gudesire learned frae a warlock, that heard it when they were worshipping Satan at their meetings, and my gudesire had sometimes played it at the ranting suppers in Redgauntlet Castle, but never very willingly; and now he grew cauld at the very name of it, and said, for excuse, he hadna his pipes wi' him.

"MacCallum, ye limb of Beelzebub," said the

fearfu' Sir Robert, "bring Steenie the pipes that I am keeping for him!"

MacCallum brought a pair of pipes that might have served the piper of Donald of the Isles. But he gave my gudesire a nudge as he offered them; and looking secretly and closely, Steenie saw that the chanter was of steel, and heated to a white heat; so he had fair warning not to trust his fingers with it. So he excused himself again, and said he was faint and frightened, and had not wind enough to fill the bag.

"Then ye maun eat and drink, Steenie," said the figure; "for we do little else here; and it's ill speaking between a fou man and a fasting."

Now these were the very words that the bloody Earl of Douglas said to keep the king's messenger in hand, while he cut the head off MacLellan of Bombie, at the Threave Castle, and that put Steenie mair and mair on his guard. So he spoke up like a man, and said he came neither to eat, or drink, or make minstrelsy, but simply for his ain—to ken what was come o' the money he had paid, and to get a discharge for it; and he was so stout-hearted by this time, that he charged Sir Robert for conscience' sake (he had no power to say the holy name), and as he hoped for peace and rest, to spread no snares for him, but just to give him his ain.

The appearance gnashed its teeth and laughed, but it took from a large pocket-book the receipt, and handed it to Steenie. "There is your

receipt, ye pitiful cur; and for the money, my dog-whelp of a son may go look for it in the Cat's Cradle."

My gudesire uttered mony thanks, and was about to retire when Sir Robert roared aloud: "Stop though, thou sack-doudling son of a whore! I am not done with thee. Here we do nothing for nothing; and you must return on this very day twelvemonth to pay your master the homage that you owe me for my protection."

My father's tongue was loosed of a suddenty, and he said aloud: "I refer mysell to God's pleasure, and not to yours."

He had no sooner uttered the word than all was dark around him, and he sunk on the earth with such a sudden shock, that he lost both breath and sense.

How lang Steenie lay there he could not tell, but when he came to himsell he was lying in the auld kirkyard of Redgauntlet parochine, just at the door of the family aisle, and the scutcheon of the auld knight, Sir Robert, hanging over his head. There was a deep morning fog on grass and gravestane around him, and his horse was feeding quietly beside the minister's twa cows. Steenie would have thought the whole was a dream, but he had the receipt in his hand, fairly written and signed by the auld laird; only the last letters of his name were a little disorderly, written like one seized with sudden pain.

Sorely troubled in his mind, he left that dreary place, rode through the mist to Red-

gauntlet Castle, and with much ado he got speech of the laird.

"Well, you dyvour bankrupt," was the first word, "have you brought me my rent?"

"No," answered my gudesire, "I have not; but I have brought your honour Sir Robert's receipt for it."

"How, sirrah? Sir Robert's receipt! You told me he had not given you one."

"Will your honour please to see if that bit line is right?"

Sir John looked at every line, and at every letter, with much attention, and at last at the date, which my gudesire had not observed—"'From my appointed place,' he read, 'this twenty-fifth of November.' What! That is yesterday! Villain, thou must have gone to Hell for this!"

"I got it from your honour's father; whether he be in Heaven or Hell, I know not," said Steenie.

"I will delate you for a warlock to the privy council!" said Sir John. "I will send you to your master, the devil, with the help of a tar-barrel and a torch!"

"I intend to delate mysell to the presbytery," said Steenie, "and tell them all I have seen last night, whilk are things fitter for them to judge of than a borrel man like me."

Sir John paused, composed himsell, and desired to hear the full history; and my gudesire told it him from point to point, as I have told it you—word for word, neither more nor less.

Sir John was silent again for a long time, and at last he said, very composedly: "Steenie, this story of yours concerns the honour of many a noble family besides mine; and if it be a leasing-making, to keep yourself out of my danger, the least you can expect is to have a red-hot iron driven through your tongue, and that will be as bad as scauding your fingers with a red-hot chanter. But yet it may be true, Steenie; and if the money cast up, I shall not know what to think of it. But where shall we find the Cat's Cradle? There are cats enough about the old house, but I think they kitten without the ceremony of bed or cradle."

"We were best ask Hutcheon," said my gudesire; "he kens a' the odd corners about as weel as—another serving-man that is now gane, and that I wad not like to name."

Aweel, Hutcheon, when he was asked, told them that a ruinous turret, lang disused, next to the clock-house, only accessible by a ladder, for the opening was on the outside, and far above the battlements, was called of old the Cat's Cradle.

"There will I go immediately," said Sir John; and he took (with what purpose, Heaven kens) one of his father's pistols from the hall-table, where they had lain since the night he died, and hastened to the battlements.

It was a dangerous place to climb, for the ladder was auld and frail, and wanted ane or twa rounds. However, up got Sir John, and

entered at the turret door, where his body stopped the only little light that was in the bit turret. Something flees at him wi' a vengeance, maist dang him back ower; bang gaed the knight's pistol, and Hutcheon, that held the ladder, and my gudesire that stood beside him, hears a loud skelloch. A minute after, Sir John flings the body of the jackanape down to them, and cries that the siller is fund, and that they should come up and help him. And there was the bag of siller sure aneugh, and mony orra things besides that had been missing for mony a day. And Sir John, when he had riped the turret weel, led my gudesire into the dining-parlour, and took him by the hand, and spoke kindly to him, and said he was sorry he should have doubted his word, and that he would hereafter be a good master to him, to make amends.

"And now, Steenie," said Sir John, "although this vision of yours tends, on the whole, to my father's credit, as an honest man, that he should, even after his death, desire to see justice done to a poor man like you, yet you are sensible that ill-dispositioned men might make bad constructions upon it, concerning his soul's health. So, I think, we had better lay the haill dirdum on that ill-deedie creature, Major Weir, and say naething about your dream in the wood of Pitmurkie. You had taken ower muckle brandy to be very certain about onything; and, Steenie, this receipt (his hand shook while he held it out),

it's but a queer kind of document, and we will do best, I think, to put it quietly in the fire."

"Od, but for as queer as it is, it's a' the voucher I have for my rent," said my gudesire, who was afraid, it may be, of losing the benefit of Sir Robert's discharge.

"I will bear the contents to your credit in the rental-book, and give you a discharge under my own hand," said Sir John, "and that on the spot. And, Steenie, if you can hold your tongue about this matter, you shall sit, from this term downward, at an easier rent."

"Mony thanks to your honour," said Steenie, who saw easily in what corner the wind was; "doubtless I will be conformable to all your honour's commands; only I would willingly speak wi' some powerful minister on the subject, for I do not like the sort of soumons of appointment whilk your honour's father——"

"Do not call the phantom my father!" said Sir John, interrupting him.

"Weel, then, the thing that was so like him," said my gudesire; "he spoke of my coming back to him this time twelvemonth, and it's a weight on my conscience."

"Aweel, then," said Sir John, "if you be so much distressed in mind, you speak to our minister of the parish; he is a douce man, regards the honour of our family, and the mair that he may look for some patronage from me."

Wi' that my gudesire readily agreed that the receipt should be burnt, and the laird threw it

into the chimney with his ain hand. Burn it would not for them, though; but away it flew up the lum, wi' a lang train of sparks at its tail, and a hissing noise like a squib.

My gudesire gaed down to the manse, and the minister, when he had heard the story, said it was his real opinion that, though my gudesire had gaen very far in tampering with dangerous matters, yet, as he had refused the devil's arles (for such was the offer of meat and drink), and had refused to do homage by piping at his bidding, he hoped, that if he held a circumspect walk hereafter, Satan could take little advantage by what was come and gane. And, indeed, my gudesire, of his ain accord, lang forswore baith the pipes and the brandy; it was not even till the year was out, and the fatal day passed, that he would so much as take the fiddle, or drink usquebaugh or tippenny.

Sir John made up his story about the jack-anape as he liked himsell; and some believe till this day there was no more in the matter than the filching nature of the brute. Indeed, ye'll no hinder some to threap that it was nane o' the Auld Enemy that Dougal and Hutcheon saw in the laird's room, but only that wanchancie creature, the major, capering on the coffin; and that, as to the blawing on the laird's whistle that was heard after he was dead, the filthy brute could do that as weel as the laird himsell, if no better. But Heaven kens the truth, whilk first came out by the minister's wife, after Sir

John and her ain gudeman were baith in the moulds. And then, my gudesire, wha was failed in his limbs, but not in his judgment or memory—at least nothing to speak of—was obliged to tell the real narrative to his freends for the credit of his good name. He might else have been charged for a warlock.

But they had baith to sup the sauce o't sooner or later. What was fristed wasna forgiven. Sir John died before he was much over threescore; and it was just like of a moment's illness. And for my gudesire, though he departed in fulness of years, yet there was my father, a yauld man of forty-five, fell down betwixt the stilts of his pleugh, and raise never again, and left nae bairn but me, a puir sightless, fatherless, motherless creature, could neither work nor want. Things gaed weel aneugh at first; for Sir Redwald Redgauntlet, the only son of Sir John, and the oye of auld Sir Robert, and, wae's me! the last of the honourable house, took the farm off our hands, and brought me into his household to have care of me. He liked music, and I had the best teachers baith England and Scotland could gie me. Mony a merry year was I wi' him; but wae's me! he gaed out with other pretty men in the Forty-five—— I'll say nae mair about it.

DENNIS HAGGARTY'S WIFE

BY

WILLIAM MAKEPEACE THACKERAY

THERE was an odious Irishwoman and her daughter who used to frequent the "Royal Hotel" at Leamington some years ago, and who went by the name of Mrs. Major Gam. Gam had been a distinguished officer in his Majesty's service, whom nothing but death and his own amiable wife could overcome. The widow mourned her husband in the most becoming bombazine she could muster, and had at least half an inch of lampblack round the immense visiting-tickets which she left at the houses of the nobility and gentry her friends.

Some of us, I am sorry to say, used to call her Mrs. Major Gammon; for, if the worthy widow had a propensity, it was to talk largely of herself and family (of her own family, for she held her husband's very cheap), and of the wonders of her paternal mansion, Molloyville, county of Mayo. She was of the Molloys of that county; and though I never heard of the family before, I have little doubt, from what Mrs. Major Gam stated, that they were the most ancient and illustrious family of that part of Ireland. I remember there came down to see his aunt a

young fellow with huge red whiskers and tight nankeens, a green coat, and an awful breastpin, who, after two days' stay at the Spa, proposed marriage to Miss S——, or, in default, a duel with her father; and who drove a flash curricle with a bay and a grey, and who was presented with much pride by Mrs. Gam as Castlereagh Molloy of Molloyville. We all agreed that he was the most insufferable snob of the whole season, and were delighted when a bailiff came down in search of him.

Well, this is all I know personally of the Molloyville family; but at the house, if you met the Widow Gam, and talked on any subject in life, you were sure to hear of it. If you asked her to have pease at dinner, she would say, "Oh, sir, after the pease at Molloyville, I really don't care for any others—do I, dearest Jemima? We always had a dish in the month of June, when my father gave his head gardener a guinea,—we had three at Molloyville—and sent him with his compliments and a quart of pease to our neighbour, dear Lord Marrowfat. What a sweet place Marrowfat Park is! Isn't it, Jemima?" If a carriage passed by the window, Mrs. Major Gammon would be sure to tell you that there were three carriages at Molloyville—"the barouche, the chawiot, and the covered cyar." In the same manner she would favour you with the number and names of the footmen of the establishment; and on a visit to Warwick Castle (for this bustling woman made one in every party of

pleasure that was formed from the hotel), she gave us to understand that the great walk by the river was altogether inferior to the principal avenue of Molloyville Park. I should not have been able to tell so much about Mrs. Gam and her daughter, but that, between ourselves, I was particularly sweet upon a young lady at the time whose papa lived at the "Royal," and was under the care of Dr. Jephson.

The Jemima appealed to by Mrs. Gam in the above sentence was, of course, her daughter, apostrophised by her mother, "Jemima, my soul's darling!" or, "Jemima, my blessed child!" or, "Jemima, my own love!" The sacrifices that Mrs. Gam had made for that daughter were, she said, astonishing. The money she had spent in masters upon her, the illnesses through which she had nursed her, the ineffable love the mother bore her, were only known to Heaven, Mrs. Gam said. They used to come into the room with their arms round each other's waists; at dinner, between the courses, the mother would sit with one hand locked in her daughter's; and if only two or three young men were present at the time, would be pretty sure to kiss her Jemima more than once during the time whilst the bohea was poured out.

As for Miss Gam, if she was not handsome, candour forbids me to say she was ugly. She was neither one nor t'other. She was a person who wore ringlets and a band round her forehead; she knew four songs, which became rather tedious

at the end of a couple of months' acquaintance; she had excessively bare shoulders; she inclined to wear numbers of cheap ornaments, rings, brooches, *ferronnières*, smelling-bottles, and was always, we thought, very smartly dressed: though old Mrs. Lynx hinted that her gowns and her mother's were turned over and over again, and that her eyes were almost put out by darning stockings.

These eyes Miss Gam had very large, though rather red and weak, and used to roll them about at every eligible unmarried man in the place. But though the widow subscribed to all the balls; though she hired a fly to go to the meet of the hounds; though she was constant at church, and Jemima sang louder than any person there except the clerk; and though, probably, any person who made her a happy husband would be invited down to enjoy the three footmen, gardeners, and carriages at Molloyville, yet no English gentleman was found sufficiently audacious to propose. Old Lynx used to say that the pair had been at Tunbridge, Harrogate, Brighton, Ramsgate, Cheltenham, for this eight years past; where they had met, it seemed, with no better fortune. Indeed, the widow looked rather high for her blessed child; and as she looked with the contempt which no small number of Irish people feel upon all persons who get their bread by labour or commerce, or as she was a person whose energetic manners, costume, and brogue were not much to the taste of quiet English coun-

try gentlemen, Jemima—sweet, spotless flower—still remained on her hands, a thought withered, perhaps, and seedy.

Now at this time the 120th Regiment was quartered at Weedon Barracks, and with the corps was a certain Assistant-Surgeon Haggarty, a large, lean, tough, raw-boned man, with big hands, knock-knees, and carroty whiskers, and, withal, as honest a creature as ever handled a lancet. Haggarty, as his name imports, was of the very same nation as Mrs. Gam; and, what is more, the honest fellow had some of the peculiarities which belonged to the widow, and bragged about his family almost as much as she did. I do not know of what particular part of Ireland they were kings, but monarchs they must have been, as have been the ancestors of so many thousand Hibernian families; but they had been men of no small consideration in Dublin, "where my father," Haggarty said, "is as well known as King William's statue, and where he 'rowls his carriage, too,' let me tell ye."

Hence, Haggarty was called by the wags "Rowl the carriage," and several of them made inquiries of Mrs. Gam regarding him. "Mrs. Gam, when you used to go up from Molloyville to the Lord Lieutenant's balls, and had your town-house in Fitzwilliam Square, used you to meet the famous Doctor Haggarty in society?"

"Is it Surgeon Haggarty of Gloucester Street ye mean? The black Papist! D'ye suppose

that the Molloys would sit down to table with a creature of that sort?"

"Why, isn't he the most famous physician in Dublin, and doesn't he rowl his carriage there?"

"The horrid wretch! He keeps a shop, I tell ye, and sends his sons out with the medicine. He's got four of them off into the army—Ulick and Phil, and Terence and Denny; and now it's Charles that takes out the physic. But how should I know about these odious creatures? Their mother was a Burke, of Burke's Town, county Cavan, and brought Surgeon Haggarty two thousand pounds. She was a Protestant, and I am surprised how she could have taken up with a horrid, odious, Popish apothecary!"

From the extent of the widow's information, I am led to suppose that the inhabitants of Dublin are not less anxious about their neighbours than are the natives of English cities; and I think it is very probable that Mrs. Gam's account of the young Haggartys who carried out the medicine is perfectly correct, for a lad in the 120th made a caricature of Haggarty coming out of a chemist's shop with an oil-cloth basket under his arm, which set the worthy surgeon in such a fury that there would have been a duel between him and the ensign could the fiery doctor have had his way.

Now Dionysius Haggarty was of an exceedingly inflammable temperament, and it chanced that of all the invalids, the visitors, the young squires of Warwickshire, the young manufactur-

ers from Birmingham, the young officers from the barracks—it chanced, unluckily for Miss Gam and himself, that he was the only individual who was in the least smitten by her personal charms. He was very tender and modest about his love, however; for it must be owned that he respected Mrs. Gam hugely, and fully admitted, like a good simple fellow as he was, the superiority of that lady's birth and breeding to his own. How could he hope that he, a humble assistant surgeon, with a thousand pounds his aunt Kitty left him for all his fortune—how could he hope that one of the race of Molloyville would ever condescend to marry him?

Inflamed, however, by love, and inspired by wine, one day, at a picnic at Kenilworth, Haggarty, whose loves and raptures were the talk of the whole regiment, was induced by his waggish comrades to make a proposal in form.

"Are you aware, Mr. Haggarty, that you are speaking to a Molloy?" was all the reply majestic Mrs. Gam made when, according to the usual formula, the fluttering Jemima referred her suitor to "mamma." She left him with a look which was meant to crush the poor fellow to earth; she gathered up her cloak and bonnet, and precipitately called for her fly. She took care to tell every single soul in Leamington that the son of the odious Papist apothecary had had the audacity to propose for her daughter (indeed, a proposal, coming from whatever quarter it may,

does no harm), and left Haggarty in a state of extreme depression and despair.

His downheartedness, indeed, surprised most of his acquaintances in and out of the regiment; for the young lady was no beauty, and a doubtful fortune, and Dennis was a man outwardly of an unromantic turn, who seemed to have a great deal more liking for beefsteak and whisky-punch than for women, however fascinating.

But there is no doubt this shy, uncouth, rough fellow had a warmer and more faithful heart hid within him than many a dandy who is as handsome as Apollo. I, for my part, never can understand why a man falls in love, and heartily give him credit for so doing, never mind with what or whom. *That* I take to be a point quite as much beyond an individual's own control as the catching of the small-pox or the colour of his hair. To the surprise of all, Assistant-Surgeon Dionysius Haggarty was deeply and seriously in love; and I am told that one day he very nearly killed the before-mentioned young ensign with a carving-knife for venturing to make a second caricature representing Lady Gammon and Jemima in a fantastical park, surrounded by three gardeners, three carriages, three footmen, and the covered cyar. He would have no joking concerning them. He became moody and quarrelsome of habit. He was for some time much more in the surgery and hospital than in the mess. He gave up the eating, for the most part, of those vast quantities of beef and pudding for which his stomach

had used to afford such ample and swift accommodation; and when the cloth was drawn, instead of taking twelve tumblers, and singing Irish melodies as he used to do in a horrible cracked, yelling voice, he would retire to his own apartment, or gloomily pace the barrack-yard, or madly whip and spur a grey mare he had on the road to Leamington, where his Jemima (although invisible for him) still dwelt.

The season at Leamington coming to a conclusion by the withdrawal of the young fellows who frequented that watering-place, the Widow Gam retired to her usual quarters for the other months of the year. Where these quarters were, I think we have no right to ask; for I believe she had quarrelled with her brother at Molloyville, and, besides, was a great deal too proud to be a burden on anybody.

Not only did the widow quit Leamington, but very soon afterward the 120th received its marching orders, and left Weedon and Warwickshire. Haggarty's appetite was by this time partially restored; but his love was not altered, and his humour was still morose and gloomy. I am informed that at this period of his life he wrote some poems relative to his unhappy passion—a wild set of verses of several lengths, and in his handwriting, being discovered upon a sheet of paper in which a pitch-plaster was wrapped up, which Lieutenant and Adjutant Wheezer was compelled to put on for a cold.

Fancy, then, three years afterward, the sur-

prise of all Haggarty's acquaintances on reading in the public papers the following announcement:

"Married, at Monkstown, on the 12th instant, Dionysius Haggarty, Esq., of H.M. 120th Foot, to Jemima Amelia Wilhelmina Molloy, daughter of the late Major Lancelot Gam, R.M., and granddaughter of the late, and niece of the present, Burke Bodkin Blake Molloy, Esq., Molloyville, county Mayo."

"Has the course of true love at last begun to run smooth?" thought I, as I laid down the paper, and the old times, and the old leering, bragging widow, and the high shoulders of her daughter, and the jolly days with the 120th, and Dr. Jephson's one-horse chaise, and the Warwickshire hunt, and—and Louisa S——, but never mind *her*—came back to my mind. "Has that good-natured, simple fellow at last met with his reward? Well, if he has not to marry the mother-in-law, too, he may get on well enough."

Another year announced the retirement of Assistant-Surgeon Haggarty from the 120th, where he was replaced by Assistant-Surgeon Angus Rothsay Leech, a Scotchman, probably, with whom I have not the least acquaintance, and who has nothing whatever to do with this little history.

Still more years passed on, during which time I will not say that I kept a constant watch upon

the fortunes of Mr. Haggarty and his lady; for, perhaps, if the truth were known, I never thought for a moment about them, until one day, being at Kingstown, near Dublin, dawdling on the beach and staring at the Hill of Howth, as most people at that watering-place do, I saw coming toward me a tall, gaunt man, with a pair of bushy red whiskers, of which I thought I had seen the like in former years, and a face which could be no other than Haggarty's. It was Haggarty, ten years older than when we last met, and greatly more grim and thin. He had on one shoulder a young gentleman in a dirty tartan costume, and a face exceedingly like his own peeping from under a battered plume of black feathers, while with his other hand he was dragging a light-green go-cart, in which reposed a female infant of some two years old. Both were roaring with great power of lungs.

As soon as Dennis saw me his face lost the dull, puzzled expression which had seemed to characterise it. He dropped the pole of the go-cart from one hand and his son from the other, and came jumping forward to greet me with all his might, leaving his progeny roaring in the road.

"Bless my sowl," says he, "sure it's Fitz-Boodle! Fitz, don't you remember me? Dennis Haggarty of the 120th? Leamington, you know?—Molloy, my boy, hould your tongue and stop your screeching, and Jemima's, too; d'ye hear?—Well, it does good to sore eyes to see an

old face. How fat you're grown, Fitz; and were ye ever in Ireland before? And a'n't ye delighted with it? Confess, now, isn't it beautiful?"

This question regarding the merits of their country, which I have remarked is put by most Irish persons, being answered in a satisfactory manner, and the shouts of the infants appeased from an apple-stall hard by, Dennis and I talked of old times; and I congratulated him on his marriage with the lovely girl whom we all admired, and hoped he had a fortune with her, and so forth. His appearance, however, did not bespeak a great fortune. He had an old grey hat, short old trousers, an old waistcoat with regimental buttons, and patched Blucher boots, such as are not usually sported by persons in easy life.

"Ah!" says he, with a sigh, in reply to my queries, "times are changed since them days, Fitz-Boodle. My wife's not what she was—the beautiful creature you knew her.—Molloy, my boy, run off in a hurry to your mamma, and tell her an English gentleman is coming home to dine—for you'll dine with me, Fitz, in course?" And I agreed to partake of that meal, though Master Molloy altogether declined to obey his papa's orders with respect to announcing the stranger.

"Well, I must announce you myself," says Haggarty, with a smile. "Come, it's just dinner-time, and my little cottage is not a hundred yards off." Accordingly, we all marched in procession to Dennis's little cottage, which was one of a row

and a half of one-storied houses, with little court-yards before them, and mostly with very fine names on the door-posts of each. "Surgeon Haggarty" was emblazoned on Dennis's gate, on a stained green copper-plate; and, not content with this, on the door-post above the bell was an oval with the inscription of "New Molloyville." The bell was broken, of course; the court, or garden path, was mouldy, weedy, seedy; there were some dirty rocks, by way of ornament, round a faded grass-plot in the centre; some clothes and rags hanging out of most part of the windows of New Molloyville, the immediate entrance to which was by a battered scraper, under a broken trellis-work, up which a withered creeper declined any longer to climb.

"Small, but snug," says Haggarty. "I'll lead the way, Fitz. Put your hat on the flower-pot there, and turn to the left into the drawing-room." A fog of onions and turf-smoke filled the whole of the house, and gave signs that dinner was not far off. Far off? You could hear it frizzling in the kitchen, where the maid was also endeavouring to hush the crying of a third refractory child. But as we entered, all three of Haggarty's darlings were in full war.

"Is it you, Dennis?" cried a sharp, raw voice from a dark corner in the drawing-room to which we were introduced, and in which a dirty table-cloth was laid for dinner, some bottles of porter and a cold mutton-bone being laid out on a rickety grand piano hard by. "Ye're always

late, Mr. Haggarty. Have you brought the whisky from Nowlan's? I'll go bail ye've not now."

"My dear, I've brought an old friend of yours and mine to take pot-luck with us to-day," said Dennis.

"When is he to come?" said the lady. At which speech I was rather surprised, for I stood before her.

"Here he is, Jemima, my love," answered Dennis, looking at me. "Mr. Fitz-Boodle; don't you remember him in Warwickshire, darling?"

"Mr. Fitz-Boodle! I am very glad to see him," said the lady, rising and curtseying with much cordiality.

Mrs. Haggarty was blind!

Mrs. Haggarty was not only blind, but it was evident that small-pox had been the cause of her loss of vision. Her eyes were bound with a bandage, her features were entirely swollen, scarred, and distorted by the horrible effects of the malady. She had been knitting in a corner when we entered, and was wrapped in a very dirty bedgown. Her voice to me was quite different to that in which she addressed her husband. She spoke to Haggarty in broad Irish: she addressed me in that most odious of all languages—Irish-English—endeavouring to the utmost to disguise her brogue, and to speak with the true dawdling *distingué* English air.

"Are you long in I-a-land?" said the poor creature in this accent. "You must faind it a

sad ba'ba'ous place, Mr. Fitz-Boodle, I'm shu-ah! It was vary kaind of you to come upon us *en famille*, and accept a dinner *sans cérémonie*— Mr. Haggarty, I hope you'll put the waine into aice; Mr. Fitz-Boodle must be melted with this hot weathah."

For some time she conducted the conversation in this polite strain, and I was obliged to say, in reply to a query of hers, that I did not find her the least altered, though I should never have recognised her but for this *rencontre*. She told Haggarty with a significant air to get the wine from the cellah, and whispered to me that he was his own butlah; and the poor fellow, taking the hint, scudded away into the town for a pound of veal cutlets and a couple of bottles of wine from the tavern.

"Will the childhren get their potatoes and butther here?" said a barefoot girl, with long black hair flowing over her face, which she thrust in at the door.

"Let them sup in the nursery, Elizabeth, and send—ah! Edwards to me."

"Is it cook you mane, ma'am?" said the girl.

"Send her at once!" shrieked the unfortunate woman; and the noise of frying presently ceasing, a hot woman made her appearance, wiping her brows with her apron, and asking, with an accent decidedly Hibernian, what the mishtress wanted.

"Lead me up to my dressing-room, Edwards; I really am not fit to be seen in this dishabille by Mr. Fitz-Boodle."

"Fait', I can't!" says Edwards. "Sure the masther's out at the butcher's, and can't look to the kitchen fire!"

"Nonsense, I must go!" cried Mrs. Haggarty; and so Edwards, putting on a resigned air, and giving her arm and face a further rub with her apron, held out her arm to Mrs. Dennis, and the pair went upstairs.

She left me to indulge my reflections for half an hour, at the end of which period she came downstairs dressed in an old yellow satin, with the poor shoulders exposed just as much as ever. She had mounted a tawdry cap, which Haggarty himself must have selected for her. She had all sorts of necklaces, bracelets, and earrings in gold, in garnets, in mother-of-pearl, in ormolu. She brought in a furious savour of musk, which drove the odours of onions and turf-smoke before it; and she waved across her wretched, angular, mean, scarred features an old cambric handkerchief with a yellow lace border.

"And so you would have known me anywhere, Mr. Fitz-Boodle?" said she, with a grin that was meant to be most fascinating. "I was sure you would; for though my dreadful illness deprived me of my sight, it is a mercy that it did not change my features or complexion at all!"

This mortification had been spared the unhappy woman; but I don't know whether, with all her vanity, her infernal pride, folly, and selfishness, it was charitable to leave her in her error.

Yet why correct her? There is a quality in certain people which is above all advice, exposure, or correction. Only let a man or woman have DULLNESS sufficient, and they need bow to no extant authority. A dullard recognises no betters; a dullard can't see that he is in the wrong; a dullard has no scruples of conscience, no doubts of pleasing, or succeeding, or doing right—no qualms for other people's feelings, no respect but for the fool himself. How can you make a fool perceive that he is a fool? Such a personage can no more see his own folly than he can see his own ears. And the great quality of dullness is to be unalterably contented with itself. What myriads of souls are there of this admirable sort—selfish, stingy, ignorant, passionate, brutal; bad sons, mothers, fathers, never known to do kind actions!

To pause, however, in this disquisition which was carrying us far off Kingstown, New Molloyville, Ireland—nay, into the wide world wherever Dullness inhabits—let it be stated that Mrs. Haggarty, from my brief acquaintance with her and her mother, was of the order of persons just mentioned. There was an air of conscious merit about her, very hard to swallow along with the infamous dinner poor Dennis managed, after much delay, to get on the table. She did not fail to invite me to Molloyville, where she said her cousin would be charmed to see me; and she told me almost as many anecdotes about that place as her mother used to impart in former

days. I observed, moreover, that Dennis cut her the favourite pieces of the beefsteak, that she ate thereof with great gusto, and that she drank with similar eagerness of the various strong liquors at table. "We Irish ladies are all fond of a leetle glass of punch," she said, with a playful air; and Dennis mixed her a powerful tumbler of such violent grog as I myself could swallow only with some difficulty. She talked of her suffering a great deal, of her sacrifices, of the luxuries to which she had been accustomed before marriage—in a word, of a hundred of those themes on which some ladies are in the custom of enlarging when they wish to plague some husbands.

But honest Dennis, far from being angry at this perpetual, wearisome, impudent recurrence to her own superiority, rather encouraged the conversation than otherwise. It pleased him to hear his wife discourse about her merits and family splendours. He was so thoroughly beaten down and henpecked that he, as it were, gloried in his servitude, and fancied that his wife's magnificence reflected credit on himself. He looked toward me, who was half sick of the woman and her egotism, as if expecting me to exhibit the deepest sympathy, and flung me glances across the table as much as to say, "What a gifted creature my Jemima is, and what a fine fellow I am to be in possession of her!" When the children came down she scolded them, of course, and dismissed them abruptly (for which circumstance,

perhaps, the writer of these pages was not in his heart very sorry); and, after having sat a preposterously long time, left us, asking whether we would have coffee there or in her boudoir.

"Oh! here, of course," said Dennis, with rather a troubled air; and in about ten minutes the lovely creature was led back to us again by "Edwards," and the coffee made its appearance. After coffee her husband begged her to let Mr. Fitz-Boodle hear her voice. "He longs for some of his old favourites."

"No! *do* you?" said she, and was led in triumph to the jingling old piano, and with a screechy, wiry voice sung those very abominable old ditties which I had heard her sing at Leamington ten years back.

Haggarty, as she sang, flung himself back in his chair delighted. Husbands always are, and with the same song—one that they have heard when they were nineteen years old, probably: most Englishmen's tunes have that date, and it is rather affecting, I think, to hear an old gentleman of sixty or seventy quavering the old ditty that was fresh when *he* was fresh and in his prime. If he has a musical wife, depend on it he thinks her old songs of 1788 are better than any he has heard since—in fact, he has heard *none* since. When the old couple are in high good-humour, the old gentleman will take the old lady round the waist, and say, "My dear, do sing me one of your own songs"; and she sits down and sings with her old voice, and, as she

sings, the roses of her youth bloom again for a moment. Ranelagh resuscitates, and she is dancing a minuet in powder and a train.

This is another digression. It was occasioned by looking at poor Dennis's face while his wife was screeching (and, believe me, the former was the most pleasant occupation). Bottom tickled by the fairies could not have been in greater ecstasies. He thought the music was divine; and had further reason for exulting in it, which was, that his wife was always in a good humour after singing, and never would sing but in that happy frame of mind. Dennis had hinted so much in our little colloquy during the ten minutes of his lady's absence in the "boudoir"; so, at the conclusion of each piece, we shouted "Bravo!" and clapped our hands like mad.

Such was my insight into the life of Surgeon Dionysius Haggarty and his wife; and I must have come upon him at a favourable moment, too, for poor Dennis has spoken subsequently of our delightful evening at Kingstown, and evidently thinks to this day that his friend was fascinated by the entertainment there. His inward economy was as follows: he had his half-pay, a thousand pounds, about a hundred a year that his father left, and his wife had sixty pounds a year from the mother—which the mother, of course, never paid. He had no practice, for he was absorbed in attention to his Jemima and the children, whom he used to wash, to dress, to carry out, to walk, or to give a ride, as we

have seen, and who could not have a servant, as their dear blind mother could never be left alone. Mrs. Haggarty, a great invalid, used to lie in bed till one, and have breakfast and hot luncheon there. A fifth part of his income was spent in having her wheeled about in a chair, by which it was his duty to walk daily for an allotted number of hours. Dinner would ensue, and the amateur clergy, who abound in Ireland, and of whom Mrs. Haggarty was a great admirer, lauded her everywhere as a model of resignation and virtue, and praised beyond measure the admirable piety with which she bore her sufferings.

Well, every man to his taste. It did not certainly appear to me that *she* was the martyr of the family.

"The circumstances of my marriage with Jemima," Dennis said to me in some after conversations we had on this interesting subject, "were the most romantic and touching you can conceive. You saw what an impression the dear girl had made upon me when we were at Weedon; for from the first day I set eyes on her, and heard her sing her delightful song of 'Dark-eyed Maiden of Araby,' I felt, and said to Turniquet of ours that very night, that *she* was the dark-eyed maid of Araby for *me*—not that she was, you know, for she was born in Shropshire. But I felt that I had seen the woman who was to make me happy or miserable for life. You know how I proposed for her at Kenilworth,

and how I was rejected, and how I almost shot myself in consequence—no, you don't know that, for I said nothing about it to any one; but I can tell you it was a very near thing, and a very lucky thing for me I didn't do it, for—would you believe it?—the dear girl was in love with me all the time."

"Was she really?" said I, who recollected that Miss Gam's love of those days showed itself in a very singular manner; but the fact is, when women are most in love they most disguise it.

"Over head and ears in love with poor Dennis," resumed that worthy fellow, "who'd ever have thought it? But I have it from the best authority, from her own mother, with whom I'm not over and above good friends now; but of this fact she assured me, and I'll tell you when and how.

"We were quartered at Cork three years after we were at Weedon, and it was our last year at home; and a great mercy that my dear girl spoke in time, or where should we have been *now?* Well, one day, marching home from parade, I saw a lady seated at an open window by another who seemed an invalid; and the lady at the window, who was dressed in the profoundest mourning, cried out with a scream, 'Gracious Heavens! it's Mr. Haggarty of the 120th.'

"'Sure I know that voice,' says I to Whiskerton.

"'It's a great mercy you don't know it a deal

too well,' says he; 'it's Lady Gammon. She's on some husband-hunting scheme, depend on it, for that daughter of hers. She was at Bath last year on the same errand, and at Cheltenham the year before, where, Heaven bless you! she's as well known as the Hen and Chickens.'

"'I'll thank you not to speak disrespectfully of Miss Jemima Gam,' said I to Whiskerton; 'she's of one of the first families in Ireland, and whoever says a word against a woman I once proposed for, insults me — do you understand?'

"'Well, marry her, if you like,' says Whiskerton, quite peevish; 'marry her, and be hanged!'

"Marry her! The very idea of it set my brain a-whirling, and made me a thousand times more mad than I am by nature.

"You may be sure I walked up the hill to the parade-ground that afternoon, and with a beating heart, too. I came to the widow's house. It was called 'New Molloyville,' as this is. Wherever she takes a house for six months, she calls it 'New Molloyville'; and has had one in Mallow, in Bandon, in Sligo, in Castlebar, in Fermoy, in Drogheda, and the deuce knows where besides. But the blinds were down, and though I thought I saw somebody behind 'em, no notice was taken of poor Denny Haggarty, and I paced up and down all messtime in hopes of catching a glimpse of Jemima, but in vain. The next day I was on the ground again; I was just as much in love as ever, that's the fact. I'd

never been in that way before, look you; and when once caught, I knew it was for life.

"There's no use in telling you how long I beat about the bush, but when I *did* get admittance to the house—it was through the means of young Castlereagh Molloy, whom you may remember at Leamington, and who was at Cork for the regatta, and used to dine at our mess, and had taken a mighty fancy to me—when I *did* get into the house, I say, I rushed *in medias res* at once. I couldn't keep myself quiet; my heart was too full.

"Oh, Fitz! I shall never forget the day—the moment I was inthrojuiced into the dthrawing-room." (As he began to be agitated, Dennis's brogue broke out with greater richness than ever; but though a stranger may catch, and repeat from memory, a few words, it is next to impossible for him to *keep up a conversation* in Irish, so that we had best give up all attempts to imitate Dennis.) "When I saw old Mother Gam," said he, "my feelings overcame me all at once. I rowled down on the ground, sir, as if I'd been hit by a musket-ball. 'Dearest madam,' says I, 'I'll die if you don't give me Jemima.'

"'Heavens, Mr. Haggarty!' says she, 'how you seize me with surprise!—Castlereagh, my dear nephew, had you not better leave us?' And away he went, lighting a cigar, and leaving me still on the floor.

"'Rise, Mr. Haggarty,' continued the widow.

'I will not attempt to deny that this constancy toward my daughter is extremely affecting, however sudden your present appeal may be. I will not attempt to deny that, perhaps, Jemima may have a similar feeling; but, as I said, I never could give my daughter to a Catholic.'

"'I'm as good a Protestant as yourself, ma'am,' says I; 'my mother was an heiress, and we were all brought up her way.'

"'That makes the matter very different,' says she, turning up the whites of her eyes. 'How could I ever have reconciled it to my conscience to see my blessed child married to a Papist? How could I ever have taken him to Molloyville? Well, this obstacle being removed, *I* must put myself no longer in the way between two young people. *I* must sacrifice myself, as I always have when my darling girl was in question. You shall see her, the poor dear, lovely, gentle sufferer, and learn your fate from her own lips.'

"'The sufferer, ma'am,' says I; 'has Miss Gam been ill?'

"'What! haven't you heard?' cried the widow. 'Haven't you heard of the dreadful illness which so nearly carried her from me? For nine weeks, Mr. Haggarty, I watched her day and night without taking a wink of sleep—for nine weeks she lay trembling between death and life; and I paid the doctor eighty-three guineas. She is restored now, but she is the wreck of the beautiful creature she was. Suffering, and, perhaps,

another disappointment—but we won't mention that *now*—have so pulled her down. But I will leave you, and prepare my sweet girl for this strange, this entirely unexpected visit.'

"I won't tell you what took place between me and Jemima, to whom I was introduced as she sat in the darkened room, poor sufferer! nor describe to you with what a thrill of joy I seized (after groping about for it) her poor, emaciated hand. She did not withdraw it; I came out of that room an engaged man, sir; and *now* I was enabled to show her that I had always loved her sincerely, for there was my will made three years back in her favour—that night she refused me, as I told ye. I would have shot myself, but they'd have brought me in *non compos*, and my brother Mick would have contested the will; and so I determined to live, in order that she might benefit by my dying. I had but a thousand pounds then; since that my father has left me two more. I willed every shilling to her, as you may fancy, and settled it upon her when we married, as we did soon after. It was not for some time that I was allowed to see the poor girl's face, or indeed was aware of the horrid loss she had sustained. Fancy my agony, my dear fellow, when I saw that beautiful wreck!"

There was something not a little affecting to think, in the conduct of this brave fellow, that he never once, as he told his story, seemed to allude to the possibility of his declining to

marry a woman who was not the same as the woman he loved, but that he was quite as faithful to her now as he had been when captivated by the poor, tawdry charms of the silly Miss of Leamington. It was hard that such a noble heart as this should be flung away upon yonder foul mass of greedy vanity. Was it hard, or not, that he should remain deceived in his obstinate humility, and continue to admire the selfish, silly being whom he had chosen to worship?

"I should have been appointed surgeon of the regiment," continued Dennis, "soon after, when it was ordered abroad to Jamaica, where it now is. But my wife would not hear of going, and said she would break her heart if she left her mother. So I retired on half-pay, and took this cottage; and in case any practice should fall in my way—why, there is my name on the brass plate, and I'm ready for anything that comes. But the only case that ever *did* come was one day when I was driving my wife in the chaise; and another, one night, of a beggar with a broken head. My wife makes me a present of a baby every year, and we've no debts; and between you and me and the post, as long as my mother-in-law is out of the house, I'm as happy as I need be."

"What! you and the old lady don't get on well?" said I.

"I can't say we do; it's not in nature, you know," said Dennis, with a faint grin. "She

comes into the house and turns it topsy-turvy. When she's here, I'm obliged to sleep in the scullery. She's never paid her daughter's income since the first year, though she brags about her sacrifices as if she had ruined herself for Jemima; and besides, when she's here, there's a whole clan of the Molloys, horse, foot, and dragoons, that are quartered upon us, and eat me out of house and home."

"And is Molloyville such a fine place as the widow described it?" asked I, laughing, and not a little curious.

"Oh, a mighty fine place entirely!" said Dennis. "There's the oak park of two hundred acres, the finest land ye ever saw, only they've cut all the wood down. The garden in the old Molloy's time, they say, was the finest ever seen in the west of Ireland; but they've taken all the glass to mend the house windows: and small blame to them either. There's a clear rent-roll of three and fifty hundred a year, only it's in the hand of receivers; besides other debts, on which there is no land security."

"Your cousin-in-law, Castlereagh Molloy, won't come into a large fortune?"

"Oh, he'll do very well," said Dennis. "As long as he can get credit, he's not the fellow to stint himself. Faith, I was fool enough to put my name to a bit of paper for him, and as they could not catch him in Mayo, they laid hold of me at Kingstown here. And there was a pretty to-do. Didn't Mrs. Gam say I was ruining her

family, that's all! I paid it by instalments, for all my money is settled on Jemima; and Castlereagh, who's an honourable fellow, offered me any satisfaction in life. Anyhow, he couldn't do more than *that*."

"Of course not; and now you're friends?"

"Yes, and he and his aunt have had a tiff, too; and he abuses her properly, I warrant ye. He says that she carried about Jemima from place to place, and flung her at the head of every unmarried man in England a'most—my poor Jemima, and she all the while dying in love with me! As soon as she got over the small-pox—she took it at Fermoy: God bless her! I wish I'd been by to be her nurse-tender—as soon as she was rid of it, the old lady said to Castlereagh, 'Castlereagh, go to the bar'cks, and find out in the Army List where the 120th is.' Off she came to Cork hot-foot. It appears that while she was ill, Jemima's love for me showed itself in such a violent way that her mother was overcome, and promised that, should the dear child recover, she would try and bring us together. Castlereagh says she would have gone after us to Jamaica."

"I have no doubt she would," said I.

"Could you have a stronger proof of love than that?" cried Dennis. "My dear girl's illness and frightful blindness have, of course, injured her health and her temper. She cannot in her position look to the children, you know, and so they come under my charge for the most

part; and her temper is unequal, certainly. But you see what a sensitive, refined, elegant creature she is, and may fancy that she's often put out by a rough fellow like me."

Here Dennis left me, saying it was time to go and walk out the children; and I think his story has matter of some wholesome reflection in it for bachelors who are about to change their condition, or may console some who are mourning their celibacy. Marry, gentlemen, if you like; leave your comfortable dinner at the club for cold mutton and curl-papers at your home; give up your books or pleasures, and take to yourselves wives and children; but think well on what you do first, as I have no doubt you will after this advice and example. Advice is always useful in matters of love; men always take it; they always follow other people's opinions, not their own; they always profit by example. When they see a pretty woman, and feel the delicious madness of love coming over them, they always stop to calculate her temper, her money, their own money, or suitableness for the married life. . . . Ha, ha, ha! Let us fool in this way no more. I have been in love forty-three times with all ranks and conditions of women, and would have married every time if they would have let me. How many wives had King Solomon, the wisest of men? And is not that story a warning to us that Love is master of the wisest? It is only fools who defy him.

I must come, however, to the last, and perhaps

the saddest, part of poor Denny Haggarty's history. I met him once more, and in such a condition as made me determine to write this history.

In the month of June last I happened to be at Richmond, a delightful little place of retreat; and there, sunning himself upon the terrace, was my old friend of the 120th. He looked older, thinner, poorer, and more wretched than I had ever seen him. "What! you have given up Kingstown?" said I, shaking him by the hand.

"Yes," says he.

"And is my lady and your family here at Richmond?"

"No," says he, with a sad shake of the head, and the poor fellow's hollow eyes filled with tears.

"Good Heavens, Denny! what's the matter?" said I. He was squeezing my hand like a vice as I spoke.

"They've LEFT me!" he burst out with a dreadful shout of passionate grief—a horrible scream which seemed to be wrenched out of his heart. "Left me!" said he, sinking down on a seat, and clenching his great fist, and shaking his lean arms wildly. "I'm a wise man now, Mr. Fitz-Boodle. Jemima has gone away from me; and yet you know how I loved her, and how happy we were! I've got nobody now; but I'll die soon, that's one comfort, and to think it's she that'll kill me after all!"

The story, which he told me with a wild and furious lamentation such as is not known among men of our cooler country, and such as I don't like now to recall, was a very simple one. The mother-in-law had taken possession of the house, and had driven him from it. His property at his marriage was settled on his wife. She had never loved him, and told him this secret at last, and drove him out of doors with her selfish scorn and ill-temper. The boy had died; the girls were better, he said, brought up among the Molloys than they could be with him; and so he was quite alone in the world, and was living, or rather dying, on forty pounds a year.

His troubles are very likely over by this time. The two fools who caused his misery will never read this history of him—*they* never read godless stories in magazines; and I wish, honest reader, that you and I went to church as much as they do. These people are not wicked *because* of their religious observances, but *in spite* of them. They are too dull to understand humility, too blind to see a tender and simple heart under a rough, ungainly bosom. They are sure that all their conduct toward my poor friend here has been perfectly righteous, and that they have given proofs of the most Christian virtue. Haggarty's wife is considered by her friends as a martyr to a savage husband, and her mother is the angel that has come to rescue her. All they did was to cheat him and desert him. And safe in that wonderful self-compla-

cency with which the fools of this earth are endowed, they have not a single pang of conscience for their villainy toward him, and consider their heartlessness as a proof and consequence of their spotless piety and virtue.

THE COURTING OF T'NOWHEAD'S BELL

BY

JAMES MATTHEW BARRIE

FOR two years it had been notorious in the square that Sam'l Dickie was thinking of courting T'nowhead's Bell, and that if little Sanders Elshioner (which is the Thrums pronunciation of Alexander Alexander) went in for her he might prove a formidable rival. Sam'l was a weaver in the Tenements, and Sanders a coal-carter whose trade-mark was a bell on his horse's neck that told when coals were coming. Being something of a public man, Sanders had not perhaps so high a social position as Sam'l, but he had succeeded his father on the coal-cart, while the weaver had already tried several trades. It had always been against Sam'l, too, that once when the kirk was vacant he had advised the selection of the third minister who preached for it on the ground that it came expensive to pay a large number of candidates. The scandal of the thing was hushed up, out of respect for his father, who was a God-fearing man, but Sam'l was known by it in Lang Tammas' circle. The coal-carter was called Little Sanders to distinguish him from his father, who

was not much more than half his size. He had grown up with the name, and its inapplicability now came home to nobody. Sam'l's mother had been more far-seeing than Sanders'. Her man had been called Sammy all his life because it was the name he got as a boy, so when their eldest son was born she spoke of him as Sam'l while still in his cradle. The neighbours imitated her, and thus the young man had a better start in life than had been granted to Sammy, his father.

It was Saturday evening—the night in the week when Auld Licht young men fell in love. Sam'l Dickie, wearing a blue glengarry bonnet with a red ball on the top, came to the door of a one-story house in the Tenements and stood there wriggling, for he was in a suit of tweeds for the first time that week, and did not feel at one with them. When his feeling of being a stranger to himself wore off, he looked up and down the road, which straggles between houses and gardens, and then, picking his way over the puddles, crossed to his father's henhouse and sat down on it. He was now on his way to the square.

Eppie Fargus was sitting on an adjoining dike knitting stockings, and Sam'l looked at her for a time.

"Is't yersel, Eppie?" he said at last.

"It's a' that," said Eppie.

"Hoo's a' wi' ye?" asked Sam'l.

"We're juist aff an' on," replied Eppie cautiously.

There was not much more to say, but as Sam'l sidled off the henhouse he murmured politely, "Ay, ay." In another minute he would have been fairly started, but Eppie resumed the conversation.

"Sam'l," she said, with a twinkle in her eye, "ye can tell Lisbeth Fargus I'll likely be drappin' in on her aboot Munday or Teisday."

Lisbeth was sister to Eppie, and wife of Tammas McQuhatty, better known as T'nowhead, which was the name of his farm. She was thus Bell's mistress.

Sam'l leaned against the henhouse as if all his desire to depart had gone.

"Hoo d'ye kin I'll be at the T'nowhead the nicht?" he asked, grinning in anticipation.

"Ou, I'se warrant ye'll be after Bell," said Eppie.

"Am no sae sure o' that," said Sam'l, trying to leer. He was enjoying himself now.

"Am no sure o' that," he repeated, for Eppie seemed lost in stitches.

"Sam'l?"

"Ay."

"Ye'll be spierin' her sune noo, I dinna doot?"

This took Sam'l, who had only been courting Bell for a year or two, a little aback.

"Hoo d'ye mean, Eppie?" he asked.

"Maybe ye'll do't the nicht."

"Na, there's nae hurry," said Sam'l.

"Weel, we're a' coontin' on't, Sam'l."

"Gae wa wi' ye."

"What for no?"

"Gae wa wi' ye," said Sam'l again.

"Bell's gie an' fond o' ye, Sam'l."

"Ay," said Sam'l.

"But am dootin' ye're a fell billy wi' the lasses."

"Ay, oh, I d'na kin, moderate, moderate," said Sam'l, in high delight.

"I saw ye," said Eppie, speaking with a wire in her mouth, "gaein' on terr'ble wi' Mysy Haggart at the pump last Saturday."

"We was juist amoosin' oorsels," said Sam'l.

"It'll be nae amoosement to Mysy," said Eppie, "gin ye brak her heart."

"Losh, Eppie," said Sam'l, "I didna think o' that."

"Ye maun kin weel, Sam'l, 'at there's mony a lass wid jump at ye."

"Ou, weel," said Sam'l, implying that a man must take these things as they come.

"For ye're a dainty chield to look at, Sam'l."

"Do ye think so, Eppie? Ay, ay; oh, I d'na kin am onything by the ordinar."

"Ye mayna be," said Eppie, "but lasses doesna do to be ower partikler."

Sam'l resented this, and prepared to depart again.

"Ye'll no tell Bell that?" he asked anxiously.

"Tell her what?"

"Aboot me an' Mysy."

"We'll see hoo ye behave yersel, Sam'l."

"No 'at I care, Eppie; ye can tell her gin ye like. I widna think twice o' tellin' her mysel."

"The Lord forgie ye for leein', Sam'l," said Eppie, as he disappeared down Tammy Tosh's close. Here he came upon Henders Webster.

"Ye're late, Sam'l," said Henders.

"What for?"

"Ou, I was thinkin' ye wid be gaen the length o' T'nowhead the nicht, an' I saw Sanders Elshioner makkin's wy there an oor syne."

"Did ye?" cried Sam'l, adding craftily, "but it's naething to me."

"Tod, lad," said Henders, "gin ye dinna buckle to, Sanders 'll be carryin' her off."

Sam'l flung back his head and passed on.

"Sam'l!" cried Henders after him.

"Ay," said Sam'l, wheeling round.

"Gie Bell a kiss frae me."

The full force of this joke struck neither all at once. Sam'l began to smile at it as he turned down the school-wynd, and it came upon Henders while he was in his garden feeding his ferret. Then he slapped his legs gleefully, and explained the conceit to Will'um Byars, who went into the house and thought it over.

There were twelve or twenty little groups of men in the square, which was lit by a flare of oil suspended over a cadger's cart. Now and again a staid young woman passed through the square with a basket on her arm, and if she had lingered long enough to give them time, some of

the idlers would have addressed her. As it was, they gazed after her, and then grinned to each other.

"Ay, Sam'l," said two or three young men, as Sam'l joined them beneath the town clock.

"Ay, Davit," replied Sam'l.

This group was composed of some of the sharpest wits in Thrums, and it was not to be expected that they would let this opportunity pass. Perhaps when Sam'l joined them he knew what was in store for him.

"Was ye lookin' for T'nowhead's Bell, Sam'l?" asked one.

"Or mebbe ye was wantin' the minister?" suggested another, the same who had walked out twice with Christy Duff and not married her after all.

Sam'l could not think of a good reply at the moment, so he laughed good-naturedly.

"Ondoobtedly she's a snod bit crittur," said Davit archly.

"An' michty clever wi' her fingers," added Jamie Deuchars.

"Man, I've thocht o' makkin' up to Bell mysel," said Peter Ogle. "Wid there be ony chance, think ye, Sam'l?"

"I'm thinkin' she widna hae ye for her first, Pete," replied Sam'l, in one of those happy flashes that come to some men, "but there's nae sayin' but what she micht tak ye to finish up wi'."

The unexpectedness of this sally startled every-

one. Though Sam'l did not set up for a wit, however, like Davit, it was notorious that he could say a cutting thing once in a way.

"Did ye ever see Bell reddin' up?" asked Pete, recovering from his overthrow. He was a man who bore no malice.

"It's a sicht," said Sam'l solemnly.

"Hoo will that be?" asked Jamie Deuchars.

"It's weel worth yer while," said Pete, "to ging atower to the T'nowhead an' see. Ye'll mind the closed-in beds i' the kitchen? Ay, weel, they're a fell spoilt crew, T'nowhead's litlins, an' no that aisy to manage. Th' ither lasses Lisbeth's hae'n had a michty trouble wi' them. When they war i' the middle o' their reddin up the bairns wid come tumlin' about the floor, but, sal, I assure ye, Bell didna fash lang wi' them. Did she, Sam'l?"

"She did not," said Sam'l, dropping into a fine mode of speech to add emphasis to his remark.

"I'll tell ye what she did," said Pete to the others. "She juist lifted up the litlins, twa at a time, an' flung them into the coffin-beds. Syne she snibbit the doors on them, an' keepit them there till the floor was dry."

"Ay, man, did she so?" said Davit admiringly.

"I've seen her do't mysel," said Sam'l.

"There's no a lassie maks better bannocks this side o' Fetter Lums," continued Pete.

"Her mither tocht her that," said Sam'l;

"she was a gran' han' at the bakin', Kitty Ogilvy."

"I've heard say," remarked Jamie, putting it this way, so as not to tie himself down to anything, "'at Bell's scones is equal to Mag Lunan's."

"So they are," said Sam'l, almost fiercely.

"I kin she's a neat han' at singein' a hen," said Pete.

"An' wi't a'," said Davit, "she's a snod, canty bit stocky in her Sabbath claes."

"If onything, thick in the waist," suggested Jamie.

"I dinna see that," said Sam'l.

"I d'na care for her hair either," continued Jamie, who was very nice in his tastes; "something mair yallowchy wid be an improvement."

"A'body kins," growled Sam'l, "'at black hair's the bonniest."

The others chuckled.

"Puir Sam'l!" Pete said.

Sam'l not being certain whether this should be received with a smile or a frown, opened his mouth wide as a kind of compromise. This was position one with him for thinking things over.

Few Auld Lichts, as I have said, went the length of choosing a helpmate for themselves. One day a young man's friends would see him mending the washing-tub of a maiden's mother. They kept the joke until Saturday night, and then he learned from them what he had been

after. It dazed him for a time, but in a year or so he grew accustomed to the idea, and they were then married. With a little help he fell in love just like other people.

Sam'l was going the way of the others, but he found it difficult to come to the point. He only went courting once a week, and he could never take up the running at the place where he left off the Saturday before. Thus he had not, so far, made great headway His method of making up to Bell had been to drop in at T'nowhead on Saturday nights and talk with the farmer about the rinderpest.

The farm kitchen was Bell's testimonial. Its chairs, tables, and stools were scoured by her to the whiteness of Bob Angus's sawmill boards, and the muslin blind on the window was starched like a child's pinafore. Bell was brave, too, as well as energetic. Once Thrums had been overrun with thieves. It is now thought that there may have been only one, but he had the wicked cleverness of a gang. Such was his repute that there were weavers who spoke of locking their doors when they went from home. He was not very skilful, however, being generally caught, and when they said they knew he was a robber he gave them their things back and went away. If they had given him time, there is no doubt that he would have gone off with his plunder. One night he went to T'nowhead, and Bell, who slept in the kitchen, was awakened by the noise. She knew who it would be, so she rose and

dressed herself, and went to look for him with a candle. The thief had not known what to do when he got in, and as it was very lonely he was glad to see Beil. She told him he ought to be ashamed of himself, and would not let him out by the door until he had taken off his boots so as not to soil the carpet.

On this Saturday evening, Sam'l stood his ground in the square, until by and by he found himself alone. There were other groups there still, but his circle had melted away. They went separately, and no one said good-night. Each took himself off slowly, backing out of the group until he was fairly started.

Sam'l looked about him, and then, seeing that the others had gone, walked round the townhouse into the darkness of the brae that leads down and then up to the farm of T'nowhead.

To get into the good graces of Lisbèth Fargus you had to know her ways and humour them. Sam'l, who was a student of women, knew this, and so, instead of pushing the door open and walking in, he went through the rather ridiculous ceremony of knocking. Sanders Elshioner was also aware of this weakness of Lisbeth's, but, though he often made up his mind to knock, the absurdity of the thing prevented his doing so when he reached the door. T'nowhead himself had never got used to his wife's refined notions, and when any one knocked he always

started to his feet, thinking there must be something wrong.

Lisbeth came to the door, her expansive figure blocking the way in.

"Sam'l," she said.

"Lisbeth," said Sam'l.

He shook hands with the farmer's wife, knowing that she liked it, but only said "Ay, Bell" to his sweetheart, "Ay, T'nowhead" to McQuhatty, and "It's yersel, Sanders," to his rival.

They were all sitting round the fire, T'nowhead, with his feet on the ribs, wondering why he felt so warm, and Bell darned a stocking, while Lisbeth kept an eye on a goblet full of potatoes.

"Sit into the fire, Sam'l," said the farmer, not, however, making way for him.

"Na, na," said Sam'l, "I'm to bide nae time." Then he sat into the fire. His face was turned away from Bell, and when she spoke he answered her without looking round. Sam'l felt a little anxious. Sanders Elshioner, who had one leg shorter than the other, but looked well when sitting, seemed suspiciously at home. He asked Bell questions out of his own head, which was beyond Sam'l, and once he said something to her in such a low voice that the others could not catch it. T'nowhead asked curiously what it was, and Sanders explained that he had only said, "Ay, Bell, the morn's the Sabbath." There was nothing startling in this, but Sam'l

did not like it. He began to wonder if he was too late, and, had he seen his opportunity, would have told Bell of a nasty rumour that Sanders intended to go over to the Free Church if they would make him kirk-officer.

Sam'l had the good-will of T'nowhead's wife, who liked a polite man. Sanders did his best, but from want of practice he constantly made mistakes. To-night, for instance, he wore his hat in the house because he did not like to put up his hand and take it off. T'nowhead had not taken his off either, but that was because he meant to go out by and by and lock the byre door. It was impossible to say which of her lovers Bell preferred. The proper course with an Auld Licht lassie was to prefer the man who proposed to her.

"Ye'll bide a wee, an' hae something to eat?" Lisbeth asked Sam'l, with her eyes on the goblet.

"No, I thank ye," said Sam'l, with true gentility.

"Ye'll better?"

"I dinna think it."

"Hoots aye; what's to hender ye?"

"Weel, since ye're sae pressin', I'll bide."

No one asked Sanders to stay. Bell could not, for she was but the servant, and T'nowhead knew that the kick his wife had given him meant that he was not to do so either. Sanders whistled to show that he was not uncomfortable.

"Ay, then, I'll be stappin' ower the brae," he said at last.

He did not go, however. There was sufficient pride in him to get him off his chair, but only slowly, for he had to get accustomed to the notion of going. At intervals of two or three minutes he remarked that he must now be going. In the same circumstances Sam'l would have acted similarly. For a Thrums man it is one of the hardest things in life to get away from anywhere.

At last Lisbeth saw that something must be done. The potatoes were burning, and T'nowhead had an invitation on his tongue.

"Yes, I'll hae to be movin'," said Sanders, hopelessly, for the fifth time.

"Guid nicht to ye, then, Sanders," said Lisbeth. "Gie the door a fling-to, ahent ye."

Sanders, with a mighty effort, pulled himself together. He looked boldly at Bell, and then took off his hat carefully. Sam'l saw with misgivings that there was something in it which was not a handkerchief. It was a paper bag glittering with gold braid, and contained such an assortment of sweets as lads bought for their lasses on the Muckle Friday.

"Hae, Bell," said Sanders, handing the bag to Bell in an off-hand way as if it were but a trifle. Nevertheless, he was a little excited, for he went off without saying good-night.

No one spoke. Bell's face was crimson. T'nowhead fidgeted on his chair, and Lisbeth looked at Sam'l. The weaver was strangely

calm and collected, though he would have liked to know whether this was a proposal.

"Sit in by to the table, Sam'l," said Lisbeth, trying to look as if things were as they had been before.

She put a saucerful of butter, salt, and pepper near the fire to melt, for melted butter is the shoeing-horn that helps over a meal of potatoes. Sam'l, however, saw what the hour required, and jumping up, he seized his bonnet.

"Hing the tatties higher up the joist, Lisbeth," he said with dignity; "I'se be back in ten meenits."

He hurried out of the house, leaving the others looking at each other.

"What do ye think?" asked Lisbeth.

"I d'na kin," faltered Bell.

"Thae tatties is lang o' comin' to the boil," said T'nowhead.

In some circles a lover who behaved like Sam'l would have been suspected of intent upon his rival's life, but neither Bell nor Lisbeth did the weaver that injustice. In a case of this kind it did not much matter what T'nowhead thought.

The ten minutes had barely passed when Sam'l was back in the farm kitchen. He was too flurried to knock this time, and, indeed, Lisbeth did not expect it of him.

"Bell, hae!" he cried, handing his sweetheart a tinsel bag twice the size of Sanders' gift.

"Losh preserve's!" exclaimed Lisbeth; "I'se warrant there's a shillin's worth."

"There's a' that, Lisbeth—an' mair," said Sam'l firmly.

"I thank ye, Sam'l," said Bell, feeling an unwonted elation as she gazed at the two paper bags in her lap.

"Ye're ower extravegint, Sam'l," Lisbeth said.

"Not at all," said Sam'l; "not at all. But I widna advise ye to eat thae ither anes, Bell—they're second quality."

Bell drew back a step from Sam'l.

"How do ye kin?" asked the farmer shortly, for he liked Sanders.

"I spiered i' the shop," said Sam'l.

The goblet was placed on a broken plate on the table with the saucer beside it, and Sam'l, like the others, helped himself. What he did was to take potatoes from the pot with his fingers, peel off their coats, and then dip them into the butter. Lisbeth would have liked to provide knives and forks, but she knew that beyond a certain point T'nowhead was master in his own house. As for Sam'l, he felt victory in his hands, and began to think that he had gone too far.

In the meantime, Sanders, little witting that Sam'l had trumped his trick, was sauntering along the kirk-wynd with his hat on the side of his head. Fortunately, he did not meet the minister.

The courting of T'nowhead's Bell reached its crisis one Sabbath about a month after the events above recorded. The minister was in

great force that day, but it is no part of mine to tell how he bore himself. I was there, and am not likely to forget the scene. It was a fateful Sabbath for T'nowhead's Bell and her swains, and destined to be remembered for the painful scandal which they perpetrated in their passion.

Bell was not in the kirk. There being an infant of six months in the house, it was a question of either Lisbeth or the lassie's staying at home with him, and though Lisbeth was unselfish in a general way, she could not resist the delight of going to church. She had nine children besides the baby, and being but a woman, it was the pride of her life to march them into the T'nowhead pew, so well watched that they dared not misbehave, and so tightly packed that they could not fall. The congregation looked at that pew, the mothers enviously, when they sang the lines:

"Jerusalem like a city is
Compactly built together."

The first half of the service had been gone through on this particular Sunday without anything remarkable happening. It was at the end of the psalm which preceded the sermon that Sanders Elshioner, who sat near the door, lowered his head until it was no higher than the pews, and in that attitude, looking almost like a four-footed animal, slipped out of the church. In their eagerness to be at the sermon many of the congregation did not notice him, and those

who did put the matter by in their minds for future investigation. Sam'l, however, could not take it so coolly. From his seat in the gallery he saw Sanders disappear, and his mind misgave him. With the true lover's instinct he understood it all. Sanders had been struck by the fine turn-out in the T'nowhead pew. Bell was alone at the farm. What an opportunity to work one's way up to a proposal! T'nowhead was so overrun with children that such a chance seldom occurred, except on a Sabbath. Sanders, doubtless, was off to propose, and he, Sam'l, was left behind.

The suspense was terrible. Sam'l and Sanders had both known all along that Bell would take the first of the two who asked her. Even those who thought her proud admitted that she was modest. Bitterly the weaver repented having waited so long. Now it was too late. In ten minutes Sanders would be at T'nowhead; in an hour all would be over. Sam'l rose to his feet in a daze. His mother pulled him down by the coat-tail, and his father shook him, thinking he was walking in his sleep. He tottered past them, however, hurried up the aisle, which was so narrow that Dan'l Ross could only reach his seat by walking sideways, and was gone before the minister could do more than stop in the middle of a whirl and gape in horror after him.

A number of the congregation felt that day the advantage of sitting in the loft. What was a mystery to those downstairs was revealed to

them. From the gallery windows they had a fine open view to the south; and as Sam'l took the common, which was a short cut though a steep ascent to T'nowhead, he was never out of their line of vision. Sanders was not to be seen, but they guessed rightly the reason why. Thinking he had ample time, he had gone round by the main road to save his boots—perhaps a little scared by what was coming. Sam'l's design was to forestall him by taking the shorter path over the burn and up the common.

It was a race for a wife, and several onlookers in the gallery braved the minister's displeasure to see who won. Those who favoured Sam'l's suit exultingly saw him leap the stream, while the friends of Sanders fixed their eyes on the top of the common where it ran into the road. Sanders must come into sight there, and the one who reached this point first would get Bell.

As Auld Lichts do not walk abroad on the Sabbath, Sanders would probably not be delayed. The chances were in his favour. Had it been any other day in the week Sam'l might have run. So some of the congregation in the gallery were thinking, when suddenly they saw him bend low and then take to his heels. He had caught sight of Sanders's head bodding over the hedge that separated the road from the common, and feared that Sanders might see him. The members of the congregation who could crane their necks sufficiently saw a black object, which they guessed to be the carter's hat, crawl-

ing along the hedge-top. For a moment it was motionless, and then it shot ahead. The rivals had seen each other. It was now a hot race. Sam'l, dissembling no longer, clattered up the common, becoming smaller and smaller to the onlookers as he neared the top. More than one person in the gallery almost rose to their feet in their excitement. Sam'l had it. No, Sanders was in front. Then the two figures disappeared from view. They seemed to run into each other at the top of the brae, and no one could say who was first. The congregation looked at one another. Some of them perspired. But the minister held on his course.

Sam'l had just been in time to cut Sanders out. It was the weaver's saving that Sanders saw this when his rival turned the corner; for Sam'l was sadly blown. Sanders took in the situation and gave in at once. The last hundred yards of the distance he covered at his leisure, and when he arrived at his destination he did not go in. It was a fine afternoon for the time of year, and he went round to have a look at the pig, about which T'nowhead was a little sinfully puffed up.

"Ay," said Sanders, digging his fingers critically into the grunting animal; "quite so."

"Grumph," said the pig, getting reluctantly to his feet.

"Ou, ay; yes," said Sanders, thoughtfully.

Then he sat down on the edge of the sty, and looked long and silently at an empty bucket.

But whether his thoughts were of T'nowhead's Bell, whom he had lost forever, or of the food the farmer fed his pig on, is not known.

"Lord preserve's! Are ye no at the kirk?" cried Bell, nearly dropping the baby as Sam'l broke into the room.

"Bell!" cried Sam'l.

Then T'nowhead's Bell knew that her hour had come.

"Sam'l," she faltered.

"Will ye hae's, Bell?" demanded Sam'l, glaring at her sheepishly.

"Ay," answered Bell.

Sam'l fell into a chair.

"Bring's a drink o' water, Bell," he said.

But Bell thought the occasion required milk, and there was none in the kitchen. She went out to the byre, still with the baby in her arms, and saw Sanders Elshioner sitting gloomily on the pigsty.

"Weel, Bell," said Sanders.

"I thocht ye'd been at the kirk, Sanders," said Bell.

Then there was a silence between them.

"Has Sam'l spiered ye, Bell?" asked Sanders, stolidly.

"Ay," said Bell again, and this time there was a tear in her eye. Sanders was little better than an "orra man," and Sam'l was a weaver, and yet—— But it was too late now. Sanders gave the pig a vicious poke with a stick, and when it had ceased to grunt Bell was back in

the kitchen. She had forgotten about the milk, however, and Sam'l only got water after all.

In after days, when the story of Bell's wooing was told, there were some who held that the circumstances would have almost justified the lassie in giving Sam'l the go-by. But these perhaps forgot that her other lover was in the same predicament as the accepted one—that of the two, indeed, he was the more to blame, for he set off to T'nowhead on the Sabbath of his own accord, while Sam'l only ran after him. And then there is no one to say for certain whether Bell heard of her suitors' delinquencies until Lisbeth's return from the kirk. Sam'l could never remember whether he told her, and Bell was not sure whether, if he did, she took it in. Sanders was greatly in demand for weeks after to tell what he knew of the affair, but though he was twice asked to tea to the manse among the trees, and subjected thereafter to ministerial cross-examinations, this is all he told. He remained at the pigsty until Sam'l left the farm, when he joined him at the top of the brae, and they went home together.

"It's yersel, Sanders," said Sam'l.

"It is so, Sam'l," said Sanders.

"Very cauld," said Sam'l.

"Blawy," assented Sanders.

After a pause:

"Sam'l," said Sanders.

"Ay."

"I'm hearin' yer to be mairit."

"Ay."

"Weel, Sam'l, she's a snod bit lassie."

"Thank ye," said Sam'l.

"I had ance a kin' o' notion o' Bell mysel," continued Sanders.

"Ye had?"

"Yes, Sam'l; but I thocht better o't."

"Hoo d'ye mean?" asked Sam'l, a little anxiously.

"Weel, Sam'l, mairitch is a terrible responsibeelity."

"It is so," said Sam'l, wincing.

"An' no the thing to tak up withoot conseederation."

"But it's a blessed and honourable state, Sanders; ye've heard the minister on't."

"They say," continued the relentless Sanders, "'at the minister doesna get on sair wi' the wife himsel."

"So they do," cried Sam'l, with a sinking at the heart.

"I've been telt," Sanders went on, "'at gin ye can get the upper han' o' the wife for a while at first, there's the mair chance o' a harmonious exeestence."

"Bell's no the lassie," said Sam'l, appealingly, "to thwart her man."

Sanders smiled.

"D'ye think she is, Sanders?"

"Weel, Sam'l, I d'na want to fluster ye, but she's been ower lang wi' Lisbeth Fargus no to

hae learnt her ways. An' a'body kins what a life T'nowhead has wi' her."

"Guid sake, Sanders, hoo did ye no speak o' this afore?"

"I thocht ye kent o't, Sam'l."

They had now reached the square, and the U. P. kirk was coming out. The Auld Licht kirk would be half an hour yet.

"But, Sanders," said Sam'l, brightening up, "ye was on yer wy to spier her yersel."

"I was, Sam'l," said Sanders, "and I canna but be thankfu' ye was ower quick for's."

"Gin't hadna been you," said Sam'l, "I wid never hae thocht o't."

"I'm sayin' naething agin Bell," pursued the other, "but, man Sam'l, a body should be mair deleeberate in a thing o' the kind."

"It was michty hurried," said Sam'l, woefully.

"It's a serious thing to spier a lassie," said Sanders.

"It's an awfu' thing," said Sam'l.

"But we'll hope for the best," added Sanders, in a hopeless voice.

They were close to the Tenements now, and Sam'l looked as if he were on his way to be hanged.

"Sam'l?"

"Ay, Sanders."

"Did ye—did ye kiss her, Sam'l?"

"Na."

"Hoo?"

"There's was verra little time, Sanders."

"Half an 'oor," said Sanders.

"Was there? Man, Sanders, to tell ye the truth, I never thocht o't."

Then the soul of Sanders Elshioner was filled with contempt for Sam'l Dickie.

The scandal blew over. At first it was expected that the minister would interfere to prevent the union, but beyond intimating from the pulpit that the souls of Sabbath-breakers were beyond praying for, and then praying for Sam'l and Sanders, at great length, with a word thrown in for Bell, he let things take their course. Some said it was because he was always frightened lest his young men should intermarry with other denominations, but Sanders explained it differently to Sam'l.

"I hav'na a word to say agin the minister," he said; "they're gran' prayers, but, Sam'l, he's a mairit man himsel."

"He's a' the better for that, Sanders, isn he?"

"Do ye no see," asked Sanders, compassionately, "'at he's tryin' to mak the best o't?"

"Oh, Sanders, man!" said Sam'l.

"Cheer up, Sam'l," said Sanders, "it'll sune be ower."

Their having been rival suitors had not interfered with their friendship. On the contrary, while they had hitherto been mere acquaintances, they became inseparables as the wedding-day drew near. It was noticed that they had much to say to each other, and that

when they could not get a room to themselves they wandered about together in the churchyard. When Sam'l had anything to tell Bell he sent Sanders to tell it, and Sanders did as he was bid. There was nothing that he would not have done for Sam'l.

The more obliging Sanders was, however, the sadder Sam'l grew. He never laughed now on Saturdays, and sometimes his loom was silent half the day. Sam'l felt that Sanders's was the kindness of a friend for a dying man.

It was to be a penny wedding, and Lisbeth Fargus said it was delicacy that made Sam'l superintend the fitting-up of the barn by deputy. Once he came to see it in person, but he looked so ill that Sanders had to see him home. This was on the Thursday afternoon, and the wedding was fixed for Friday.

"Sanders, Sanders," said Sam'l, in a voice strangely unlike his own, "it'll a' be ower by this time the morn."

"It will," said Sanders.

"If I had only kent her langer," continued Sam'l.

"It wid hae been safer," said Sanders.

"Did ye see the yallow floor in Bell's bonnet?" asked the accepted swain.

"Ay," said Sanders, reluctantly.

"I'm dootin'—I'm sair dootin' she's but a flichty, licht-hearted crittur after a'."

"I had ay my suspeecions o't," said Sanders.

"Ye hae kent her langer than me," said Sam'l.

"Yes," said Sanders, "but there's nae gettin' at the heart o' women. Man, Sam'l, they're desperate cunnin'."

"I'm dootin't; I'm sair dootin't."

"It'll be a warnin' to ye, Sam'l, no to be in sic a hurry i' the futur," said Sanders.

Sam'l groaned.

"Ye'll be gaein' up to the manse to arrange wi' the minister the morn's mornin'," continued Sanders, in a subdued voice.

Sam'l looked wistfully at his friend.

"I canna do't, Sanders," he said, "I canna do't."

"Ye maun," said Sanders.

"It's aisy to speak," retorted Sam'l bitterly.

"We have a' oor troubles, Sam'l," said Sanders, soothingly, "an' every man maun bear his ain burdens. Johnny Davie's wife's dead, an' he's no repinin'."

"Ay," said Sam'l, "but a death's no a mairitch. We hae haen deaths in our family too."

"It may a' be for the best," added Sanders, "an' there wid be a michty talk i' the hale country-side gin ye didna ging to the minister like a man."

"I maun hae langer to think o't," said Sam'l.

"Bell's mairitch is the morn," said Sanders, decisively.

Sam'l glanced up with a wild look in his eyes.

"Sanders," he cried.

"Sam'l?"

"Ye hae been a guid friend to me, Sanders, in this sair affliction."

"Nothing ava," said Sanders; "dount mention'd."

"But, Sanders, ye canna deny but what your rinnin oot o' the kirk that awfu' day was at the bottom o'd a'."

"It was so," said Sanders, bravely.

"An' ye used to be fond o' Bell, Sanders."

"I dinna deny't."

"Sanders, laddie," said Sam'l, bending forward and speaking in a wheedling voice, "I aye thocht it was you she likeit."

"I had some sic idea mysel," said Sanders.

"Sanders, I canna think to pairt twa fowk sae weel suited to ane anither as you an' Bell."

"Canna ye, Sam'l?"

"She wid mak ye a guid wife, Sanders. I hae studied her weel, and she's a thrifty, douce, clever lassie. Sanders, there's no the like o' her. Mony a time, Sanders, I hae said to mysel, There's a lass ony man micht be prood to tak. A'body says the same, Sanders. There's nae risk ava, man: nane to speak o'. Tak her, laddie, tak her, Sanders; it's a grand chance, Sanders. She's yours for the spierin'. I'll gie her up, Sanders."

"Will ye, though?" said Sanders.

"What d'ye think?" asked Sam'l.

"If ye wid rayther," said Sanders, politely.

"There's my han' on't," said Sam'l. "Bless ye, Sanders; ye've been a true frien' to me."

Then they shook hands for the first time in their lives; and soon afterward Sanders struck up the brae to T'nowhead.

Next morning Sanders Elshioner, who had been very busy the night before, put on his Sabbath clothes and strolled up to the manse.

"But—but where is Sam'l?" asked the minister; "I must see himself."

"It's a new arrangement," said Sanders.

"What do you mean, Sanders?"

"Bell's to marry me," explained Sanders.

"But—but what does Sam'l say?"

"He's willin'," said Sanders.

"And Bell?"

"She's willin', too. She prefers't."

"It is unusual," said the minister.

"It's a' richt," said Sanders.

"Well, you know best," said the minister.

"You see the house was taen, at ony rate," continued Sanders. "An' I'll juist ging in til't instead o' Sam'l."

"Quite so."

"An' I cudna think to disappoint the lassie."

"Your sentiments do you credit, Sanders," said the minister; "but I hope you do not enter upon the blessed state of matrimony without full consideration of its responsibilities. It is a serious business—marriage."

"It's a' that," said Sanders, "but I'm willin' to stan' the risk."

So, as soon as it could be done, Sanders Elshioner took to wife T'nowhead's Bell, and I

remember seeing Sam'l Dickie trying to dance at the penny wedding.

Years afterward it was said in Thrums that Sam'l had treated Bell badly, but he was never sure about it himself.

"It was a near thing—a michty near thing," he admitted in the square.

"They say," some other weaver would remark, "'at it was you Bell liked best."

"I d'na kin," Sam'l would reply, "but there's nae doot the lassie was fell fond o' me. Ou, a mere passin' fancy's ye micht say."