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OR,

THE GIRL OF THE PERIOD.

A Novel.

BY THOMAS DUNN ENGLISH.

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CHAPTER I.

Which introduces a nice little girl, and an accident.

I must have been about eighteen years old, or thereabouts, when, on a holiday in June, I walked out, and strolled by the high road to the country beyond Puttenham. The highway led me to a common over which it crossed; and there, musing over the commonplace events of the week, I wandered over the knolls of gravelly soil, and among the furze-bushes, watching the donkies as they cropped the scanty blades of grass, and indulged occasionally in a tit-bit, in the way of a juicy thistle. Tired at length, I sat me down to rest under a thorn-bush by the road-side, and was thus seated when I heard the sound of voices. Looking up, I saw a man approach, who was leading by the hand a little girl who appeared to be about ten years of age. I was struck with the appearance of the couple, and so scanned them closely.

The man was short, thick-set, and well-stricken in years. He was clad in a plain suit of black, considerably worn, and much dusted by travel; and he wore a black felt hat, with a very wide brim. His complexion was swarthy, and his eyes were keen and deeply set beneath long and bushy eye brows. On his face he wore a

thick, grey moustache—a thing quite uncommon in England at that time. In fact, it was the first I had ever seen off the stage of a theatre. His hair was jet black in color, streaked here and there with white, and fell in glossy curls to his shoulders; but when he removed his hat for a moment to wipe the perspiration from his forehead, I noticed that the hair in a wide circle over the crown was not over a half inch in length, as though it had grown after having been recently shaved. His walk was slow and steady, and, although he occasionally threw searching glances around him, his eyes were generally bent on the ground.

My gaze, however, was riveted most firmly to the little girl. She was the very perfection of childish beauty, and I had never seen before, nor have I beheld since, anything so exquisitely lovely. Her complexion was clear and delicate, with that thin skin, in which the color comes and goes at every fleeting emotion. Her features were of as perfect an outline as ever poet imagined, or painter drew. There was but little color in the cheeks, but the lips were intensely red, and the lower one looked like a ripe, pulpy

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cherry. Her form, well shown by a closely-fitting dress, seemed to be most symmetrical; and the mould of her ankles and feet would have delighted a sculptor. But her eyes were the most striking of all. Large, lustrous and passionate, in color of the deepest hazel, with the iris floating in a sea of liquid pearl, they beamed with a mingled fire and softness from beneath their long, dark lashes, in a way to haunt the memory of the gazer for many days afterward. She was a mere child—a little, innocent, dreamy-looking girl; but I rose to my feet as she came forward, and felt an emotion of tenderness for the beautiful being, which, had she been older, could only have been inspired by love. As it was I was fascinated.

The man saw me, stopped, removed his hat, and addressed me a question in a foreign tongue. I knew the language to be Spanish, for I had heard similar sounds once before; but I could not understand the meaning. I showed, this, doubtless, by my looks, for he replaced his hat, bowed slightly, and moved on. It happened, however, that the music-teacher of my adopted sister, who was a Frenchman, had given me frequent lessons in his language, and having labored to acquire it during a whole year, I managed to speak it fluently enough, though with a defective accent. My admiration for the child made me forget this, and almost everything else; and it was only when the couple had turned, and the spell of the little girl's eyes had passed, that I recalled to mind my accomplishment. Thinking the man might possibly understand me, I called after him in French, and asked how I could serve him. He turned instantly, his coun-

tenance expressing great satisfaction, and replied in the same tongue:

"I should be glad, my son, if you could tell me the distance to the town of Puttenham."

"Two miles from the milestone which stands at the mouth of yonder quarry, sir. You can see the town from the rising ground just beyond."

As I spoke I joined them in their walk toward the town. The man resumed his questions.

"How far thence is the chateau of the Lord Landeeze?"

"Landys Castle, I suppose you mean. The park commences about a mile on the other side of town, but the castle is at least two miles farther, and stands back nearly a half mile from the high road. There is a near path which cuts off much of the distance."

"Is milord at home?"

"I believe so."

"He is a very tall, stately gentleman, is he not? He has dark grey eyes, and brown hair, not unlike your own, in color I mean, for yours is straight and his is curled?"

"No; you describe his second-cousin, the former earl, who died about two years since, and who rarely visited the place. The present earl is stately enough, and tall; but he has light grey eyes, and light, reddish, yellow hair, such as we call sandy."

The man seemed staggered at this.

"Dead?" he exclaimed, "about two years since!"

I nodded my head affirmatively.

We walked for a few minutes in silence. Then he turned suddenly and questioned me again.

"How did he die?"

"I can only tell you what is gene-

rally believed here," I replied. "He had been absent from England for many years, traveling restlessly all over the world. He was last heard from at Valparaiso, where he took passage in a schooner bound to Mazatlan, whence he intended to cross over and to Vera Cruz, and to go thence by way of Havana to the United States. The vessel was wrecked near her port, and all on board perished, except his lordship's valet. He returned about a year and a half since, and brought the news of his master's death."

He muttered something in Spanish, and then resumed his questions.

"And the second-cousin succeeded. Ah, yes! I know your English law—the nearest heir-male."

"Not exactly," I replied. "His second-cousin did succeed him, undoubtedly; but as the nearest heir, and not as the nearest heir-male."

"I do not understand the distinction. What is it?"

"Because," I said, "the earldom of Landys is unlike many, and for all I know, unlike any other title in the peerage. It is of a very old creation, and the title and estates are entailed on the senior heir, without regard to sex. If a female, and she marries, the husband becomes earl through his wife's right, to the exclusion of the next of kin. The grandfather of the late earl was a commoner, but on his marriage with the young Countess of Landys, entered on the wife's title and estate. The late earl was childless, having never married, and so the next heir, the son of his father's cousin, succeeded."

The Spaniard seemed to be revolving something in his mind, and walked along for awhile in silence. I pleased

myself during the interval by watching the movements of the child, who tripped along, walking naturally and gracefully, as most girls of her age do. At length the man raised his head and inquired:

"The present earl—is he married?"

"He is," I replied, "and has a child about four years old, a son."

The eyes of the stranger flashed angrily, but the gleam of passion passed, and was followed by an expression half smile and half sneer.

"What kind of man is the earl," he asked, "I mean as to mind and manners?"

"That," I answered, "would be hard for me to tell. I have no opportunities of judging of either."

"I should have supposed," said the stranger, "from your familiarity with the family history, that you were a connexion or friend."

I laughed at this, and said:

"You will not be in Puttenham long before you learn that the townfolk are naturally interested in the Landys family, since the earl owns about one-half the town—the rest belonging to old Sharp, the miser. My position debars me from any special intimacy with a peer."

"Your position; may I ask, without offending you, what that is?"

"Certainly. I am a printer's apprentice at your service—apprentice and adopted son of John Guttenberg, printer and stationer."

"You! a printer?"

"Nothing more sure."

"Do printer's apprentices in this part of the world usually learn French?"

"I believe not; but I have a taste for languages."

We had now reached the edge of the town, and my companion having asked where he could obtain lodging, I directed him to the Crown and Angel, a respectable, middle-class inn, situated on the main street. He bowed formally, gave me a profusion of thanks for my courtesy, and so we parted. I stood and gazed after him and the little girl as she walked by his side, her body gently swaying, and her glossy hair, which hung in unrestrained waves down her back, glistening in the sunshine. A turn of the street hid them from my sight; and then I walked to the lodgings of a friend with whom I purposed to spend the remainder of the day.

This friend was a young London artist, fastly rising into note in his profession, who came annually to Puttenham, and spent a couple of months' time there and thereabouts, partly to sketch, for there was some beautiful scenery around the place, and partly to fish, for there was an excellent trout stream in the neighborhood. His name was Paul Bagby. We had met while I was spending a Saturday afternoon—a half holiday always allowed me—fishing on the banks of the Willowfringe; and, from the admiration I expressed at a huge trout he dexterously captured, we became acquaintances. He had his sketch-book with him, and I begged a sight at the drawings, which he was good enough to let me have. Finding that I admired art and artists, he invited me to call at his lodgings, and I was glad to accept the invitation. Being John Guttenberg's adopted son, I had received a fair English education, and was not, in either manner or language, what the world expected to find in an

ordinary apprentice-boy. Paul was struck by some boyish remark I made when looking at his sketches—its oddity tickled his fancy—perhaps my unfeigned admiration for his productions tickled his vanity too—and we became friends. He gave me lessons in drawing, and during his stay would frequently come to the shop and beg a holiday for me that I might accompany him in his sketching rambles. My master never refused this, for Mr. Bagby was becoming distinguished, and was patronized by the Landys family, the last fact, of course, a high recommendation to the favor of the townsfolk. Beside this he was a very good customer to our circulating library, taking out a fresh book nearly every day, merely to dawdle over a few passages, and then throw it aside. He was lively, made many queer remarks, and used to drop in at the shop along with the officers and others, and to tell all kinds of funny stories to Mrs. Guttenberg and Mary, who had charge of that part of the business. He was a great favorite with the family, as he appeared to be with every one else.

But Bagby was not at home, having left in the morning on a sketching tour, and I turned to go elsewhere. Longing to have another look at the little girl whose childish beauty had so impressed me, I made my way to the inn, knowing that by taking a street which ran diagonally, I would reach there before the Spaniard and his daughter, who had taken the longer and usual way.

The Crown and Angel was in Charter street, which was the principal avenue of the town, and the house stood at the corner of the market

square. By going through Billet lane I arrived at the inn first. On entering the public room I called for a mug of ale, not that I wanted a drink, but because I desired a pretext for remaining. The waiter sat it before me, and it was still untasted when I heard an uproar without, and ran to the door with the rest, to learn the cause.

Two runaway horses attached to an empty phaeton were galloping furiously down the street, everybody getting out of the way, and no one attempting to stop the infuriated animals. As they came near the inn, the Spaniard and little girl emerged from the cross street, and walked toward the Crown and Angel. A dozen voices called to them to go back; but the man, not understanding English, did not think the words to be addressed to him, or was probably so lost in thought as not to hear the noise. He still advanced, the little girl accompanying him. I called to him in French to take care, and springing forward, dragged the child out of the horses' path. The man saw his danger, and leaped desperately forward, but the hub of one of the wheels struck him on the hip, and threw him forward violently on his face. The horses, as though startled by the occurrence, stopped suddenly, and were at once secured by the bystanders.

The stranger was picked up insensible, carried into the inn, and a surgeon sent for. The little girl was almost frantic at first, but soon calmed when she recognized me as one whom she had met before, though only for a few minutes; and though she understood none of my words, I was enabled by soothing looks and gestures to reassure her. In a few minutes her

father recovered his senses, but was evidently seriously injured, as the blood on his face denoted—even more seriously hurt than at first appeared, for when the surgeon came he pronounced the hip to be dislocated. The patient was at once removed to a chamber, and the dislocation with great difficulty reduced. The operation was doubtless very painful; but the Spaniard, during its continuance, merely set his teeth firmly together, and did not even groan. So soon as the head of the bone resumed its proper position, he fainted, but quickly recovered, and in a short while, although the parts around the joints were much swollen, enjoyed comparative ease.

The child would not be separated from her father, but obeyed every order given by signs to remain quiet—keeping her large eyes fixed on the sufferer during the operation, and wiping the large drops of perspiration from his forehead.

As I was the only person present who could act as interpreter, I was forced to remain nearly an hour. During that time the Spaniard, who gave his name as Jose Espinel, requested me to tell the landlord that he preferred to remain there rather than to go to the public hospital, and that he had sufficient means to pay for the required accommodation. This I did, and at his further request made the landlord send by the carrier to the next town, Puddleford, for his own portmanteau, and his daughter's trunk, both of which had been left there. He explained to me that he could not obtain a conveyance that morning, and, being anxious to get to Puttenham, had walked over, getting a lift for himself and the child

part of the way in a farmer's cart. He requested me to visit him often while he lay there, which I promised to do if permitted. I pressed his hand, patted the child on the shoulder, and left the two together.

When I got home I found that the news of the accident had preceded me—indeed by that time had been spread throughout the town. Captain Berkeley, of the stationed regiment, was commenting on the matter as I entered the shop, and complimented me as a “doocid plucky little fellah.” Mrs. Guttenburg, who looked upon me as a kind of hero for having pulled the child out of the way of the horses, made a great many inquiries about the couple, and seemed very proud of the compliment paid me by the captain. Mary asked if the little girl were pretty, and on my answering in the affirmative, said that when we grew up we would be married—as that was the way in all the novels and plays. As for John Guttenberg, he merely said that I had acted properly enough; and when I told him of the Spaniard's request, added that I might spend two hours with him during the day, and the entire evenings, if he desired it—a permission I was not slow to accept.

CHAPTER II.

Which is principally about a Baby, a Mysterious Personage in Black, and the Church-Clock.

Thus far my story is plain enough; but the reader may possibly desire to know who I am, who John Guttenberg was, and other matters. It is a proper curiosity, and shall be gratified. Who I am will be told in due time—what I was, and how I came to be, up

to the commencement of the story, he shall hear at once.

Mr. John Guttenberg, although born in England, was the grandson of a German printer, and was himself a master of the printer's art and mystery. He came of a race of printers, and boasted that from the time of his great ancestor, who had divided with Fust and Schoeffer the honor of introducing moveable types, the eldest-born of the family had always been a typesetter. Mr. John Guttenberg was a staid, sober and respectable tradesman, the master of a well-conducted printing-office, and the publisher of a country newspaper at the town of Puttenham, in the Southwestern part of England. He was also a book-seller, and kept a circulating library, whereof the officers of a marching regiment, quartered in the neighborhood, and all the people of consequence there, as well as many who were of no consequence at all, were patrons.

Puttenham was a place having pretensions to size and respectability. It boasted of several public buildings, including a Retreat for Decayed Masters, founded by the will of Gervase Thompson, a retired brewer; the County Jail and Court-house, for Puttenham was the shire town; the stocks and public pound; a fine old church, planned by Sir Christopher Wren, and erected in 1701; three Dissenters' Meeting-Houses, each rectangular and many-windowed; and a public square, highly-ornamented by the stocks, a pump and two long horse-troughs. The church had a most excellent clock, made by a famous clock-maker in London, and had four dials, placed to face the four points of the compass.

Of all these things, I insist more

particularly on John Guttenburg and the town clock, since both have a deal to do with the early part of my life. To the one I am indebted for my rearing, and to the other for my name; and I hold both my benefactors in grateful remembrance.

Mr. John Guttenberg, I repeat, was a staid, sober, and respectable tradesman. Physically, nature had not been lavish of her choicest gifts upon his person, since he was but five feet five inches in height, but as he was nearly as rotund as one of his own ink-balls, the deficiency of length was compensated for by the extent of breadth; and in like manner, a brevity of nose was balanced by an extreme length of chin; and a mouth in shape and size like the button-hole of a great coat, atoned for by a pair of ears whose length caused them to invade the domain of the hat above, and encroach on that of the shirt-collar below. Mentally, he was rather above the greater part of his neighbors, having energy, quick-sightedness in business affairs, and some concentration of purpose. Morally, he was well endowed, and in addition to a warm heart, possessed a fair share of honor, as he understood the sentiment, and an abhorrence of what he deemed a mean action. The robbers of old, those fellows who went robbing and ruffianizing over the country in sheet-iron coats and trousers, would not have recognized him as a chivalrous gentleman. Yet, I assert that John Guttenberg, tradesman as he was, and therefore by occupation supposed to be devoid of such feeling, had as much of such chivalric impulse in his nature as ever shed its lustre upon the Knights of the Round Table or the Peers of Charlemagne.

It is true that he had some prejudices, and he evinced a slavish deference to those above him in social position; but these were common to the tradesman of that time and place, and, judging from history, not incompatible with knightly acts. And if he were occasionally betrayed into a slight excess, it was only at rare intervals, and upon great occasions.

Two and thirty years ago to a day—I am writing this upon the third day of December, in the year of grace one thousand eight hundred and fifty-nine—the publisher of the *Puttenham Chronicle*, being a Councilman, attended a meeting of the Corporation. After the council had closed its session, he accepted an invitation to dine with the Mayor, a wealthy soap-boiler of the town, and sat late with his worshipful host and friends over the wine and walnuts. Although, as he afterwards explained to Mrs. Guttenberg, he was exceedingly sober when he left the Mayor's house, yet the sudden emergence from a warm to a cold atmosphere, and the change from the bright, cheerful fire within, the more cheerful company, and the still more cheerful wine, to the coldness and quiet without, had a bewildering effect upon him. Instead of turning to the right, he turned to the left, and pursued his way for some distance before he discovered his error.

He stopped and looked around him. It was difficult at first to find to what quarter of the town he had strayed. At length he recognized a barber's pole, which stood before a low house at the street-corner, and thus knew that his nearest road homeward would be obtained by retracing his steps. Before he could turn he felt a

hand upon his elbow. He looked around and saw a tall, dark figure, with a coat closely buttoned up, and a heavy fur collar over its shoulders. All that he could discover about the face was a pair of flashing eyes that were fixed steadily on his own.

"Well?" said the printer, enquiringly, and not without some apprehension, lest his new companion might be a foot-pad.

"Mr. John Guttenberg, I believe," said the other, in good enough English, but with an accent that sounded foreign.

"That is my name," was the reply.

"You can do me an essential service."

"I should be glad enough to do it," said the startled tradesman; "but it is rather late, and Mrs. Guttenberg will wonder what detains me so long beyond my accustomed hour. If you will call at my shop to-morrow, or rather to-day, for it is now long past midnight, I shall be happy to hear what you may have to propose."

The church clock struck two.

"At this moment, or never," said the unknown. "When the day dawns it may be too late."

John Guttenberg was about to reply, when the other seized his arm with a firm grasp, and urged his steps onwards in a direction opposite to his own house. Resistance was useless, and although the printer was rather startled, he saw no one to afford help, and so gave in to the will of his captor. Fifteen minutes sharp walking, but through what streets he could not tell, sufficed to bring the couple to the outside of a dilapidated building in an unfamiliar place. Into its narrow and unlighted hall, and up its creaking

stairs, the unknown led the tradesman. Before the back-room in the third story, the stranger stopped, and without announcing his approach, entered, dragging his companion after him, and then closing the door.

John Guttenberg, though greatly astounded at the whole matter, when he saw no personal harm was intended to him, took a good look at the apartment into which he had been so unceremoniously thrust.

The room was devoid of comfortable furniture. There was an old and creaking deal table, and a three-legged, oaken stool. On the former was a farthing candle, inserted in an ordinary iron candle-stick. A scanty sea-coal fire glimmered at the bottom of the grate. In the corner something lay wrapped up in a pile of ragged clothes, over which a cloak was partly drawn. Near there, on the three-legged stool, sat a woman, meanly clad, and, for the weather, insufficiently. She was handsome, though her skin was dark, almost tawny—her hair especially being of an unwonted blackness and glossiness, and, from the mass gathered at the back of the head, exceedingly luxuriant in growth. She turned her eyes on the new-comer, and seemed about to rise. The unknown raised his finger with a menacing motion, when she sank back in her seat, and covered her face with her hands.

"You have the reputation of being an honest and humane man," said the stranger.

"I hope so," said the printer.

"You have, and I dare say it is deserved."

The stranger paused a moment, and the woman sighed. John Guttenberg

took a good look at both. The woman, though dressed so commonly, had a well-proportioned hand and wrist; and a portion of her underclothing, which protruded from the bosom of her dress, was edged with what appeared to be costly lace. As for the stranger, he was tall, handsomely dressed, though without cloak or surtout, and wore around his neck a heavy collar, or rather a half cape of fur. His eyes were dark, but whether grey, black, or hazel, could not well be seen, for his hat was so slouched over his face as to throw them in shadow. He also wore a heavy beard and whiskers.

"Take this child," he said; and as he spoke he lifted a young babe from the pile of clothes in which it had been snugly stowed. The woman made a motion as though to wrest it; but the stranger said something in a foreign tongue, when she shrank back. "Take it home with you," he continued. "Here—this collar of fur will protect it still further from the cold. Here are fifty pounds. Do with the brat as you like. Make a printer of him—bring him up as you think fit—give him what name you choose. You shall hear from me again. Come, it is time for you to go home."

"But," remonstrated the printer, holding the babe at arm's length, "I don't choose to—"

"Ah!" said the woman, rising, and commencing to speak.

"Diyum!" cried the unknown, angrily.

The woman was cowed, either by the strange word, which she apparently understood, or by his manner, for she resumed her seat, wringing her hands, piteously.

The babe looked up in the printer's face, and smiled—at least, that contortion of the lips which passes for a smile in new-born babes made its appearance. John Guttenberg, whose married life was childless, found himself involuntarily pressing the little innocent to his bosom.

"Come," said the stranger, "it is time to go."

The woman darted forward, snatched the child, and gave it a kiss—then returned it with a sigh. As she did so, she slipped into John Guttenberg's hand a small paper packet.

"Come!" said the stranger again, and he led the bewildered printer, who seemed to have lost all power of resistance, out of the room, down stairs and along the streets—by what route it seemed impossible to say—to the door of the latter's house. There the bearer of the child plucked up courage, and was about to return the charge thus thrust upon him, when he discovered that the other had turned the nearest corner and disappeared.

"Oh, well! never mind!" said the printer to himself, as he opened the door with his latch-key, "I'll send the little fellow to the poor-house in the morning."

Mrs. Guttenberg had not retired to rest. She knew that her husband had dined with the Mayor, and expecting him to return a little flushed with wine, had prepared a series of moral observations, specially adapted to his case. To her great surprise his face had a look far more sober and melancholy than usual, and to her greater surprise she saw him unroll from a bundle of furs and clothing, a very little child. The babe, which by this time had grown hungry, began to wail.

"Bless me!" said the wife, "if the man hasn't a baby! Who's is it?"

"That's precisely what I'd like to know," replied the husband.

"But how did you come by it?"

"That's precisely what I mean to tell you, if it will only stop its whining."

Mrs. Guttenberg took the babe in her arms. It was dressed in a long frock of cross-barred muslin; but around one arm was a strip of yellow lace, of an exceedingly rare and costly kind; and the short sleeves of the dress, with those of the silk and flannel underclothes, were looped up and joined together by two bracelets of turquoises, chained with gold after a quaint and peculiar fashion. Around the babe's neck was suspended by a coarse flaxen thread, a plain gold ring. Inside of this were some peculiar characters. The letters M and T were to be made out distinctly; but the others seemed to be mere hieroglyphics. The inscription, which was deeply engraven, was as follows:

M-T-M TAW

The fur in which the child was wrapped was of the richest Russian sable, and underneath it was a shawl whose material was afterwards ascertained to be true cashmere. The babe raised its large grey eyes to the face of the good woman, and, curling its little lip, renewed its piteous wailing.

"I'm sure I don't know what to do with it," said the printer's wife. "It wants feeding, poor thing, and I don't believe there's a drop of milk in the house. Jane gave the last to the cat before she went to bed."

"Well, my dear, Jane has a baby herself, and—"

"Dear me! so she has. I never thought of that. I'll wake her."

And she did. Jane came. As she was about to take the child, it again indulged in that facial contortion which young mothers call a smile.

"Why," exclaimed Mrs. Guttenberg, "it is the sweetest babe. There, Jane, take care of him until morning. He seems to be very hungry."

Jane experimented before reporting. "It feeds uncommon strong, mum," she said. "It's a rare, hearty babe, mum."

And presently off went Jane, with the new comer in charge.

John Guttenberg told his wife all that had occurred to him, including the fact that the apparent mother had slipped a packet in his hand; but when he came to that part of the story, for the first time he missed the paper. It was neither in his hand nor on his person, and, after an unavailing search, he came to the conclusion that he had dropped it on the way home.

"What will you do with it?" inquired the wife.

"Do with it! Give it up to the parochial authorities along with the money. I think that is the proper course."

"Is it like the man?"

"I am not sure whether it is or not. He hid his face so that I cannot say. It's not like the mother, I'm sure. Its eyes are grey, and hers are the blackest I ever saw."

"It's a pretty baby, John; a very pretty baby."

"That's what you women say about all babies. It looks to me to have about as much expression as a sheet of brown paper. However, its good or bad looks don't concern us. The

parish will have to take care of it."

"John, we've been married four years come next May-day, and we have no children."

"Well?"

"It's a boy, John."

"Is it? What then?"

"Suppose we keep him."

"No, indeed! I have no idea of supporting other peoples' babies—at least not to bring them up at my expense."

"But it seems like the gift of Providence; and then the fifty pound, and the lace, and the jewels, and the fur, and that beautiful soft shawl! It is not a poor man's child, you may depend on that, and I think it will bring good luck."

"Do you really want to keep it, Martha?"

"Indeed I do, John."

"I should be annoyed to death with all kinds of ridiculous stories. People would invent all kinds of strange stories, and some of them might even fancy—"

"Well, let them fancy. I wouldn't believe that, nor any one that has eyes, for it isn't a hair like you; that's easy to be seen."

"It won't do, Martha."

"Well, just as you choose; but it's very hard that you won't grant a little favor like that, when I've taken a fancy to the child."

"Little favor! very little to be sure—to be kept awake all night by some other man's crying brat."

"Do you hear it cry now?"

"No, but—"

"John, dear!"

"Oh, well!" exclaimed the printer, inwardly delighted at his wife's perseverance in a whim which accorded

with his own wish, "you can keep it, if you will. But what will you name the young fellow?"

"Oh, I'll find a name, never fear."

The church clock struck three.

"There!" she exclaimed, "there is a name now, and a very pretty one. You can see it any day on the north dial of the clock. We'll call him Ambrose Fecit."

"Ambrose *fecit*! Why, my dear, do you know what that means?"

"Of course, I do. It means that Mr. Fecit made that clock. And a very good clock it is, and a very pretty name too, and not very common either; for I never met any of the Fecits in the course of my life."

"I dare say not," replied the husband; and he leaned against the bedpost—the latter part of the conversation occurring as they were disrobing for rest—and laughed immoderately.

And thus it was I had my name, and that was why I was bred a printer.

As for the unknown couple, no inquiries could find them out, nor could John Guttenberg, in his after rambles through the town, ever recognize the house from whence he had taken me.

The after history of my life, up to the period when I met the Spaniard and his daughter, would show nothing remarkable. I was a healthy child and went through the perils of teething and the measles safely. John Guttenberg and his wife fulfilled their self-imposed task like good and conscientious people. I was treated as though I were their own child, being duly lectured and birched when I was naughty, and cuddled and candied when I was not. When I was about four years old, Mrs. Guttenberg pre-

sented her husband, greatly to his gratification and her delight, with a daughter. Everybody—for people knew me to be a foundling, though they did not know the circumstances of my finding—declared that “my nose was put out of joint,” and that I might now look out for neglect, if not positive ill-treatment. Everybody was mistaken. I was treated the same as usual. As for myself, I was too young to understand these predictions, of which I knew nothing until afterwards. But I was vastly delighted with the new-comer, on whom I used to gaze in the cradle with wrapt admiration. It was the dawning of an amiable weakness which followed me through life—a love and esteem for the opposite sex. As we grew up together I loved the little Mary more and more. I brought her home all my trophies in the shape of marbles and peg-tops; I expended my scanty pocket-money in hard-bake and barley-sugar for her particular benefit; and after I had left school to be instructed in the mysteries of my protector’s craft, I used to take surreptitious impressions of wood-cuts in colored inks, to ornament her play-house. I thought my sister—for such I believed her to be until good-natured strangers taught me better—to be the prettiest child in the world, my idea of beautiful eyes being those of a mottled, light hazel hue, and my type of symmetrical noses the pug.

During the early part of my life, and more especially in the first year of my apprenticeship, I thought the *Puttenham Chronicle* to be the leading newspaper of the world; and I felt more awful reverence for Mr. Hincks, the editor, than I did for the Earl of

Landys, whose estate lay within a mile of town, or even the ady Caroline Bowlington, who came in her own coach once a year to make the Dowager Countess of Landys a visit, and was the sole daughter of a Duke. For, did not Mr. Hincks handle not only Dukes and Marquesses without gloves, but even boldly attacked her Majesty’s ministers—they being of the opposite party to ours? Did he not sneer at the French, who, to be sure, were not much, as they all wore wooden shoes, and lived on frogs, and spent the principal part of their lives in hair-dressing, and giving dancing-lessons to one-another—a poor, lean set of fellows, for any ten of whom a hardy Briton was a match at any time? And did he not give, at times, a good setting-down to the Yankees, a nation of savages who spoke a kind of wild English, and scalped and ate their prisoners—whose women chewed tobacco and spoke through their noses; a people who had behaved so badly that his Majesty, George the Third, after whipping them at Parker Hill and Yorktown, and New Orleans, and I don’t know how many more places, finally cast them off, and sent them about their own business, where they have been miserably ever since? Then there was my fellow-apprentice, Tom Brown, who set up all the leaders, and, in the absence of his master, even made up the form. My opinion of him was that he had great force of character, combined with great knowledge of the world, and had only to say the word, after he was out of his time, to be made a prime-minister, or a member of parliament, or a beadle, or something else equally important. And the fishermen who came on market

days, with fish from the little port of Puddleford, about five miles off, I regarded as men who went down into the sea in ships, bold navigators who were ready to sail to the bottom of the Maelstrom, if needed; though I did find fault with them for not frequently hitching up their trousers by the waistband, and imprecating their tarry top-lights, as the gallant sailor, who appeared in “Black-Eyed Souse,” when the players made their annual visit, invariably did.

Having thus introduced myself to the reader, let us go back to the Spaniard and the little girl.

CHAPTER III.

Wherein I become almost a Spanish Scholar, but lose both my Teachers.

The next day Paul Bagby, having heard of my adventure, called at the printing-house. Learning that I was about to visit the patient, he volunteered to accompany me, saying that in his two years’ sketching tour on the Peninsula he had made himself a tolerable master of the Castilian. We found the Spaniard lying upon a couch, reading, while his little daughter sat near. He seemed glad to see me, and when I presented the artist, received him with all the courtesy that his constrained position would allow him to show. They entered into conversation in Spanish, at my instance; and while they were thus engaged, I watched the child, and noted the play of her features as she listened. Occasionally I joined in the conversation, Espinel appealing to me at times in French. Their conversation, I found by this, had turned upon the Earl of Landys, who seemed to be a subject of deep interest

to the Spaniard. The latter at length said to me in French:

“Monsieur Bagby seems to admire milord Landees very much.”

“My faith!” said Paul, in the same language, “the admiration is merely gratitude for patronage, of which I have received a deal through the Landys’ interest.”

“D’Alembert pronounced quite a panegyric upon Louis XIV., because the king sent forty arm-chairs to the Academy,” said the Spaniard.

“Exactly,” replied Paul, laughing; “I might have bought as many as forty sofas with the proceeds of Lord Landys’ direct patronage, throwing aside the sitters he has sent me; consequently, common gratitude requires that I should admire him as much as D’Alembert did Louis XIV.”

“He is fond of pictures then. Has he many?”

“Yes, and some very fine ones. His gallery contains a picture from every modern artist of note, with some fine specimens of the masters. By the by, he has a picture painted by a foreign artist, the portrait of a monk, which, odd as it may seem, bears a striking resemblance to you, senior.”

“Indeed! by one of the old masters?”

“No; modern, undoubtedly.”

The surgeon now entered the room, and told us that the senior would not be able to go about for some days, as the internal injuries were severe. Bagby translated this to the patient, who merely replied that it was unfortunate, as he desired to visit London at an early date. Bagby now rose to leave, and I, promising to return in a few minutes, accompanied him down stairs.

"What do you think of the couple?" I asked, when we were fairly out of the room.

"I think the child is the most beautiful creature of her age I ever saw," was the answer, "and I intend to paint her portrait. As for her father, he is no father at all, I fancy."

"How do you come to that conclusion?"

"A child always bears some resemblance to each parent. It may be only such as those acquainted with those matters can point out; but it is always there. Sometimes the upper part of the head is that of the father, and the lower that of the mother, or *vice versa*. Then the face may be that of one parent, when the back part of the head will have the configuration peculiar to that of the other, or the reverse. Again, there may be a mingling of the facial points. I have been studying the two with the eye of a naturalist, and the analytical habit of an artist, and the girl's face, head, and physical conformation, are totally unlike his, except in points that might be accidentally similar. Besides, he is a monk, or has been until recently."

"How do you make that out?"

"His head bears the mark of the tonsure. The hair has been only suffered to grow a short while."

"It may have been shaved through illness."

"Not a bit of it. In that case the shaving would not have been so regular, and scarcely on the top of the head. Then you must remember, that although she called him 'father,' and he addressed her as 'daughter,' he spoke of her to me all through as 'this child,' 'this dear little girl,' and so on."

"But," said I, "he spoke of her to

me as 'the child he was bound to protect.'"

"Precisely. It is not a parental obligation, you see, on which a parent, taking it as a matter of course, would not insist. But you had better return to your Spaniard. I'll see you again, and we'll talk the matter over farther. Call on me to-morrow before you come here, and I will show you how far I have gone in the way of painting her."

"Do you expect her to sit, then?"

"Sit? No. A face so remarkable is easily painted from memory. I won't get its character and expression out of my mind for a twelvemonth."

He left, and I returned to Espinel. The latter was reading when I came in, but put the book down.

"Do not let me interrupt you," said I. "If you are interested, go on; but first tell me if I can order anything new for you of the landlord."

"No; I am quite comfortable, and if you will, would prefer to talk."

He then asked me a great many questions about the town and its vicinity, more particularly about the Landys family, all of which I answered as well as I could. At length he said:

"How long since you commenced to study French?"

"About a year since."

"Are there many French people in this town?"

"Only one that I know—the gentleman who gave me lessons—M. de Lille."

"You must have great aptitude for acquiring languages. Your accent is defective in part, but wonderfully good to have been acquired during a year. How would you like to study Spanish?"

"Very much."

"Repeat this," and he uttered a few

words in Castilian.

I obeyed.

"Very good; very good, indeed," said he, while the little girl clapped her hands in delight. "You have caught the accent perfectly. You would find the Spanish quite easy to master. Once learn the alphabetical sounds, and all after that is an effort of memory. I know most European languages, but not English. I have been thinking, as I have nothing better to do while fastened here, that I would like to change lessons with you. I could get along fastly, for I am familiar with the Low Dutch, which is nearly identical with the Low Saxon, one of the parents of the English tongue. You shall teach me English, and I will return it with Spanish."

I acceded to the proposition, and the lessons began.

We continued our studies all the time the Spaniard remained in Puttenham. In a little time I had mastered the sounds of the Spanish language, and a good many phrases, as well as the forms of its verbs. I was less fortunate as a teacher than pupil. Espinel found it very difficult to get over some of our peculiar sounds, and our exceptional orthography became a great stumbling-block. Fortunately there was in our printing-room a Spanish grammar and dictionary, kept to determine the proper spelling of Spanish words, when such had to be used in the *Chronicle*, and these books were of great assistance.

It was nearly four weeks before Senor Espinel was able to rise and walk about the room. The shock had been a severe one to a man over fifty-six—for such he told me was his age—and his recovery was slow. So earnestly

did I labor during this time that I had acquired quite a smattering of Castilian, and managed not only to translate rapidly with the aid of the dictionary, but to keep up a brisk conversation on ordinary subjects. I found myself, however, better able to converse with the child than the old man. Her prattle, simple as it was, I readily understood, and my interest in her was so deep, that it became my greatest delight to talk with her. Zara, for such was her name, had by this time grown quite attached to me, and would come and sit on my knee, and lay her head on my shoulder, while I told her some nursery ballad, or fairy story, in my imperfect Spanish; or would prattle to me in a curious mixture of her own language with English, which last tongue she acquired faster than Espinel. The Senor Jose, meanwhile, with a table wheeled up to where he sat, worked hard in translating some English book, and occasionally interrupted Zara and me to ask me the proper form of some verb, or an explanation of a difficult idiom. How tenderly I loved that pure and affectionate child! How delighted I was with her growing attachment to me!

At length the Senor Espinel was able to walk without serious difficulty, and managed to call on Mr. Guttenberg, and thank him for permitting my attendance. My protector received him civilly enough, but did not feel prepossessed in his favor. This arose from the fact that Paul Bagby, then in London, had intimated, previously to his departure, that Espinel was, or had been a monk. With all his many good qualities, John Guttenberg had a strong sectarian prejudice.

I left the Espinels one night about

ten o'clock, having shaken hands with Don Jose, and kissed little Zara, who always remained up from rest until I left. She said, as we parted:

"Good night, brother Ambrosio. Some day Zara grow great big; then she spick English much gooder as now."

I smoothed her hair with my hand, and turned to go. As I left the landlord came with a letter which had arrived by the evening mail, directed to the Senor Jose Espinel. I noticed that it had the London mark.

The next day, at noon, I went to see my friends as usual, and was told that the Spaniard and his daughter had taken places the night before in the mail-coach for London, and had departed at daybreak.

"He left this for you," said the landlord.

I tore open the letter. It was in French, and read in English thus:

"My dear young friend.—A letter, received as you left us last night, called me direct to London, without an opportunity to bid you more than this farewell, or to express, as I ought, my sense of your kindness. Zara sends her love to you, and the enclosed souvenir. May God have you in his holy keeping."

"JOSE ESPINEL."

Enclosed in the letter was a packet, containing a lock of hair, which I knew at once to be Zara's.

CHAPTER IV.

Which details singular events, including a fresh Mystery, and introduces the Right Honorable the Earl of Landys.

About two months after Zara and her father had left the town, Tom Brown, who had been over to the shop for copy, told me that a package addressed to me had arrived by the car-

rier from London. For I must mention that our printing-house was a back building, in the rear of a piece of ground on which the book-shop and dwelling-house was built, and faced on a ten foot alley behind. I asked Tom what the package was like, and why he did not bring it with him.

"It is thin," answered he, "and looks like a big atlas, wrapped up in brown paper. I'd have brought it in, Brosy, my boy, and charged you a pint of beer for carrying it, only they wouldn't let me. The Governor," meaning thereby his master, "said you were to come in the shop shortly, as he wanted to see you. He is in a terrible state of excitement, I can tell you, about the skeleton they picked up this morning, and has got the traps they dug out with it."

"I'll go as soon as I fill my stick," said I. "What skeleton, and where did they find it?"

"You know Sharp's old rookery, in the Ram's Horn?"

The Ram's Horn was the cant name given to a crooked lane in the outskirts of the town, inhabited by the poorest class of people.

"Yes," I replied, "it tumbled down during the last storm."

"Exactly; very much tumbled; went all to crash. Sharp sold it a little while since to Bingham, who also bought the three next to it, and is about to build his new brew-house there. They've been clearing out ruins and digging foundations all last week. This morning, right in the center of what used to be the cellar of Sharp's house, they came across a skeleton, in some rotten clothes. Old Dr. Craig says that the bones belonged to a woman. The gold sleeve-buttons of the

chemise were there, and a gold pin, with a sky-blue stone in it, and some queer-shaped letters on the back; the woman's name, I suppose."

"What was the name?"

"Queer—very—V. M. Taw. Mrs. Taw must have been made away with, and buried there; at least that is everybody's say-so. They found a dagger there, the rummiest kind of a knife, with a blade as crooked as a dog's hind-leg, and a carved wooden handle, partly rotten. The Governor heard of it, and he bought all the things. I think he means to keep 'em in the shop to draw custom. Old Sharp tried to get them for the Museum, but the Governor was too quick for him. He is in a terrible pother about something."

"Who? Sharp?"

"No; our old man. He and the mistress are holding a grand confabulation. I heard 'em mention your name as I went in."

I finished my task, washed my hands, put off my apron, and went to the house. Mary Guttenberg, a girl of fourteen, just turning into womanhood, was sewing in the back part of the shop. Her father and mother were inside of the counter. Before them were various articles, including the things Tom had spoken of. As I came forward, Mrs. Guttenberg pointed to the larger package. I undid the fastenings, and, after removing the wrapper, and two stout bits of binder's bands, placed on either side to preserve it from injury, I found a portrait, one-fourth size, of Zara Espinel. From the P. B. in the left-hand corner, I knew it to be the work of Paul Bagby. As I opened it I discovered a letter, addressed to me. When I had admired the portrait sufficiently, I opened the letter. It was

from Paul, dated at London, and these were the contents:

"My dear little type-sticker:

"Herewith you have a copy of my portrait of little Zara, whose untimely fate in being whisked away by a grim, grey-bearded ogre, you have so much lamented. I think that I have not only caught the features, but the whole spirit of her extraordinary face. I should like your criticism on that point, for you were so fond of her that her expression must be firmly fixed on your mind."

"*Appropos to Zara—who do you think I saw in the Park yesterday? No other than that mysterious Don, the Senor Espinel. My conjecture concerning him was right. Don Jose is Fray Jose. He wore the suit of black, with the cut and style of the ecclesiastic. He was in a coach, with a coat of arms on the panel, but it drove off and past before I could make out more than a ducal coronet. I was on foot—what right has a poor devil of an artist to ride anything but Shank's mare? Our eyes met, and I bowed. He looked at me superciliously, as much as to say, 'And who are you, pray?' It was a cut—cool as a cucumber—unless I am very much mistaken. There seemed to me to be a twitching about the corners of his mouth, as though he enjoyed my discomfiture. I felt annoyed, and have made up my mind to pick up a quarrel with his reverence on the first opportunity. Zara was not with him. I should like to know where he has bestowed her. Would not you?*"

"I have a famous commission. I am to make a series of paintings for a wealthy Yankee—at least he came from New York, and I presume he is an American. He wants a set of pictures, without limit as to number, of English life and scenery. He is a perfect magnifico—as stately and proud as a baron of old—and has lots of tin. His name is Archibald."

"Give my compliments to the worthy publisher of that astounding print, the *Bottenham Chronicle*, and tell the *Red-tail* chef that ministers tremble at the thunder he hurls, and the world generally shakes at his fulminations as usual. I have three pictures ready for the exhibition of this year, wherefrom I expect great fame, unless the hanging committee treat me unfairly, and elevate my offspring forty cubits high. I have known vagabonds to do such things."

The rest of the letter was filled with gossip. I put it down and turned to view the picture again, which Mary Guttenburg, who had laid down her work for the purpose, now held in her hand.

"How pretty she is!" exclaimed Mary, and her father and mother echoed her comment. The likeness was wonderfully correct. The artist had caught the expression of tenderness peculiar to her face, the liquidity of her dark eyes, and all the poetry of her clouds of dark hair. He had brought to his task the whole force of his genius, and every resource of his art.

"What a sweet face!" continued Mary.

"Beautiful, indeed!" said a voice behind us.

We turned, and to our astonishment stood the Earl of Landys, who bowed slightly and apologetically. But the bend of his body was entirely wasted on a part of the by-standers. Mr. John Guttenberg was filled with all that servile deference to a peer which marks the true English tradesman. Had the Right Honorable John, Earl of Landys, ex-member of the Privy Council, condescended to have thrown a flip-flap then and there—an outrageous impossibility to suggest, I admit—my worthy patron would have thought it in nowise incompatible with the dignity of the peerage. He would have gone into ecstasies at the agility of the nobleman, and would have avowed at once that no one below the rank of a marquis could have thrown such a flip-flap as that. He felt honored by the ill-bred peeping of the peer.

All the Guttenbergs bowed profoundly; and the head of the family,

with a smiling face and a rubbing of the palms of the hands together—a trick of his when desiring to be very courteous—inquired in what way he could have the honor of serving his lordship.

"I called, Mr. Guttenburg," said the Earl, "to say I would like to have the last new novel, if it be in."

I said to myself—

"That is not true, my lord. You would have it sent you by the carrier from London; or, had you wanted it from us, would have despatched a servant to obtain it. You have some other motive for this extraordinary visit."

However, though I thought all this I said nothing aloud, of course, but merely stood there in a respectful attitude waiting to hear more.

Mr. Guttenburg took down the book from the shelf, and did it up carefully in white paper, offering to send it by me, but the Earl said he would take it himself, and threw down the subscription-money.

"Can I have the honor to serve your lordship in any other way?" inquired the zealous bookseller. "Will your lordship condescend to accept a copy of this week's *Chronicle*? You will find your lordship's recent arrival at Landys Castle respectfully noticed under the proper head. Will your lordship deign to be seated?"

But his lordship preferred to stand.

"Is that picture for sale?" he asked.

"Of course, your lordship. That is, it belongs to my adopted son there, Ambrose, (pay your respects to his lordship, sir,) and no doubt he would be glad to dispose of it if your lordship wished." And the bookseller con-

torted his brows and looked at me as much as to say—"Why don't you offer it to him at once?"

But I was determined not to part with the picture at all and said—

"It is a gift from a friend, and therefore your lordship will see, cannot be sold."

"It is a very fine picture. What artist?"

"Mr. Paul Bagby my lord."

"Ah, yes! I see his mark. I might have known his style. I would like to have a copy."

"This is a copy, my lord. He retains the original."

"Is it a fancy sketch or from life?"

"From life, my lord."

"Indeed! a very beautiful child, then. I am much struck with the face and will write to Mr. Bagby on the subject. By the by, Mr. Guttenberg, what is this story about a skeleton having been found in the town? They tell me that you have some curious relics."

"Yes, your lordship," replied the printer; "and Mrs. Guttenberg, and myself—let me have the honor of presenting Mrs. Guttenberg to your lordship's notice—were discussing the matter just before your lordship entered the shop. It is very singular taken in connection with the other circumstances; very singular indeed, your lordship."

"Is there a story, then?"

"Yes, your lordship. Pray be seated, my lord. I am pained to see your lordship standing. Mary, my dear, you may resume your former seat back there."

Mary retreated to the rear of the shop, with a vexed expression on her countenance; but she endeavored to listen as well as the distance would permit.

"You see, your lordship, that my wife and I are of the opinion that the skeleton is connected with the history of this boy. If your lordship will deign to listen, you shall judge for yourself. Don't go, Ambrose," continued he as I made a motion to leave, "I intend to give his lordship your real history which you have never heard yourself."

He then detailed the circumstances I have before given to the readers of the events of the night in which I came into his charge, and displayed the jewelry and articles received with me, dwelling on the fact that the pin or brooch recently found matched the bracelet before had, and bore an inscription similar to that on the inside of the ring. I took up the pin as he spoke, and saw, deeply engraven on the back:

V.M.—TAW

"And was the package the woman gave you ever found?" inquired Lord Landys, when the printer had finished his narration.

"Never, your lordship?"

"Your adopted son does you credit," said the Earl. "I hear that he is a young man of correct deportment and very studious, as well as proficient in two or three languages. If he desire it, he can have the use of my library occasionally. I will speak to Mr. Osborn, my steward, to that effect on my return to the castle."

I bowed my acknowledgment of the favor, and Mr. Guttenberg rubbed his hands and bobbed his head with great assiduity.

"And this portrait, you say Mr.—Mr.—"

"Fecit, my lord," suggested Mrs. Guttenberg.

"Ah, yes! thank you. This portrait, you say, Mr. Fecit, is from life. Did I hear you mention the name of the party?"

"Her name is Zara, my lord. She is the daughter of a Spaniard who was in this town some few months back, and who met with an accident which delayed him for several weeks."

"Ah, yes! I remember. You rescued the child, I believe. I think I read some account of it either in, or copied from the *Chronicle*. I believe also," and here the nobleman fixed his eyes full on mine, "that this same Spaniard did me the honor to inquire concerning me."

How did he know that? I had never mentioned it to any one. I felt a little embarrassed, having no idea how far the queries might be pushed; but I answered:

"He did make some inquiries concerning matters of interest in the neighborhood, among the rest about your lordship's place and asked questions about your lordship's family; but those were such as strangers are apt to put."

"May I ask who he was and what he was?"

"Senor Jose Espinel, my lord, I do not know his profession, if he had any; that is not beyond doubt."

"You conjecture then?"

"Another does. It has been suggested to me that he was a monk or something of that sort."

"Was the child his daughter?"

"I cannot say, my lord."

"Will you do me the favor to describe the man?"

"I complied as accurately as I was able, for though I felt the querist was endeavoring to get from me all the in-

formation he could, there was no reason why I should withhold what he wanted, and I was anxious to discover the cause of his manifest interest, and thought that full replies might lead to a probable conjecture on my part. The Earl mused a moment and then said:

"Did you notice anything peculiar in his person or manner?"

This was said carelessly, but at the latter part of the sentence his voice, as I thought trembled a little. I watched him, therefore, curiously as I replied:

"Nothing, my lord, in his manner, more than the profusion of gesture common to most foreigners; and nothing on his person except a blood-mark on his right wrist shaped like a cross."

The Earl turned pale and shivered as though he were cold. He dropped the subject, and turning toward the counter took up the rusted and crooked dagger.

"I recognize this kind of weapon," said he. "This is a *krees*, a dagger used by the Malays. I passed three months on the island of Sumatra, with my late cousin, years since, and became well acquainted with their language and costume. Indeed, one reason why I have proffered Mr. Fecit here the use of my library is that I learn that he is fond of the study of languages. Having some pretensions to be a linguist myself, I sympathise with his pursuit."

"May I presume, said my patron to ask your lordship a question?"

"Do so."

"The tall dark man of whom I told you spoke to the lady in a strange language. I remember one word which seemed to have a powerful effect. It was, near as I can make out the sound, *diyum*!"

"The word, I think, is Malay. It sounds very near the word for silence in that language."

"Pray, my lord," said I, "is this inscription in the Malay character?" and I pointed to the letters on the brooch.

"No; these seem to be the rude attempts of some foreigner to form English characters."

After some general conversation, Captain Berkely and another officer came in the shop, and his lordship, after nodding to them, turned to leave the shop, accompanied to the door by the obsequious printer.

"Well, old fellah," said Berkely, when the printer returned, "what was Lord Toplofty doing here, eh?"

"His lordship has been paying his subscription to the library, captain. Bless me, if his lordship hasn't left the novel! His lordship has only gone a few steps. Run after him, Ambrose, and hand it to him, with my respectful compliments."

CHAPTER V.

In which I meet with the Dowager Countess, and see a strange portrait.

His lordship kept his word as a nobleman should. Mr. Osborne, the steward, called at the shop a few days afterward, and told me that I had permission to read in the library of the castle at suitable hours. These suitable hours I found, upon inquiry, were from three to six in the afternoon, while the family were there, and at any hours I might choose when the family were away. The time first named interfered with my duties in the composing room, but Mr. Guttenberg looked upon the permission as an express command from an authority not to be contemned, and insisted that I should spend the time

set down for me among his lordship's books. I was readily obedient, for I thus had a field of study opened to me, otherwise far beyond my reach. I found the library to be a full one—the rarest and finest editions of new and old works occupying the shelves. It struck me that neither the earl nor his visitors ever troubled the library, unless perchance to lounge there, since none of the works on the shelves bore traces of frequent use. My mind did not dwell on that fact. I thought only of enjoying the advantages which I possessed. Among the volumes were grammars and dictionaries of all the European languages, and some of Asiatic tongues, besides a few hundred of the writings of various foreign authors in the original. My fondness for acquiring languages found new stimulus and satisfaction, and I applied myself earnestly to a pursuit which some would have called a task.

Time passed for several months with little incident worthy of notice. I heard nothing of Zara or her father in the meanwhile, and it was only at rare intervals that they came to my memory. I was lost in my rambles through a new world. My ordinary life was simply monotonous, the same round of employment in the printing-room or circulating library, and I made no acquaintance beyond our circle of patrons, with whom I was a favorite. The officers of the regiment, through Berkely, had me in to assist when they gave amateur dramatic performances, but this was only an occasional amusement. The servants at the castle got to know me very well, and often amused me by a bit of gossip concerning the family, or an anecdote of one of its members. To all these I listened, but made no

comments. I was naturally fond of talking, but I was naturally prudent. This was soon discovered, and I became gradually the depository of a deal of secret history, useless enough, but very amusing.

Among other facts, I speedily learned that the Dowager Countess of Landys, the mother of the late earl, was nearly imbecile—so much so that she was constantly attended to by her maid, a woman who had been brought up in the family; and that the present earl suffered her to retain the apartments she had occupied during her son's life-time. She was said to have become insane on receiving the news of her son's shipwreck; but the violent paroxysms ceased, leaving her mind in a state approaching idiocy, and giving rise to a few harmless peculiarities. Her cousin, Lady Caroline Bowington, was the only one who had the power to interest her. During her short yearly visit the countess seemed to rally, and her mind resumed its normal condition. On the departure of her cousin there was an apparent relapse.

I also became well acquainted with the steward, Mr. Osborne. He was quite a fine gentleman in manners, and had the entire confidence of his noble master. Indeed it was remarked by many that the consultations between the two were conducted on a footing of equality, and that the manner of the steward to the peer was that of one who felt secure of his position under all circumstances. No one knew the origin of this Mr. Osborne. He came when the wearer of the title succeeded to the earldom, having been summoned from a distance. It was said that they traveled together abroad, and had been connected for many years. People

wondered how the servant maintained such absolute control over the master, for it was evident that the smooth, smirking and dapper gentleman lost a portion of his deferential manner when conversing with his patron, and paid but little heed to the commands generally put as suggestions of the latter. There was some secret in this which none had been able to discover. I made no effort to penetrate it. It was no affair of mine.

Thus it passed until about a year after the rescue of Zara, when, as I sat one day in my customary place in the library, Lord Landys entered. I rose to go, but he bade me remain and be seated. He took up the book I had been reading, the *Dejing Nawodu Creskeho*, of Francis Palacky, and put me some questions as to its contents, possibly to ascertain what progress I had made in the language in which it was written. At length he said:

"Do you keep up communication with your mysterious Spanish friend still, Mr. Fecit?"

"No, my lord," was my answer. "I have not heard of him or of his daughter, for a long while."

"I should have thought Mr. Bagby would have kept you advised of their movements."

"No, my lord. He never mentions them in the occasional letters I receive from him, and I suppose is as ignorant of their whereabouts as I."

"Hardly since he painted the little Zara's portrait."

"That was a sketch from memory, my lord. She has a striking face, apt to fix its features in an artist's mind."

"You are to be free of your indentures in a couple of years, I believe," continued the earl. "Have you thought on your future pursuits?"

"Not particularly, my lord. I shall be a printer, of course."

"Your information and quickness," said he, and I rose and bowed an acknowledgment of the compliment, "lift you out of that sphere of life. There are few avenues for ambition in England, without the command of money and connexions, but abroad you might rise rapidly."

"It is possible, my lord," I replied; "but it would require means there too."

"Those might be found. I have influence with the present ministry, and could procure you a creditable position in India. The road there to reputation and wealth is not yet choked up. At least, youth, health, talent and enterprise might remove all obstacles."

"I thank your lordship, but I have no desire to abandon the land where I was born."

"Are you sure that you were born here, at all?" was the quick reply.

I was startled at the question, and the tone in which it was uttered. Before I could frame an answer, he continued—

"I do not mean to wound your feelings at all, but you know your own history, and you might have been born in France, you know. Think on my proposition well before you reject it. It gives you an opportunity which you can never have upon the soil of England. But perhaps you are determined to remain here in order to investigate the mystery of your birth."

"No," I replied, "I have thought of that, but there seems to be no clue. The loss of the packet of papers by Mr. Guttenberg is irreparable. I shall not waste time in a fruitless pursuit. When I come to grapple with the world

I will do it boldly, and I will allow no vain object to weaken my efforts."

"You are ambitious, then," said the earl, as he arose to leave the room. "Think well on India—wealth and distinction."

Without reflecting any more on his offers, I resumed my reading, when he had retired. How long I read it is impossible to say, but I had certainly gone through a great number of pages, when I heard the rustling of silk, and, looking up, beheld a very old woman regarding me with apparent interest.

There was something startling in the apparition.

The features, from the indications presented, must at one time have been handsome; age had not entirely destroyed their pleasing regularity of outline; but the soul which formerly animated them was clouded. In strange contrast with the brilliant black eyes, and the white hair which escaped in masses from beneath the laced cap, was the vacant expression about the mouth, whose puckered lips, slightly parted, disclosed the toothless gums. The old woman looked at me intently, and then muttered something which I could not distinguish. This was followed by the words, plainly uttered:

"Her son! it must be; yes, look at the ear."

I recovered from my astonishment at length, and, rising, bowed respectfully; for I was sure that this was the Dowager Countess of Landys. She motioned me to resume my seat, and when I hesitated, sank in a chair, and waving her hand, said in a peremptory way:

"Sit, sir!"

I obeyed, and she still kept her eyes fixed on me, the features lighting up,

and the vacant expression quite gone. I was meditating how to escape the painful scrutiny, when she spoke again, and this time in a voice of tenderness:

"I have not seen you for many days, my son. Why do you mourn her loss still? She was not worthy of you. I told you in the beginning how it would be. Let her go."

I made no answer. What could I have said?

"He will come again," continued the Countess, now apparently talking to herself. "I know it. He will come again. What the living promised the dead would do, were the body a hundred fathoms beneath the sea. The dead has never come, and the living will."

The interview with one thus crazed became so embarrassing that I was about to escape it by flight, when the steward entered the room. The Countess glared at him for a moment, rose, and walked with a haughty, and, for her years, a vigorous step from the library.

"Were you much disturbed, Ambrose?" inquired Osborne.

"Yes, sir; and in some fear, though she has been here but a few minutes. It is the Dowager Countess—is it not?"

"Yes. It is singular that she said nothing to you. She is very apt to make queer remarks to strangers."

"She did say something," I said, and repeated her words.

"Do you understand it?" he inquired.

"Now, why should he ask that? Why should I understand it? Is there some secret here they fear I may fathom?"

These were the questions that I instantly put to myself. But to Osborne

I merely gave a negative to his question.

"She sometimes eludes the vigilance of her attendant," he said, "and goes wandering about in this strange kind of way, startling visitors with all kinds of queer sayings. She often fancies if she meets with a stranger that he must be her son. She has never recovered the late earl's loss."

"Her ladyship seems to be very old," I said.

"Yes; but I merely came to get a book, and will not disturb you."

Mr. Osborne selected a book from the shelves, and left the room.

I resumed my study, but was doomed to another interruption. I heard the door open, and on looking around, saw another stranger.

The last intruder was a woman, neatly clad in black, apparently a kind of domestic. She was about forty years of age, with bold, strong features, short in stature, rather stout, but not fat. Her eyes were grey, and were fixed on me in some surprise.

"I beg pardon, sir," she said, "but I have missed the Countess Dowager, and looked to see if she were here. She sometimes comes in the library."

"Ah! you are her attendant then?"

"Yes, sir."

"She was here, but left when Mr. Osborne came."

"She does not like him—who does? I hope you won't think me impertinent, but pray who are you, sir?"

"My name is Ambrose Fecit. I am Mr. Guttenberg's apprentice and adopted son."

"A printer's boy! How singular!"

I was amused at the tone in which the words were uttered, and the look of wonder in her face.

"Pray," I inquired, "is it singular that I should be a printer's apprentice, or that, being a printer's apprentice, I should be seated here?"

"No, it was not that; but the likeness was so strong."

"What likeness?"

"Yours; you look like the portrait in the north gallery."

"Whose portrait?"

"I'm sure I don't know. The butler says he was a pirate. It has hung there for years. The late earl brought it here. Would you like to see it?"

"Very much," I replied.

"Come with me, and I will show you."

"But," I said, "I have only the privilege of the library, and doubt if that permission extends to any other part of the castle."

"Oh, the north gallery is a show-room?"

"But the Countess may want you."

"No, she always keeps herself alone for an hour or so after she meets a stranger."

I was curious to see the portrait, and so, without farther objections, I accompanied the woman, who told me that her name was Gifford. She led me to the north gallery, and there pointed out the portrait.

Certainly the features on the canvass and my own were strikingly alike—at least as far as the upper part of the face went; but the mouth in the portrait was broader, and the chin heavier and squarer than mine.

The portrait was a full length likeness of a man apparently about twenty-five. The costume was oriental, but of what particular country in the east I could not say.

"You say this was a pirate," I ask-

ed, after I had looked at it well.

"The butler, who served the former earl, says so," answered she. "For my part, I know nothing about it. He was a foreigner of some kind. My lord sent it home from abroad, when he was a young man. Before he went away for the last time he would stand before the picture for hours, or rather he would walk the gallery for hours, and stop every now and then before the picture, and look at it. He did not appear to be fond of the man it was like, either. He would scowl at it in a way that was fearful. The servants say"—and here she looked around cautiously—"that every year, on the day my lord was born—that is the late earl—the picture walks."

I laughed.

"It is silly, I know," she said, "but there is one thing quite certain; I saw that face once—whether a ghost or alive, I don't know. It was the year before my lord came back the last time. I had to cross the gallery late at night. I had a candle in my hand, and stopped to look at the picture as I passed. I went on, after I had taken a look, and just as I reached yonder door, which was my lord's chamber, it opened. As the door was kept locked always during my lord's absence, it startled me a deal. I turned to look, and saw a figure wrapped in a dark cloak. My light fell on the face."

"Well?" said I, for she paused.

"It was the face of the picture," said she. "I could not be mistaken. I dropped the light and ran. The house was alarmed, and when all gathered there, the door was found locked. It was opened, and as no trace could be found of any one, they all said I dream-

ed the matter."

"What did the earl say to it when he came back?"

"He never knew it. My lady, his mother, forbade any of us to tell him. But I must go, lest my lady want me. You do look like the picture—very much—especially that look from the eyes."

And Gifford left me alone.

I looked a little while longer at the portrait, and then returned to the library, where I sat down, and began to think. According to Guttenberg, the man who gave me in his charge was a foreigner. Could this be he? His likeness to me, too! Could he have been my father? How was I to learn more of this strange portrait, and the name of the original? While I was engaged in these reflections, the steward came in to replace the book he had taken away.

"Has the Countess Dowager been here since?"

"No," I replied, "but her attendant has."

"Ah!" he ejaculated. "A strange creature is Gifford—a woman of strong prejudices. I have had to talk sharply to Gifford, once or twice, and she don't like me much."

"Mr. Osborne," I said, looking him full in the face, "there is a portrait in the gallery yonder, which is said to be that of a pirate. May I ask who he was?"

"Did you see it?"

"Yes."

"Well, it is nobody; a mere fancy piece. The servants have an absurd notion that it represents a pirate."

"Does it not, then?"

"No more than it does his lordship, or his lordship's son, or me. It was

picked up abroad by the late earl, I believe, at a sale somewhere on the continent. It is a very odd picture, but is said to be a very good piece of painting."

"The likeness to me, then, would appear to be accidental, after all?"

"Entirely so."

I did not believe him, and for a plain reason. The gay cloak or robe on the picture was fastened by a belt, clasped by turquoises; the striped jacket was buttoned at the neck, with a brooch exactly like that found in the old house in the Ram's Horn; there was a crooked dagger in the sash around the waist; and on the dagger's handle were several characters similar to those on the inside of the ring which had been found suspended from my neck.

CHAPTER VI.

Wherein another Chip is thrown into the current of my Life, and I hear from Zara.

All these events began to shape themselves into a problem. "Who am I? What am I?" were the questions to be solved. Thus it was that I frequently reviewed the incidents connected with my life, and wondered whether the missing links in the chain would be supplied. The facts might be connected with a common-place origin—perhaps a base one, after all; still there was an air of romance about them, and I was at an age when romance had full control over the mind.

There was first a child with certain tokens, delivered to a printer in the town of Puttenham. One of these tokens was a wedding-ring, with a singular posy; the other, a packet. The packet, which I conjectured to contain the proofs of a marriage, was gone,

but the ring remained. Then in the house that would seem to be the one where the child had been entrusted to the printer's care, certain relics were found, one of which contained letters similar to those in the ring.

Then the portrait in the gallery, with its strange resemblance to me, and with the same sort of mysterious letters on the dagger-blade; and the singular appearance of the original to Gifford.

The bones in Sharp's house—were they those of the woman? Was she my mother? Had she been murdered? Admitting the packet to contain evidences of marriage—a conjecture—and that it were ever recovered—a remote possibility—how to identify me?

These questions, and others as useless, frequently occurred to me. To what end? The packet was gone irrecoverably—trampled in the snow of that night—utterly defaced; the mother dead; the mysterious stranger dead too, perhaps, or interested in keeping silence.

Suppose all elucidated. I might prove after all to be a—my face reddened then. Better to be a child of mystery than of shame. And yet the questions would come again—"Who am I? What am I?"

Time went on in the meanwhile. I studied hard at the earl's books, and each step made the next easier. The people of the town thought me a prodigy of learning, and I was not displeased with the vulgar admiration. I had vanity—who has not? and it was tickled. No foreigner, high or low, ever entered the town, but my name was mentioned to him, and we were speedily brought in contact. I was, beyond dispute, the great linguist of

Puttenham. This was of service to me. I acquired greater colloquial intercourse with several modern languages, and ease of manner. The municipal dignitaries honored me with their nod; and even the proud Earl of Landys condescended to speak of me as a remarkable boy. With the military officers, and the patrons of the library, I still continued to be a favorite. As I was tall for my age, well-knit, and with handsome features, the young ladies of the place looked on me pleasantly, and the matrons with a forbidding air. For you see I was nobody; my very name was not my own; and, though Mr. Guttenberg had adopted me, I might not be co-heir with his daughter after all. I was not a desirable match in the eyes of prudent mothers, among the trades-folk of the town.

A strange kind of friendship sprang up between me and Gifford. She would often slip into the library when I was there, and interrupt my reading with reminiscences of the Landys family, of whose history she was a walking chronicle. I asked her but few questions, contenting myself with playing the part of a listener; but there were two points on which I wished to be enlightened. One was about the portrait that Bagby mentioned as resembling Espinel; the other what the dowager countess meant, if there was any meaning to the words, by saying: "The dead has not come, and the living will."

Gifford readily answered both questions.

"I know nothing about the picture. I recollect there was one in my lord's chamber, such as you describe, but it has been removed, I think. As for her

ladyship's words, they refer to a promise of her son. The old lady believes in spirits coming back to this world and appearing to their friends, if they want to. Why shouldn't she? You do, don't you?"

As Gifford evidently did, and I had no desire to discuss the point, I said evasively:

"Oh, that point is settled among all sensible people; but I don't see what that has to do with the words."

"Why, you see, the late earl was very fond of his mother, and she of him. Somehow he never believed in ghosts and such things—though there was a spirit in the family once—I'll tell you about that some other time; and they used to dispute about it a good deal, only in a good-natured way. I was busy doing something one day in the countess's chamber, and her son was there, and they'd been talking over the matter. Said his lordship, said he:

"We'll settle the matter practically, mother. If I die before you, and am able to do so, I will come to see you after death, and let you know how I like the other world; and you shall do the same with me."

"The countess she spoke up and said, says she:

"That I solemnly promise to do, George."

"Now as he has never made his appearance to her, and she knows he would keep his word, that's what she means by saying that the dead hadn't come, and the living would."

"But," said I, "there can be no doubt of the earl's death."

"It seems not, but her ladyship don't believe it."

One thing Gifford was not communicative upon—her own history; but I

learned that from others. She was an orphan child, reared by the dowager countess's direction, and in due time promoted to be her maid. Despite her apparent love of tattling, she was close in regard to some things, and was, beyond doubt, the confidante of her noble mistress. What she said to me, therefore, I at once divined was not meant to be a secret, at least from me.

Beside Gifford, I made another friend, and a very singular one, about this time. The reader will remember that the old house in the Ram's Horn belonged to one Sharp. This Sharp, whose Christian name was Abner, was a singular character. No man was more generally execrated and abhorred by his townsmen. He was a thin, pinched, cadaverous old man, apparently about sixty, with a high and narrow forehead, a thin nose, ornamented with a knob, like a mighty pimple, at the tip, and a round, long chin. His eyes were small, keen and restless, keeping up an uneasy motion all the while; and he had a remarkable and noted habit of casting alarmed glances from time to time over his shoulder. He was said to be enormously rich, owning houses upon houses, holding bonds and mortgages innumerable, and loaning money at usurious interest. Yet he was so parsimonious that he denied himself necessary food and proper clothing; and he lived in the garret of one of his own houses, the other floors being let to the poorest class of people. This Sharp I knew by sight very well, as did every one else in town, and I had had at times some conversation with him. He owned the house and premises which Mr. Guttenberg occupied, and used to come on quarter day, exactly on the

stroke of twelve, to receive his rent. He was also the proprietor of the Museum of the town, a place got up by a Yankee speculator, as a resort for the people of the surrounding country, on holidays; but which proved to be a failure. However such a thing might do in America, it failed here; but Sharp had taken it in lieu of a debt, and it became his only apparent delight. He used to gloat over its quaint treasures, its mummies, stuffed beasts, stones and butterflies; its pickled heads of New Zealanders, birds and wax figures. Nay, he even expended money on it, not only buying any double-headed calf, or four-legged chicken that came along, but absolutely going to some expense by advertising each new possession in the *Puttenham Chronicle*, and having placards printed to post upon dead walls and pumps, and to place in the tap-rooms. Through his visits to the printing-room, I came to know Sharp tolerably well, and as I treated him with a sort of patronizing deference, we became quite familiar. The truth is that I pitied the poor wretch in spite of his large possessions, and felt commiseration for the miserable being who, in the midst of wealth, felt the pangs of poverty. He returned this by a number of parsimonious proverbs, and much good money-making advice. There was no obligation incurred on either side. Each could well spare what he parted with, and the gifts given were not of the least use to the recipients.

A striking incident made us quite intimate.

One day in winter, the quarter-day, Sharp came to collect his rent. The weather was more damp than cold; the snow which had fallen the night

before had melted, and when Sharp entered he presented a pitiable sight. His face looked blue, with the exception of his nose, which glowed like the tip of a carbuncle, and he trembled with weakness and cold. He was thinly clad, as usual, without a great-coat, and his patched shoes had evidently not kept out the snow-water. I offered him the loan of my great-coat, but he declined it, saying that he had a very excellent wrapper of his own, which he had forgotten to put on in the morning. Toward night-fall he came to the printing-room again, on his way home, and stood by the grate to dry his feet and warm himself. He looked even more ill than before, and I renewed the offer of the great coat.

"No!" he answered sharply, "I've one of my own, I tell you. Besides," he added, more pleasantly, "you might want to go out to-night; and I might injure your coat too."

"Nonsense!" I said, "I know you'll take care of it; you never injure any thing that costs money, and as I'm not going out to-night, I shan't want it. You'll be ill if you don't take it; and if you do wear it out a little, that's no matter. As I'm not quite so rich as you, I'm not so close."

"Ah!" he muttered, "wilful waste makes woeful want. If I were to be as extravagant as you I'd soon be a beggar. It's very comfortable though," he continued, as he put it on, "and wadded, too. A printer's apprentice with such a coat as this. Dear me! West of England cloth, at that. Why don't you wear shoddy? Your master allows you this, eh? He'll never be rich—never!"

And off he went, grumbling. That night at supper I mentioned

the occurrence laughingly to the family.

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mrs. Guttenberg, "what a mean man he is; and so rich. To be sure, he was poor enough once—a wild spendthrift."

"He a spendthrift, mother! That's the last I should expect to hear of him. Why he might stand to a sculptor for a model of Avarice. It seems to have been born with him."

"It was in the blood, that's a fact," said the old woman, "but he was a spendthrift at first; and his father threatened to disinherit him. The old man would have done it, too, everybody said; but he died suddenly, and there was no will found, so, as Abner was an only son, he fell heir to about ten thousand pounds."

"Which he has screwed and scraped, and swelled into a hundred thousand at least," said Mr. Guttenberg. "When his father died he cut loose from his riotous companions, and for forty years he has been a miserable, sordid, gripping miser, without a friend in the world."

"He is much to be pitied then," I said.

"I do not pity him," said Mary. "He is a mean old hunk; and I don't believe you'll get your coat again, Ambrose."

"He was wiser in one thing than you, my boy," said Mr. Guttenberg, "for you really will want your coat to-night. He signed the receipt I wrote for the rent, and by mistake I have made it up to the end of the coming quarter. It is very odd that he did not notice the blunder. I wish you would go to his lodgings and have the error corrected at once. Here is the old receipt, and a new one stamped.

You can run along fastly, so you won't need any overcoat while you're going; and you can get your own to return in."

"Won't the morning do as well?" inquired his wife.

"Oh, no! As the old fellow would say himself, 'never put off till to-morrow what you can do to-day.' Ambrose rather likes the errand, I dare say."

"Of course I do," I answered. "I want to see how the old miser lives at home." And without further words I took the receipt and started.

I cantered along briskly through the sloppy, half-melted snow, to the house where old Sharp had his den. Like many other of his buildings, it was in a dilapidated condition. I knocked at the door, and after considerable delay it was opened by a half-grown girl, who held a flaring tallow candle over her head with one hand, while she kept the door half closed with the other.

"What do you want?" she inquired.

"I wish to see Mr. Sharp on particular business," I answered.

"I don't know that he'll want to see you. He never does business after dark. Who are you?"

"My name is Fecit, and I come from Mr. Guttenberg."

"Oh," said the girl, after scrutinizing me closely, "I know you. You can go up to his room, but I don't think you'll get in. He bolts up at dark, and won't speak to any one. It's the topmost room of the house. You can't miss it. You can take this light, and leave it on the stair-head."

I took the candle, and made my way up the creaking staircase to the garret. I knocked at the door, but there was no reply made. I tried the knob, and to my surprise the door opened.

I entered.

I had never seen a room so meanly furnished containing so many tokens of wealth. There was a heavy iron box, a wooden chest of drawers, a table covered with papers, jewelry and money, and a pallet. The windows were furnished with iron bars, and there were three bolts to the door, and a chain. Around the room in a confused litter were articles of vertu, piles of handsomely bound books, beautiful pictures, and an old suit of armor. Hanging on hooks in the walls were several curious swords and two pairs of pistols, richly mounted. Upon a large silver salver, which lay on the chest of drawers, were a number of pieces of plate, and on the corner of the table lay a diamond-studded snuff-box. As a sort of mockery of the valuables, there was a wooden platter in the midst of the table, containing a crust of bread and a red herring. The supper had been untouched.

I turned toward the pallet. Sharp, still wrapped in my great-coat, lay upon it, breathing heavily. I shook him, but there was no answer. He did not recognize me. I felt his pulse—it scarcely beat. His head was hot, but his feet were cold as ice. I ran to the door and called down the stairs. Some of the inmates of the rooms put their heads out from their doors, among the rest the girl who had admitted me.

"Send some one for the nearest doctor," I said, "Mr. Sharp is quite unwell. And bring me some hot water, somebody. I'd be obliged to any one who'd go for Mr. Guttenberg." They were all for entering the room, but I kept them back. As soon as I had pacified them I threw some old clothes over the money and valuables that

were exposed to view, so that when the girl came with the hot water there was nothing in sight of which she could babble to excite the cupidity of her hearers.

I removed Sharp's shoes. His feet were icily cold. I propped him half upright in the pallet, and placed his feet in the hot water. I then opened the dormer window, and obtaining some snow from the roof, made a temporary bag of my handkerchief, and placing the snow in it, applied it to his head. These simple measures soon had their effect. The pulse began to beat more quickly and firmly; the temperature of the body became more even, and the breathing grew natural. At length Sharp recognised me.

"What are you doing here?" he asked, endeavoring to rise. He was too weak, however, and fell back again.

"You can let him lie down now," I said to the girl who was aiding me. "Go down stairs, and when the doctor and Mr. Guttenberg come, show them up at once."

The girl left the room. Sharp looked at me in wonder.

"What do you mean?" he asked. "I don't want a doctor. He'll ruin me."

"Pray be quiet," I said. "You are very ill, and must have a doctor. He'll be here presently."

"I won't pay him. I didn't send for him—mind that."

"Very well; we won't quarrel on that score. A doctor is necessary, and if you won't pay for him I will."

"You can't; you haven't the money; you're only a prentice boy. What's your business here, anyhow? Do you think you'll get any money from me?"

I was thoroughly provoked, but I

kept my temper, as there was no use of quarrelling with such a madman. So I told him my errand there. It seemed to calm him at first, but at the next moment he glanced uneasily at the table.

"All right," I said, in answer to his look. "I threw those clothes on the table and chest, that the girl's prying eyes might not fall on the money and plate you had left exposed."

"It was thoughtful," he said, after a moment's pause. "I must trust some one—why not you? Take those keys from under my pillow; there, pick only the second-sized one from the bunch; open the chest, and put the money and jewelry away."

I obeyed him, locked the chest, and returned the key. I had scarcely done this when the doctor entered, closely followed by Mr. Guttenberg. The doctor wasn't a physician; he was not a regular M. D., but what in Puttenham is called an apothecary. In London he would have styled himself a general practitioner. He was of some eminence in his profession, and bore the reputation of being a very worthy man.

"I didn't send for you," said Sharp, when he saw him. "Remember, if you prescribe I won't pay you. I call Mr. Guttenberg to witness."

Mr. Gray, the doctor, smiled, and asked me the history of the case. I told him how I had found the old man, and what I had done.

"You couldn't have done better if you had been the whole Royal College of Surgeons," said Mr. Gray. "You have probably saved his life. Without your prompt action, the congestion of the brain might have been fatal."

"Do you think he saved my life?"

inquired Sharp, leaning on his elbow, and peering in the doctor's face.

"I think it very probable?"

"Well, well!" exclaimed the miser, "I suppose I ought to be much obliged to him. But he isn't a regular practitioner; he can't make me pay."

The air of the old man as he said this was so absurdly earnest, that we all burst into a simultaneous peal of laughter. Sharp looked annoyed, but the next instant his features relaxed into a faint smile.

"I am well enough now, at all events," said he, "and I don't want any one here now."

The doctor told him that he was not well enough at all, and that it was necessary some one should remain with him during the night, to carry out the directions left.

"I won't have any one here," persisted Sharp.

"But you must," reiterated the doctor.

"If Ambrose will stay, he may; but I'll have no one else," returned the miser.

I looked at Mr. Guttenberg inquiringly. He nodded his head.

"Very well," I said, "I'll stay."

Mr. Gray told me what medicines he should send, how to administer them, and what to do in case certain unfavorable symptoms came on. Then off he went, and Mr. Guttenberg with him. Previous to the departure of the latter, he handed me a letter.

"This came," said he, "during the afternoon. I forgot to hand it you at supper. We'll keep your breakfast ready for you in the morning."

I was left alone with my strange charge. I turned towards him. He was fast asleep. I found a couple of

tallow candles in a tin box, and laid them in readiness by the candlestick; put some of the books that were scattered about on the table to read during the night; took the medicine from the doctor's box, who had now come, awakened my patient and gave him the powder according to directions, and then sat down to read my letter.

It was from Paul Bagby, and read as follows:

"My dear Ambrose:—Read this letter as carefully as you like, and then burn it."

"Zara is in my charge—where you will learn some day by word of mouth. I dare not, for her sake, write it, lest some accident should befall this letter."

"Espinel, who is a Spanish nobleman, and her uncle, has disappeared. He has been either killed or abducted; which I cannot say."

"Keep all this secret. What I desire you to do for me, and for Zara's sake, is to ascertain, without provoking remark, if Mr. Osborne left the castle recently. If so, when, how long he was absent, and whether he has now returned."

"The blow at Zara comes from that quarter. I would like to tell you all; but this is not the proper place nor time. I shall see you shortly if I can leave London."

"Make some excuse for examining the records of the parish-church of St. Stephen. See the marriage-register, and get me the exact date of the marriage of the present Earl of Landys with Miss Ansleigh. I wish to see if it corresponds with the statement in Burke's peerage."

I read the letter twice, and tearing it in strips, consumed them one by one in the flame of the candle.

CHAPTER VII.

Which contains singular revelations, and tells of the growth of an odd friendship.

I was musing over the contents of the letter, when I heard Sharp speak. I went to the pallet. The old man's eyes were staring wildly, their whites

injected with blood, and his face deeply flushed. The fever, as the doctor had warned me, had evidently come on. It was with some difficulty I could get him to swallow the draught sent for such an exigency.

Helay there, restlessly tossing about, while I paced up and down the room, striving to keep myself warm. There was a grate, indeed, at the chimney-place, but it was quite empty, and it was too late in the night to order coals. All I could do to defend myself against the cold was to keep myself in motion.

The rustling noise of Sharp's movements stopped. I turned to look at him. He was sitting erect on the bed, his eyes dilated and almost starting from their sockets with terror.

"Ah!" he cried, in a tone of horror that made my very flesh creep, "there he is, cold and stiff; and he is my father! Have I murdered him? Take him away! Take him away!"

Was this, then, the terrible secret of the old man's life, or was it the creation of the fever?

"There! there!" he said, "they are coming—for me! There is the gallows! and the rope—how it dangles and swings! The hangman—I see him! and the crowd! how they yell and howl! Oh, God! how they yell!"

This, then, I thought, was the cause of those watchful glances which he cast over his shoulder from time to time as he walked—this was the spectre that haunted him.

I hoisted the window again, obtained some snow, and applied it to his head.

"Heavens!" I said, as I was thus engaged, "is this miserable old man a parricide?"

He caught at the word.

"Parricide!" he exclaimed. "No, my lord, and you, gentlemen of the jury, I did not mean to murder him. No; mean and cold and cruel as he was to me, he was still my father. Murder!—me! Why I would not harm a worm. I meant to rob; yes, I meant to help myself from his hoard; for she—she was starving—dying of want—and he spurned me from him—he would not give me a farthing to save her—her! my poor Margaret! Yes! I was a spendthrift—a reckless young man; but I was a husband! I thought to make him sleep the sounder that I might get the keys. He slept, and he never awoke again. Ah! the money came too late! too late! my poor Margaret was dead!"

I still applied the snow, and he calmed under it, but his fancies were busy with him.

"Yes! I know—he died of disease of the heart—they said his death was sudden; but did not the laudanum hasten it? He comes at night," he murmured, "at night, when all is still, and sits and looks at me with his cold eyes and pale face; he tells me that I have his money; but I have no Margaret—and then he goes to only come back again—again—again. You are there now, and your touch is cold as ice."

"It is I, Ambrose Fecit," I said. "Don't you know me?"

"But I wonder what is in the packet," he continued. "Shall I open it? I think not."

I renewed the snow application to his head.

"My poor Margaret!" he said. "She is dead, and I have nothing to love now but gold—gold—gold! I am rich—they do not know how rich I am; but I atone; yes, I atone. Men hate

and despise me for a miser. They'll never know me better; but the grave will cover me; and then the worms will find it out—ha! ha! the worms will find it out!"

It was a trying position for one of my age to fill—alone in a cold and cheerless room, in the dead hours of the night, listening to the ravings of a remorseful man, whose sensitive conscience, excited by disease, exaggerated his crime, and unmasked his soul to a stranger. What he meant by saying that he atoned, I could not even conceive. His sordid life, his denial of pity and kindness to others, and even to himself, was a worse crime than the robbery of his father. The one was prompted by the suffering of his wife; the other had no palliation. But with these and other thoughts within me, I still sat there applying the cooling snow to his head, and administering his hourly draught. Two or three hours more of raving and delirium passed, and then he sank into an uneasy slumber. I gathered what spare clothes I could find around, and muffling myself in these to secure a portion of warmth, I took up one of the books on the table, and sat down to read. With the exception of once, when he awakened, and took the draught ready for him, I remained thus until long after the grey streaks of dawn had stolen through the dusty window-panes.

He did not wake until after nine o'clock. He was evidently much better; his skin was moist and his mind clear, though his body was weak. He looked at me curiously.

"I have been very sick, have I not?" he inquired at length.

"Yes," I answered, "you have had a high fever during the greater part of

the night, talking all sorts of nonsense, and seeing all kinds of dead people."

He looked a little alarmed.

"What did I say?"

"Oh, you saw your father, and told me all about him."

I fixed my eyes on him closely and curiously as I said this. He did not seem so discomposed as I expected.

"Tell me what I said."

I repeated it nearly word for word.

"Well," he said, when I had done, "do you think me a murderer, or was it the fever?"

"I am willing to put down two-thirds, at least to the fever."

He raised himself up.

"Is it possible," said he, "that you've been sitting there without fire all night, and your great coat on me? Why didn't you get it?"

"I couldn't well disturb you for such a purpose. I got along very well."

"Help me off with it now. There, there. You ought to whisk it well. It is full of lint. The brush never injures clothing so much as dust. Remember that. You should never have suffered me to lie in your coat. It injures a coat very much. You'll never be rich, if you're so extravagant."

"Why, you miserable old man!" I exclaimed, provoked at his folly, "do you suppose great coats were not made to be of service? I wouldn't have your feelings for ten times your money."

"And the doctor said you saved my life; I remember that. And yet you despise me."

"You despise yourself. As for me I only despise your parsimony. Do you think people can respect any man who walks through life alone, doing no good to kin or kind?"

"I have no kin, and men are not of my kind."

"God forbid they were," I said to myself.

He seemed to read my thoughts by his remark.

"Shall I tell you my secret, then?"

"As you choose about that. I covet no more confidence than you have already given me without intending it."

"I will tell you. I have watched you before this. You have prudence and discretion beyond your years; and I would sooner trust you than graver and older men. Your feelings are fresh yet—you will understand me."

The old man evidently could not repress the desire to pour out his whole history, and I sat there and listened.

Parsimony ran in the blood. His father, Jacob Sharp, had acquired a fortune of twenty thousand pounds, by saving and pinching. Abner was brought up to his father's trade, that of a silver-smith, and became an expert workman; but the family taste for hoarding did not at first betray itself in him. On the contrary, his vice ran the other way. Young Abner spent as fast, and faster than he earned, to the great disgust of the father; and to add to the chagrin and anger of the latter, the son fell in love and married a poor orphan girl. The elder Sharp grew furious at this last act of folly, turned his son out of doors, and swore he never would see his daughter-in-law. Abner grew more prudent in money matters, but an accident to his right hand threw him out of work, his surplus means were soon exhausted, and he and his wife were reduced to want. She, indeed, obtained a pittance by sewing, but fell sick, more through hunger than disease, and languished.

Abner made up his mind to rob his father of a sufficient sum to pay the passage of himself and wife to America, where he believed he could get employment. Now, old Sharp, in spite of his avarice, indulged in one luxury, namely, a night-cap of old ale before he went to bed. Into this night draught Abner managed to pour some laudanum, a dose of which he had in the house. It was not an overdose by any means, but it set the miser soundly asleep. The son obtained the keys, helped himself to sufficient money from a spot where he knew it would not be missed for awhile, and left the house. The next morning, while he was preparing to leave for Liverpool, word was brought him that his father had been found dead in his chair. The coroner's jury, on the evidence of the surgeons who made a post-mortem examination of the body, rendered a verdict of "Death from disease of the heart;" but Abner was filled with the belief that the dose of laudanum had hastened his father's death. Hence the remorseful feelings which embittered his life. He succeeded to the father's property as heir-at-law, but all the money came too late for his wife, who died the day after his father. From that time the family propensity broke out on him fiercely; he gave himself up totally to the accumulation of money, and for forty years had devoted his energy, backed by unmitigated parsimony, to gain.

"Young man," said he, when he had closed his story, "I owe you my life. I am not ungrateful. I will show you more of myself than the world knows. You shall not entirely despise me. Hitherto I have had no particular care for one human being beyond another,

and no one has cared for me; but I can confide in you. I like you. If you will promise not to reveal it, I will acquaint you with a secret."

"As you choose. I do not covet your confidence, as I told you before but if your secret be one I can honorably keep, I'll hear it."

He arose, and I assisted him to arrange his dress. He went to the iron chest where I had placed his money and jewelry, and took out a book.

"No one but myself," said he, "has ever looked at these entries. The book will be destroyed when I feel death approaching. Before you examine it, let me tell you something. You remember that James Meadows, the carpenter, was burned out last spring?"

"Yes."

"His tools, his household furniture, the clothing of the family, everything he had was destroyed. He and his family barely escaped with their lives. They were in great distress. Every one pitied them, and the pity took the substantial shape of one pound, fourteen shillings and nine pence."

"You are mistaken," I said, "fifty pounds were sent by an unknown hand from London. On this Meadows commenced his work again, and is doing well. There was one good Samaritan."

"No; it was merely the payment due from discriminating wealth to honest industry crippled by misfortune. Meadows was an honest and industrious man, and the fire came through no carelessness of his. He was my tenant, and I lost a house by it—a loss only partly made up by the insurance. The money came from me through my London bankers."

"From you?"

"Yes, from me. I sent it with a written charge to Meadows that he should repay the unknown lender, by sending anonymously, from time to time, as he could afford it, small sums of money to poor and honest persons in distress. I hope and believe that he will be honest enough to pay the debt in that way."

I was much astonished at the statement, but more so when I glanced over the book which he placed in my hand. It was a record extending over many years, of sums secretly sent to needy persons, running from hundreds of pounds down to a few shillings, and amounted in the aggregate to a heavy sum.

How the world misjudged this man! But it was not the world's fault. I handed him back the book.

"You have promised to keep my secret," said he. "I spend nothing on myself; but I have on others for many years, wherever I think it deserved. It is my only relief from the terrible remorse that weighs me down. But it makes no diminution to my income. Everything I touch prospers. Even that ridiculous Museum, which ruined its former owner, yields me a handsome profit. By the by, you must visit that. Your name will be left with the doorkeeper. You will find a deal to interest you there. Come when you like—but not if it wastes your time. Time is money—remember that."

The doctor came, pronounced the patient all right, and so I went off to my breakfast, leaving Sharp, for all I knew, to luxuriate on the red herring left from the night before.

From this date began my intimacy with old Sharp. Every one was

amused and amazed when they heard of it, attributing it to the fact of my nursing him all night through his illness. People thought that the "old wretch," as they called him, had one redeeming trait in his character. Captain Berkeley told me, before a crowd of the officers, that I had bound myself apprentice to Sharp to learn the art of making money; and Tom Brown called us "Sharp & Co." But all that wore off, and people found other topics for discussion. I used occasionally to drop in at the Museum, and sometimes I would meet the old man there. Then he came to the printing-room more frequently. One way or other I saw a good deal of him.

He never lost an opportunity to impress on me lessons of economy, or modes of making money, all of which I listened to without reply. One piece of advice I took, however. I was looking at the collection of minerals in the Museum, during a half hour's leisure at noon, when he came in.

"Do you understand mineralogy or geology?" he asked.

"No! I scarcely know one mineral from another."

"Learn both those sciences. The knowledge might be profitable sometime. Even a smattering is better than nothing. I picked up some knowledge of the kind when I was working at my trade, and that enabled me to tell gozzin when I saw it, and so I was led to buy the Bury property. I afterwards sold the mining right for twenty-five thousand pounds."

I never expected to find a copper-mine, but I had a thirst for knowledge of all sorts; and, aided by elementary works, with the collection at the museum, and the geological features of the

surrounding country, I soon managed to make myself very well versed in mineralogy and the structure of the earth.

I may as well mention here that I sent Bagby the information that he required. The date of the marriage had, however, been written over an erasure, and so I wrote to him.

CHAPTER VIII.

Which tells of the Entertainments at the Castle, and of a Finale not Rehearsed.

It was within a few weeks of the term of twenty-one years from the time I was first placed in the hands of John Gutenberg, when the events occurred which I am about to relate.

There were always a large number of visitors at Landys Castle during the Christmas holidays, when the family was there; but this year there were even more than ever before, for the Countess, an invalid, was in much better health than usual, and sometimes drove out to take an airing accompanied by her little boy. I had frequently seen her at the Castle, a pale, thin young lady, who had been a blonde beauty, but who was wrecked by ill-health. Her ladyship had recently so far recovered her strength as to occasion great rejoicing among her friends; and the Earl, who appeared to be a fond husband, did his best to minister to her amusement. Among other matters devised to add to the pleasure of the season, it was proposed to get up an amateur dramatic performance, and the manager of a circuit of provincial theatres not far from London was sent for to supervise the affair. It was found, however, even after obtaining the aid of the army officers in town, that there was not available material

for casting a tragedy—a fortunate thing for the tragedy and the audience—so they settled upon the old comedy of “The Poor Gentleman,” which they fell to rehearsing with great earnestness. The little programmes of the play were printed at our establishment, and I noted that Captain Berkeley, a very clever amateur as I knew, was set down for the part of Frederick Bramble; the Honorable Mr. Wickham, and M. P. for the county, as Doctor Ollapod, and the Honorable Mrs. Leigh for Emily Worthington. The Emily of the occasion was a young, rich, and fashionable widow, very popular in the town, on account of her beauty and affability, and the dextrous manner in which she drove her own phaeton through the streets on her visits. I knew, as I said, that Berkeley was clever, but I marvelled at his choice, Dr. Ollapod being his specialty, as Frederick had been mine, but I saw that it was done to oblige his noble host. I, of course, never expected to witness, much less to partake in these performances; for I would not stand among lackeys, and though the proud Earl of Landys might allow a printer's boy the use of his library, to receive him as a guest was another matter.

And yet I did participate, nevertheless.

The day before the evening set for the performance, Captain Berkeley came to the printing-room in company with a stranger whom he introduced as Mr. Haresfoot, the manager.

This new acquaintance was a man about forty years old, tall and inclining to stoutness, with a rubicund face, a slightly pompous manner, and a shuffling walk, as though he were moving about in Turkish slippers. He

had a ridiculous habit of emphasizing or rather punctuating his sentences, by closing and opening first one eye and then the other, like a sportsman taking aim at his game from either shoulder alternately—a curious feat, which I tried afterwards to imitate by way of amusement, but found it to be to me physically impossible.

Mr. Hincks was absent and I was managing the *Chronicle* in his stead—having been sub-editor for some time. I was knee-deep in a pile of newspapers, from which I had been clipping and arranging paragraphs; but I gave my visitors seats when they entered, and waited to hear what they had to say, for their manner spoke of business.

Captain Berkeley introduced his companion.

“Happy to make your acquaintance, sir,” said Haresfoot, winking his left eye. “I have come down here to act as director to the amateur entertainment at the castle, at Captain Berkeley's request”—here the right eye was put through its exercise—“but we find ourselves at the last moment in some trouble, from which I am told you can extricate us.” And then both eyes opened and shut alternately.

I looked my astonishment.

“You must know, then, Ambrose,” said the Captain, “we cast the ‘Poor Gentleman’ very nicely indeed, and were getting along famously, when Wickham receives news of his uncle's alarming illness in Yorkshire—”

“The said uncle personating twenty thousand a year,” interrupted Haresfoot, “and valuable props.”

“And off he posts,” continued Berkeley. “I am up in Ollapod”—

“And down on it,” again interrupted the manager.

“Oh, be quiet, will you! We have nobody to play Frederick, and reading a part is a bore. You have played it for us more cleverly than I should. I mentioned that to the Earl and ladies, and told them I thought you might be induced to do it, under the circumstances. So Haresfoot and myself were commissioned to say they would feel obliged if you would oblige them.”

“Captain,” said Haresfoot, “that was very well done. If you sell out and want employment come to me. You shall announce all the new plays, and make apologies to the audience when my leading man has set too late to dinner, and my leading woman has a fit of the sulks.”

“Oh, bother!” cried the Captain. “What do you say?”

“Well,” I replied, “I'd be very happy to do so; but why couldn't Mr. Haresfoot fill the gap?”

“Oh,” said the manager, winking his left eye, “that would never do.” Snap went the right eye. “I should only mar the—well, the unity of the performance.”

Berkeley laughed.

“That, translated into plain English,” said he, “means that he thinks we are a set of muffs. Won't we show him? But what do you say, my fine fellow?”

“My time is not at my own disposal quite. You must ask Mr. Gutenberg.”

“Oh, if that's all, we'll expect you at rehearsal at twelve o'clock to-morrow—twelve o'clock, sharp! Not your friend of the money-bags, though.”

The chuckle that broke from Haresfoot at this miserable attempt at pleasantry by Berkeley, showed that the latter had been talking to the former about me, and served to embarrass me

a little. After some little conversation on indifferent subjects, they bid me good-day, and with a nod to Tom Brown, now our foreman, who had just come in with some proof-slips, left the room.

Tom had an enquiring look on his face, so I told him their errand.

"Now there's luck!" cried he enviously. "Here you, a prentice, get an invitation to the castle among the nobles; and I'm a journeyman, and a ten times better actor than you, and get none."

And Tom went out again feeling perfectly aggrieved at my good-fortune. For my part I heartily wished he could take my place. I felt myself to be in no pleasant position. Not being among my equals in rank, I expected to be unnoticed except when wanted on the stage; and not being a professional actor I should not even have the privilege of sneering at the bad acting.

Of course, Mr. Guttenberg was only "too happy to oblige his lordship," and thought "you ought to be keenly sensible of the honor, Ambrose," though Ambrose was not. But when did a true, manly and independent British tradesman not feel delighted at a service demanded by a peer of the realm?

That evening I saw Sharp, and mentioned to him my proposed participation in the performance at the castle.

"Umph!" he growled. "Don't let them look down on you then. They're no better than you, blood or no blood. You owe no man anything, while they're in debt, every one of them."

"Not the Earl?"

"Yes; he too. That Mr. Wickham owes me nearly ten thousand pounds, spent in his last election. It's well se-

cured, though—well secured, or he wouldn't have had a ha'p'ny from me. If his uncle dies there's a nice windfall. Your Sir Robert Bramble—Mr. Willoughby, Lord Willoughby, D'Ernccliffe's brother, is in my debt a pretty penny. In fact, I've had dealings with every one, ladies and all, who are to play with you, except the Honorable Mrs. Leigh and Captain Berkeley."

"Captain Berkeley is very prudent about money-matters," I said.

"No, he isn't. He's a wasteful dog—buying all sorts of nick-nacks just because the expense don't go beyond his income. 'Many a mickle makes a muckle,' as the Scotch say, and he'll want his money some day. But you've no furred coat—you want a furred coat in order to play Frederick."

"Oh, I can trim an ordinary surtout with a little plush. That will answer very well."

"No, it won't. Those fellows shan't sneer at you. I have a furred robe that has lain in tobacco these three years. It is trimmed with the finest sable—none of your catskin humbugs, and belonged to a gay, young attache of the Russian embassy. Mary Guttenberg can take the fur off carefully, and sew it on the edges of your coat."

"I'm very much obliged to you, I'm sure."

"Yes; you ought to be—the fur might get injured. But I'm getting extravagant—like a fool. I shouldn't wonder if I came to want yet. To-day I was silly enough to waste my money. Yes; there was a little brat spilt some milk from her pitcher—spilt it all, in fact. She was crying. I took hold of her pitcher to look at it. As there was nobody looking I slipped

a sixpence in her pitcher, gave it back to her, and went away. I watched her from round the corner. She found the money presently, and—well it was right funny, I declare, to see her tears dry up, and a grin get on her dirty face, and then see the puzzled look that followed. I was a fool."

"I think not. The enjoyment was certainly worth the sixpence."

"Yes; but don't you see," returned Sharp, argumentatively, "she only lost a pen'orth of milk. Now, if I'd put in a penny she'd have been just as delighted, and I threw away five pence. Five pence at compound interest for fifty years—"

"Mr. Sharp," I interrupted, "you'll allow me to say that it isn't Abner Sharp whom I know, that is talking now, but the Abner Sharp the public know; and I prefer my own acquaintance to the public's a good deal."

"You're an impudent boy," retorted Sharp. "But let me get you the coat."

I pass over the details of the rehearsal. They were spiritless, of course, as all such things are, whether amateur or professional. Mr. Haresfoot was nearly driven frantic by people persisting in coming on at the wrong cues, and going off by the wrong exits. The ladies were even more provokingly stupid than the gentlemen, and every few minutes the voice of Mr. Haresfoot, saying—"That is not the entrance, my dear!" interrupted the business.

"Pray, Mr. Fecit," asked our Emily Worthington, "what does the man mean by 'dearing' me so absurdly?"

I explained to her that it was a technical term applied by all stage-managers to all females, old or young, during rehearsal, and that Mr. Hares-

foot was merely following a professional habit without reference to the different position of the parties addressed. "You will observe, madam," I said, "that the more he is vexed the stronger grows the emphasis on the term. If he should murmur 'my dear,' very tenderly, he is extremely put out; and when he brings it out with unction, 'my d-e-a-r!' he is in a terrible passion."

Mrs. Leigh laughed heartily. "He is a very singular person," she said. "What a ridiculous habit the man has of winking both his eyes."

"That, madam," I observed, is the language of Nod, and means—'Good characters are to be murdered to-night.'"

"Pray, answer for yourself, sir," she cried, gaily. "I intend to play with spirit; that is, if I have a Frederick who will make love to me properly—on the stage—as he is in duty bound to do."

At length it was all over, and I was about to go, when a footman informed me that the ladies wished to speak with me in the drawing-room. I followed him and he ushered me into the presence of the Countess of Landys, Mrs. Leigh and several others.

"Mr. Fecit," said Mrs. Leigh, "we have arranged some tableaux, to be shown after the play. We are desirous of adding another—Conrad and Medora. You have such a charming piratical look about you" (here she laughed gaily and I bowed ironically) "that I have ventured to request you to be my Conrad for the occasion."

"With great pleasure, madam. But I am at a loss, on so short a notice, for the costume."

"We have discussed all that, sir,"

said Lady Landys. "Gifford, the dowager's maid, to whom we mentioned it, tells us that there are a number of dresses in the lumber-room, and among them one that will answer. I have directed her to have it properly aired, and sent to the dressing-room for you this evening."

I thanked her ladyship and bowed myself out.

At night we assembled in one of the drawing-rooms, used as a temporary green-room, awaiting the call, and I slipped out for a moment to get a view of the theatre that had been improvised for the occasion. The stage had been arranged at one extremity of the great hall, and the part reserved for the spectators had been fitted up with seats very neatly. The scenery and appointments, which had been prepared under Haresfoot's supervision, were very complete. Peeping through a hole in the curtain (however new it may be every theatrical curtain has a peep-hole) I saw the audience gradually gather in, and presently they were all seated. On the extreme right sat the dowager Countess, attended by Gifford; and in the centre were the Earl and Countess of Landys, attended by their intimate friends. In the background stood the servants. Mr. Osborne, whose position was intermediate between servitude and equality, stood a little apart leaning against the wall. I took in this survey, and then returned to the green-room.

Mrs. Leigh chatted with me while I was waiting for the call, and when she was not on the stage herself. I readily saw through her purpose. She had noted that I felt isolated, and in the kindness of her heart endeavored to set me at ease. I knew that my histo-

ry had been told to the guests, and that I was the subject of observation and curiosity, perhaps pity—a still more galling position for me to take. These reflections caused me a deal of embarrassment at first, and when I made my appearance in the third act, I did little to justify the panegyric on my histrionic ability which Berkeley, as I learned by Mrs. Leigh, had given to the party. This did not last long. The excitement of the scene soon roused me up, and I dashed out vigorously. The part itself is not much; but as Humphrey and Sir Robert were but poorly represented, and as Emily supported me well, the part stood out strongly in relief. The audience began to warm, Ollapod was very quaint and funny, and the curtain fell on the final scene amid the applause of the noble and aristocratic spectators. Everybody complimented me—even Haresfoot condescended to say that it was a very clever performance (sinister eye winking) for an amateur, (dexter eye snapping); and if I ever chose to go on the stage he would find a vacancy in his company for me; the whole of which was emphasized by at least three double winks fired off with the utmost rapidity.

The stage was now cleared for the tableaux, and I went into the dressing-room to prepare for my share of the closing scene. I found a bundle there with a note sent by Sharp, the latter stating that having heard that I was to appear as Conrad in the closing tableau, he had sent me something I might need. I examined the bundle and found it to contain a Turkish yataghan and pistols and a dagger, which I recognized as similar to the Malay krees found in the old house, but longer, and

with the guard at one side, extremely wide. The dress laid out for me was not Turkish, however, nor could I tell of what nation. It consisted of a red cap, shaped like a brimless hat, a long full embroidered robe, red trousers trimmed like the cap, and a black, gilt-edged belt. The hat, jacket and trousers were very well, but I could not arrange the robe to my satisfaction. At length I girt it around me with the belt, and let it fall to my feet. When I had done so, I looked into the mirror to try the effect, and started in surprise.

I was made up to look exactly like the portrait of the pirate in the gallery, and the resemblance was certainly striking. This was a trick of Gifford, but I had no time to conjecture her object, for the call-boy run his head in the door and called out: "Mr. Fecit for the last tableau!" and I ran down stairs to take my place in the final scene.

Mrs. Leigh looked at me and said: "That is a very becoming dress, certainly, Mr. Fecit; but it doesn't belong to Conrad."

I agreed with her, but what was I to do?

The bell tinkled and the curtain rose. Mrs. Leigh was seated at my feet, lute in hand, and my head was turned nearly full front to the audience. As the curtain went up I could see the Earl rise slowly, as though in perfect amazement. The elder Countess leaned forward with an expression of wonder and dismay overspreading her countenance. The next moment she raised herself from her seat, and with the words, shrieked rather than spoken: "He is alive! Bugunda Jawa!" fell back in violent hysterics.

All was confusion in an instant, the tableau became alive at once; and the guests were gathered in groups, wondering at the circumstance, as they bore the dowager Countess to her apartment. I knew nothing of that until afterwards, for when the curtain had suddenly fallen I hastened up stairs, resumed my Frederick dress, which I had worn to the castle, and taking the bundle containing the arms, came down to leave. As I reached the stair-foot I met Mr. Osborne.

"Youngster," said he, "what did you mean by putting on that dress? Answer me that."

"Mean!" I retorted, "What should I mean, Mr. Osborne? It was the dress left out for me and I put it on. What do you mean, sir, by addressing me in that tone?"

"Where did you get it?"

"Her ladyship had it sent to me; Lady Landys."

"How did she know of it?"

"Gifford pointed it out, I believe."

He left me suddenly, coupling Gifford's name with an expression too profane to print.

CHAPTER IX.

Which describes a bold Stroke of the Peer and his Steward.

When Mr. Guttenberg learned of the occurrences at the castle he was alarmed lest the Earl might be vexed, and withdraw his favors and patronage from our circulating library and printing-rooms. This would have been a serious blow, for although directly these were not much, yet as his lordship, by virtue of his title and property set the fashion in those parts, indirectly they were a great deal.

"It's a very sad affair, Ambrose,"

said he, "very stupid on your part to get yourself up in that way. I am astonished at you."

"But it was not my fault, sir. How could I help it? The dress was prescribed for me, and I took it. It is no great matter for complaint that an old lady should take a whim into her head and go off in hysterics. And it's no great matter, sir, I should think, to the Earl, who must be used to her eccentricities."

"Yes, it is. His lordship don't like to have an occurrence which will set every one to talking. And then you mustn't call her an 'old lady.' It isn't proper."

"Isn't she an old lady, sir?"

"An old lady! Good gracious! Why her husband was a peer of the realm!"

"It was not my fault, I am sure, sir. I did not invite myself to the castle."

"Now, hush! I am ashamed of you. It was an act of condescension to ask you. You ought to feel it deeply, and your remark sounds like ingratitude."

And very ungrateful the bookseller thought me. However all my adopted father's fears were dissipated on the following day by a visit from Mr. Osborne, who came to thank me for having assisted at the play, and to say that I was expected to visit the library while the guests were in the house, as usual. He said the dowager had recovered from the events of the night before; her momentary insane fit had passed apparently away; and added that the ladies thought me a very interesting young man, with manners above my station."

I chafed under this. This man who

talked about "my station," was only one remove above a lackey, and I felt convinced that his language was his own. I preserved a contemptuous silence until he had gone, and then I broke into a torrent of wrath, innocent of effect, as there was no one to listen but Mr. Guttenberg, and he thought me mad. It had one good effect, however, it relieved me of my suppressed vexation, and next moment I smiled at the consternation of the printer and my own folly.

Berkeley came into the printing-room during the afternoon.

"Ambrose," said he, "you're a doosid lucky fellah! you've made a sensation. The whole town is talking about you. You're the observed of all observers. The ladies declare there never was such a printer since types were invented. The Honorable Mrs. Leigh raves about you and declares you are a young eastern rajah in disguise."

"It's all very annoying," I said, picking away at the letter, for I was at work at the case.

Tom Brown and the two apprentices (for we had two new ones) laughed.

"I'd like to have been in his place," said Tom.

"Would you?"

"Wouldn't I?"

"Sensible fellah, Thomas, you!" answered the Captain. "Annoyed, eh! If I could have made half the impression I'd have been content to have put types in that what-d'ye-call-it there for the remainder of my existence. You're famous, I tell you. Your friend Sharp would do a good business to exhibit you at the Museum along with the nicknackeries. By the by, where did you get that magnificent sabre you wore in the tableau?"

"Mr. Sharp was kind enough to send the arms for me," I replied, "when he found I was to stand in the tableau." Berkeley whistled.

"And that magnificent fur on your surtout—was that from Sharp too?"

"It was."

"Worse and worse; or, rather, better and better. Stranger than the Sphinx, by Jove! Old Sharp was never known to do a kind thing to any one before. I am quite sure he would never have loaned that sword to me without twice its value left as collateral security. Your power over him is very odd. Do you know they say when he gets in company with you, he is absolutely genial! What is your secret? Are you Dr. Faustus come back, and in league with the old gentleman below?"

The Captain ran on for some time in that way until he remembered an engagement to dine, and left with the quizzical caution not to run off with the Honorable Mrs. Leigh, as he had designs matrimonially on that lady himself, and should certainly kill and eat his successful rival.

To satisfy Mr. Guttenberg, I resumed my visits to the library. The visitors to my Lord Landys were not of studious habits, and I seldom met any of them amid the books. When I did it was because they dawdled in there for a partial refuge from ennui; and then in a little while dawdled out.

On Monday after the performance I was at the castle. I had not been seated a minute after hanging up my overcoat, before Gifford came in.

"I have been watching for you," said she. "Pray, come to my lady."

I followed her, and she ushered me

into the presence of the Countess dowager.

The old lady half rose as I entered, and pointed to a chair. I seated myself.

"Gifford," she said, "see that no one disturbs us."

The waiting-woman retired.

"Now, young gentleman," said the Countess, "I have heard something of your history, but not fully. Will you do me the favor to recite it so far as you can."

I told her all I knew or had heard—at least the essential parts of it. She listened attentively, and when I had concluded, came towards me, scanned my features carefully, laid her hand on my ear, and then resumed her seat, much agitated.

"It is very singular," she muttered, "and it cannot be. Yet that peculiar mark. Does Mr. Marston know your history?"

"Mr. Marston?"

"Oh, I see. You call him the Earl of Landys. I had forgotten. But the true earl will return—yes, he will return. He is not dead or his spirit would have come to tell me. But what did I ask you? I forget; for my brain wanders sadly of late."

"If the present Earl knew my history. He knows as much as I have told you," I replied.

"Have a care then. He suspects you, and will do you a mischief. And beware of Osborne. I may send for you again. Will you come?"

"Should I receive your ladyship's message, I will strive to obey it," I answered, as I bowed myself out.

I returned to the library and had not been there long before the Earl

came in. He smiled as he returned my bow.

"We had quite a scene the other night, Mr. Fecit."

"Yes, my lord."

"The Dowager Countess's infirmity gives her strange fancies. Your performance of Frederick was very spirited."

I bowed my acknowledgments.

"Be seated. Have you thought on what I suggested once concerning India?"

This was the third time during the year that he had asked me a similar question, and it was to be the third time I was to make him a similar answer.

"I am sincerely obliged to your lordship for the kind offer, but for the present I have determined to remain here, and find employment at the business which I have been taught."

How we sin through courtesy and the rule of the world! I was by habit and principle opposed to falsehood; and yet I here caught myself lying outrageously. I was not sincerely obliged to his lordship at all; on the contrary I was angry at the persistent offer. Nor did I think it kind, for I believed it to be prompted by some sinister motive, the nature of which I could scarcely conjecture.

His lordship took snuff and laid the box on the table.

"Don't let me interrupt your studies," said he, and took up a book. I resumed mine, not to study but to think. On looking up a few minutes after I found the Earl had gone. His gold snuff-box lay on the table. I thought it a piece of forgetfulness, but went on with my reading, and just then seeing a passage which I wished to note, opened a box lying near me to

get a sheet of paper. The lid of the box was lined with looking-glass, and it remained up and slightly back from the perpendicular. While I was writing before it Mr. Osborne came in. He bade me a good day, and went to the book-case, selecting and rejecting books.

I read on, and on turning a page my eye rose from the top of the book, and fell on the looking-glass in the lid of the paper box. It chanced to be that angle which brought the right side of the room before me. My very flesh crawled. What infamous work was this!

I distinctly saw Mr. Osborne with the gold snuff-box in his hand, with his eye fixed upon me, advance to where my great-coat hung, and, after slipping the snuff-box in the breast-pocket, gather up a couple of books from the table and make a noiseless departure.

I arose in alarm and excitement, but my course of action was decided on at once. I removed the box, and placing it on a small table in the farthest corner of the room, threw a newspaper carelessly over it.

I sat there for a little while, but no one came. The warning of the old Countess recurred to me. What could it all mean? At length the anxiety became insupportable. I rose and put on my great coat in order to go out. I trembled with excitement, and was steadying myself for a moment against the chair, when the Earl accompanied by Brewis, his butler, entered.

"And so, Mr. Fecit," said the peer, "you won't go to India? Why, where is my snuff-box? I left it on the table. Didn't you see it here, Mr. Fecit?"

"I did, my lord; but it has not been here since Mr. Osborne left. Perhaps he took it to hand it to your lordship."

I said this in order to see if his lordship were a party to the affair.

"No, I met him this moment. He would have told me, you know. It is very singular."

"Very," I said, playing with him.

"I am quite sure I left it on the table. Has any one else been here?"

"No one but Mr. Osborne."

"It's very odd; and I don't know, but—"

It's coming now, I thought.

"I am quite sure you couldn't have taken it, of course, but, as a matter of form, you had better allow Brewis here to examine your pockets. It will prevent false reports, you know."

He felt his degradation, I was sure. He looked meanly. I put my hand to my breast pocket for the express purpose of leading him on as I said:

"No, my lord. I allow no man, under any pretext, to thus degrade me."

"Brewis, do you hear?" asked the peer. "This is extraordinary. If you know nothing of the box, why do you object to being searched? Under such circumstances I shall insist on it."

"Pray," said I, "did it never occur to your lordship that you might have left your box elsewhere in the room?"

"No! for I am positive that I left it here."

"Brewis," said I to the butler, "do me the favor to lift the paper on yonder table."

Brewis obeyed me, and revealed the box.

"Is that what you seek, my lord?"

His lordship reddened, but took the box without a word.

"I ask your lordship if that be the box?"

The Earl muttered "Yes!"

"I owe you a thousand apologies, Mr. Fecit," he said after a pause. "The mistake was mine, but your manner—"

I might have affected to believe him, though I knew it to be a lie. But I was young and hot-headed, so I interrupted him at once.

"I would like to believe that your lordship was not engaged in a plot that would disgrace the lowest minded man in the world. But you were. What your motives may have been I can't tell; but you have the comforting reflection of knowing that you have failed."

"Do you dare to accuse me, you beggarly brat?" he demanded angrily.

"Fine language for a peer," I replied. "Do you see that mirror, my lord? Seated before that, I saw your tool at his dirty work, and I have baffled him. I see through you and despise you."

The stupid surprise on the butler's features satisfied me that he, at least, was not in the conspiracy. The contents of Paul Bagby's letter came to my mind and I could not refrain from a parting shot at random.

"Let me tell your lordship one thing. I am more prudent than Don Jose Espinel."

The shot told. The Earl's features grew livid with rage and apprehension, and with a laugh I turned on my heel and left him.

CHAPTER X.

Wherein the Storm becomes so fierce that I Scud before it.

I went home immediately from the castle, and entered the printing room in no pleasant frame of mind. I felt that I had been led by my passion into a serious error. The allusion to Espinel's abduction, or murder, whichever it might be, was entirely wrong—not only unnecessary of itself, but a breach of confidence. The Earl would know very well the source from whence I had my information, and thus I had compromised myself. The attempt against myself I could trace to nothing but a belief that I was acquainted with the secret of Espinel; and unfounded though that belief was, the boast would confirm it. In any view of the case I had let my resentment get the better of my prudence—no very wonderful position for a youth to take.

Tom Brown expressed surprise at my quick return and commented on my fretted countenance; but I parried his thrusts and answered his questions by evasive monosyllables. I took my composing stick in hand and commenced to set up one of Mr. Hinck's ponderous leaders. But I was too moody and restless, and emptying my half-filled stick on a galley, I left the copy on the case, threw off my apron, and started for the shop. Here I found Mr. Guttenberg behind the counter serving some customers with stationery.

"You are soon back from the castle to-day, Ambrose."

The fact that I went to the castle regularly by invitation of the Earl was a matter of pride with the printer, and he was fond of alluding to it before strangers.

I answered him in the affirmative and passed on to the back room. As I did so I heard him say, in reply to some remark made by one of the customers—

"Oh, yes! a great favorite with his lordship."

"Why, dear me, Ambrose!" exclaimed Mrs. Guttenberg, looking up from her work as I entered the apartment where she was engaged in sewing, "you look quite ill. What is the matter? Are you sick?"

"Heart-sick, mother," I answered; for I often called her mother, though I never called her husband father; "heart sick."

"What's the matter now, Brosy?" inquired Mary, "you are pale as a ghost."

"Mary, I want to talk to your father and mother a while. Suppose you go into the shop and ask your father to come here when he is disengaged. You can take his place awhile."

"What's it all about? Can't I know too?"

"Do as Ambrose bids you," said her mother.

Mary went out pouting, and in a few minutes Mr. Guttenberg came in. I told the couple all that had occurred between me and the Earl, with the exception of my own parting speech.

"The vile wretches!" exclaimed Mrs. Guttenberg, indignantly.

But Mr. Guttenberg only looked grave.

"There seems to be no doubt about Mr. Osborne," he said; "but you did wrong to insult his lordship. He no doubt thought you *did* take the box. It was natural enough under the circumstances, he not knowing you well."

"Why," said I, "he was in the plot."

"That can't be," was the rejoinder.

"A peer of the realm! Impossible!"

"A peer of the realm may be a rascal as well as a peasant of the soil."

"But he could have no motive."

"He has one, depend on it. I have reason to suspect it, and know why; but it is quite enough, I think, to recall the warning of the old Countess."

"She is half crazy—wholly so at times. You look at it wrongly."

We talked the matter over without coming to any agreement. While still engaged in the discussion, Mary came in to tell us that a footman was at the door with a message from Lord Landys who desired to see Mr. Guttenberg immediately, and his lordship's own carriage was in waiting to convey the stationer to the castle.

"To see me! Bless me!" exclaimed the tradesman, in a flutter of excitement. "Get me my best coat, Mrs. Guttenberg. Mary, tell the servant I'll be ready presently. His lordship's own coach! What an honor! Thank you, my dear. Tidy my cravat a little, Mrs. Guttenberg. It's all about you, Ambrose. I'll be conciliatory, but firm."

Firm! a tradesman with an earl!

"There, my dear, that will do. Ambrose, take charge of the shop till I return."

When we left the back room we found Berkeley and the lieutenant-colonel of the regiment, a gray-haired, ramrodish individual, named Carden, chatting with Mary.

"Excuse me, gentlemen, but I have to go to the castle on a little business. His lordship has sent for me, and his lordship's coach is waiting, and Am-

brose and Mary will attend to you"—and with this off went the delighted printer, riding grandly for the first time in his life, in a coach with a coronet on the panels.

"He's in a doosid hurry, to be sure," said Berkeley. "Miss Guttenberg, the Colonel wants that novel I had yesterday. Is there a copy in?"

"Two of them, Captain. Which will you have, Colonel?"

"Whichever you choose."

"Take care, Colonel," laughed Berkeley. "One is dog's-eared, and the other mortally wounded in the last leaf. Now, the question is, dog's-ears, or the veteran."

"The complete one, by all means, then."

While the Colonel was examining some stationery, I took the Captain aside.

"Are you engaged to-night?" I asked.

"No—at least to nothing which can't be put off. Why?"

"Can you spare me a couple of hours?"

"Yes."

"Then meet me at the Crown and Angel at seven."

"Of course, my boy, if it will oblige you. What's up?"

"I'll tell you then."

Out went the brace of officers. I went to the desk and wrote a note to Sharp, requesting him to meet me at the Crown and Angel at seven, if he were at all interested in a matter that concerned me very much. I gave this to a neighbor's boy, with directions to hunt Sharp up, and get a verbal answer. In about an hour the lad returned with the reply that he would attend to it.

Mary was on nettles all the time to know what was going on.

It was quite late in the day when Mr. Guttenberg returned in the noble man's coach. He was filled with news, and called me into the back room, where Mrs. Guttenberg impatiently awaited us.

"I have arranged it all properly," he said. "It was all as I conjectured. His lordship has been very much deceived in his steward, whom he has discharged. His lordship is very much hurt at what you said to him, but sends his regret at having suspected you even for a moment; though I must agree with him that, under the circumstances, the suspicion was not unnatural. Of course I promised that you would apologize for your very rash, and, I must say, notwithstanding the provocation, very offensive words."

"This I cannot do, sir. His lordship was a party to the whole affair."

"How unreasonable and absurd you are, Ambrose; and after his lordship, a peer of the realm, has condescended to make the first advances, too. He a party! Why he is perfectly furious against Mr. Osborne!"

"Is he? Will he have his steward arrested for his attempt to fasten crime on me?"

"He has sent him away."

"He will bring him back in good time."

"Now, my dear boy, you surely won't refuse, when I've made a promise. There's nothing disgraceful in a frank apology for such words to a superior."

"True, sir; but here the apology would involve a falsehood. I am not the least sorry for my conduct, which was proper enough."

"Ambrose," said Mr. Guttenberg, "I need not remind you that I have always done my duty by you. I have treated you like a son. Can you refuse me a favor, and not only lose me a patron, but gain me an enemy?"

I was a little affected by this appeal, but none the less firm. I answered promptly:

"I am grateful to you—I would serve you in almost anything; but I will not apologise to Lord Landys, and certainly will never hold any intercourse with him. He is an unprincipled man, and my enemy."

"What nonsense! He's your friend—spoke of you in the warmest manner, said you were a young man of the highest promise; and even offered to have you appointed to a post in India, and to advance a thousand pounds for your outfit. A thousand pounds! Think of that!"

"Yes, for some motives of his own he is quite anxious to exile me to India."

"Motives! What could he have?"

"I do not know; but I do know that he's a scoundrel."

"Goodness! the boy is mad! A scoundrel! An earl! a nobleman that will be a duke when his grace of Selkirkbourn dies—a scoundrel! What folly! I tell you what, Ambrose, you are standing in your own light. You will be of age in a few days. I have the papers drawn up, all ready to sign and seal, making you a full partner, not only in the printing and stationery business, but in the *Chronicle*. I had always meant you should share equally with Mary, as though you were my own son; and now you make me go back of my word."

"I am very sorry, but I can't help it."

"Then there'll be no Guttenberg & Fecit, I can tell you. No, sir! you'll be no partner of mine—no anything here. You shall leave this house. I'll have no further to do with you!"

"Oh, don't say that, John," sobbed his wife. "Give him time. He won't be so obstinate if he has time to consider."

I shook my head.

"I'll give him twenty-four hours, and not one moment more. Let him make up his mind by this time to-morrow. If he chooses to sacrifice his home and his prospects, and to repay me with ingratitude, all through his selfishness and obstinacy, let him do it—that's all."

Off flounced Mr. Guttenberg into the shop, really believing himself a much-injured man, and I absolutely and positively heard him speak snappishly to a customer. Mrs. Guttenberg cried, and pleaded with me. I answered the good old soul kindly and affectionately, but I was determined, nevertheless. Mary came in and looked on in double distress—a two-headed misery on her part—firstly, on account of the general unhappiness, and secondly, because she couldn't tell what it was all about.

That night I went to the Crown and Angel, called for a private room, and directed the waiter to send in those who inquired for me.

Captain Berkeley came in about ten minutes before seven.

"Here I am, old fellah," cried he, "in advance of time. Now, what is it?"

"Wait awhile, Captain. I don't want to tell the same story twice."

"A council of three, eh? Who's the third?"

"Mr. Sharp."

"Whew!" whistled Berkeley. "Old money-bags, eh? This will be a queer confabulation."

"You won't have to wait long, Captain, for there goes the first stroke of my godfather."

The last peal of the great bell of St. Stephen's was still echoing when a tap at the door announced the servant who came to usher in old Sharp. The latter stared in surprise at Berkeley, and then, recovering himself, said:

"Well, what is it, Ambrose? Don't keep me waiting. Time is money."

"I wish the bankers agreed with you, old fellah," said Berkeley, gaily.

"Pshaw!"

I hastened to prevent a threatened explosion by telling the story of the Earl's attempt, as I had told it before to the Guttens. I did not give my own history—it was not needed. Had I done so it might have saved me some after trouble. But who knows his future?

"Now," said I, when I had finished, "the question is—what shall I do?"

"The Countess is mad, and the Earl is madder, and Guttenberg is maddest. Mad or no mad," said Berkeley, "he wants to get you out of the road, for some reason best known to himself. It is quite clear to my mind that if you don't go he'll do you a mischief. My advice is, cut and run. What do you say, Mr. Sharp?"

"The Captain is right, Ambrose. You must leave Puttenham for the present, and quickly."

"But how, and when?"

"At once. Four wagons start for London at two to-morrow morning. One of these will take you. The wagoner will not disoblige me; he owes

me nine pound five shillings nup'nse ha'penny. You can get into the wagon just out of town, and I'll instruct him what to do. Don't attempt to leave the wagon for the mail, no matter how slowly you go. When you get to London—but have you any friend there?"

"Yes; one I can rely on, I think, Mr. Paul Bagby."

"Well, go to him, and keep quiet. Have you any money?"

"About five pounds; that will last me until I get employment in some printing-house."

"Let me give you some money, or you may get into trouble."

Berkeley raised his eyebrows at such an offer from Sharp, and then a second time when I declined it.

"Very foolish," muttered the old man. "Better lean on a friend's staff than be struck by an enemy's cudgel. However, I'll give you a sealed letter to my bankers when you leave, and you must promise to avail yourself of it when you are in need."

I promised.

"Now, go home," said Sharp, "get what you want at home; but don't encumber yourself with a large bundle. Light load, more speed. Slip out unobserved, and meet us at the Reindeer an hour after midnight."

"But this looks like flight, and I am not sure—"

"Not a word," said Berkeley. "You asked us to do your thinking, and we have done it. The enemy is too strong, and you must retreat. Leave us to cover your rear."

I could see no help for it. It was a choice between going at once of my own accord, or of being kicked out the next day by Mr. Guttenberg. So I returned home, and when the family

had retired, made a bundle of a spare suit and some shirts, took the ring and other tokens connected with my history, rolled up Zara's portrait, which I cut from its frame, and at a few minutes after one o'clock, let myself quietly out into the street.

I found the Reindeer. There were several large wagons in the yard. I was about to go to them, when some one tapped me on the shoulder. It was Berkeley, cloaked. He whispered to me:

"Keep from the wagon. We have talked with the wagoner, who will take you up at a distance from town. You know St. George Clyst."

This was a church on the high-road, nearly five miles from town.

"Yes."

"Well, walk on, and remain in the by-road there. The wagon has one grey horse in the lead; the rest are bays. There are three other wagons, and yours will start last. When you see it approach the mouth of the by-road, step up to it, and say to the driver, 'fine night for a race.' He'll tell you to get in. Keep close until you arrive in London."

Sharp, who had come forward during the utterance of these instructions, slipped the promised letter into my hand. They both wished me good-speed, and I promised to write to them, and give them the name I should assume, for it was not deemed advisable to retain my own in London. We shook hands and parted, and I pushed on to the place of rendezvous.

I waited at the spot pointed out for a long while. At length I heard the jingling of bells, and watched first one and then two other wagons pass as I lay in the shadow of the wall. The

fourth, with the light horse in the lead, came according to promise in its turn. The wagoner was walking with his horses, evidently expecting some one. I advanced, spoke as had been agreed on, and was helped into the wagon, which only contained hay and a couple of bags of feed. The train was returning empty. I buttoned my great coat closely around me, and was soon fast asleep.

I waked up about an hour after day-dawn. We had stopped at a road-side tavern, called the Fair-Mile Inn, and here the wagoner secured me a lunch. The second night I got out of the wagon before we arrived at our stopping-place, and took lodgings as though I were a foot-passer. In the morning I went out before the starting of the wagon, which picked me up two or three miles farther on. And this was the daily manner of the journey.

On the fifth day after our departure for London, when within two miles of the town of Coppleton, the fore axle-tree broke short off in the middle, and our progress was suddenly checked. After a consultation between the wagoner and myself, it was agreed that I should walk to the town, and send back a wheelwright. I did so, although I had some trouble to find an artizan disengaged, and more trouble to induce him to go so far. As I was now within forty miles of London, I concluded to remain in the town a few days to recruit myself after my five days' shaking. So I took lodgings at a quiet looking inn, sent for my scanty luggage, and bestowed it and myself in a snug apartment, where I passed a very pleasant night.

CHAPTER XI.

In which I find a former acquaintance, and make new ones.

The town of Coppleton is of modern growth, and owes its importance principally to its glove manufactories, and two large establishments for the manufacture of chemicals. In the morning I took a stroll through it, to see what was most worthy of note. As I roamed up one street and down another, my eyes frequently rested on flaming placards, announcing that the theatre would open on the following Monday, with a new and efficient company; and that the performances, by command of his worship the Mayor, would be "Speed the Plough," and "The Turnpike Gate." I concluded that the performance would be as good, at all events, as any I had hitherto seen in Puttenham, and so I said, thinking aloud:

"I think, if I remain here so long, I'll go. Why not?"

"Why not, indeed?" said some one at my elbow.

I turned. My echo was a broad-shouldered man, rather over the middle size, with a square chin, large mouth, and deeply-set eyes. He was rather shabbily dressed in an old body-coat, buttoned closely up to the chin, trousers polished on the knees, boots long guiltless of Day & Martin's manufactured lustre, and a hat garnished with brown on the edges of the crown. The presumption was that he wore a shirt, that being supposed to be a necessary part of an Englishman's apparel, but there was no ocular evidence of the fact. I made up my mind as to his profession, from his tone of voice and manner, and rejoined:

"One of the company, I presume?"

"Sir, I have that honor. My name is Fuzzy—Oliver Fuzzy. You will observe my name in large letters on the posters. I lead the business on this circuit—play the Hamlets, Richards, and others—and occasionally demean myself by assisting in a broadsword combat between the pieces. However, that keeps my hand in for Richard and Macbeth, and 'I dare do all that may become a man; who dares do more is' not Oliver Fuzzy. For all of which old Hare, the Gov., allows me a miserable sal., when we are playing, and nothing and nopence a week when we are not."

"You have a prominent position, Mr. Fuzzy, and it ought to be profitable."

"I do believe your grace, it ought to be, but it isn't. We don't play here till next week, and as I'm up in every thing we do for the first fortnight, I have nothing to study, and so I am roaming through the town, 'a looker-on here in Vienna,' cogitating on the ways and means of raising a pot of 'arf-and-arf.'"

Here was a character, and I resolved to study it.

"Suppose you join me in a pot," I said. "I have played a little myself *en amateur*, and have a sympathy with the profession."

"Will I? 'Come on, Macduff.'"

"But you'll have to point me out the proper place, for I am a stranger here."

"Point! nothing easier, as long as you'll point when we get there. 'I do remember me that hereabouts there lives,' not 'a starved apothecary,' but a well-fed publican, who deals in most

excellent potations. Shall I attend your grace?"

"Lead on; I follow," I said, catching his humor.

We soon found ourselves in a little, quiet ale-house, in an alley just back of a plain and dingy-looking building, which my companion informed me was the theatre. By the numerous portraits of leading actors on the walls, as well as from its proximity to the play-house, I inferred that the place was a resort for actors and their friends. A couple of pots of half-and-half were soon foaming before us, and Mr. Fuzzy, blowing off the froth, and exclaiming, "Off with his head! So much for Buckingham," took a hasty draught, and replaced the half-empty pot on the table.

"With some bread and cheese, and a pipe to follow," he said, "this were a banquet for the gods."

"Wouldn't a chop be better?" I asked.

"Chop! if there be anything for which this house is famous, outside of its malt liquors, it is a chop."

So I ordered the chops, and while they were preparing, I asked him concerning the actors.

"A very fine company, sir," said he.

"It's true that our juvenile man is rather shaky—the Governor goes in for that line himself, and he's past it now—fifty if he's a day; but juvenility is his weakness. Then he chews his words like Charles Kean—that young man'll never make an actor; I know it. I've seen him. Otherwise the company is tip-top, for a poor circuit. Cripps is our low comedy man—more than passable; we've a very honest fellow who makes an admirable vil-

lain; and then there's Finch—a good old fellow is Charley Finch—he does everything well, and has to do everything, second old man, heavy fathers, high-priests, eccentric comedy, and so on. Then there's myself—well, I don't boast; but I could have trod the London boards before now. Lots of city managers have made me offers; but my health, my health, you see—here's to you, sir?"

"And the women?"

"The ladies of the company are clever—one especially—Cecilia Finch. She's a prodigy; the best little juvenile, the best daughter, and in chambermaids—well, they haven't anything in London can hold a candle to her. Ah, she's a gem! and everything she does is—done to a turn, I declare."

The last observation had reference to the chops, which the waiter then placed upon the table, and which my new friend attacked with a vehemence and vigor highly complimentary to the grazier who fed the sheep, and the cook who prepared the meal, not neglecting his speech in the intervals of mastication.

"We have a vacancy in the company, though; we want a light comedy man. We had one engaged, but a screw's loose somehow. I suppose the Governor will scare one up somewhere in time. And here he comes, and Charley Finch."

I looked up, and there was my old acquaintance, Haresfoot, in company with a slender, pale and gentlemanly old man. Haresfoot caught my eye, and recognized me at once.

"Pray, my dear sir," said he, shaking me by the hand, "what lucky wind has blown you to our coast?"

"An accident," I replied; "but I am

right glad to see you. You're the manager, I see."

"Yes, and a very troubled one just now. The most unfortunate thing in the world. I've announced 'Speed the Plough,' and here my light comedian sends me word three days before we open, that he is laid up with a rheumatism which will prevent his playing for two months."

"Very unfortunate."

"Unfortunate! ruinous!"

And here the manager fired off his peculiar winks, right and left, with startling rapidity.

"By-the-bye, are you up in Bob Handy?"

"I've done it a good while since."

"Do it again. I'll announce you as a distinguished amateur; give you every chance. They're a most discriminating and fashionable audience, the wealthiest glovers in all England; fine women too; set 'em all crazy. It's a chance that only occurs once in a life-time."

I thought over the matter a little while. There was a love of the stage in me. I liked the experiment of the thing, and had never any of its rough experiences, and I consented.

Mr. Haresfoot was in a state of delight at once, and fired off his double winks more rapidly than ever. It was arranged that I should appear on the Monday following, and if I made a hit a permanent engagement was to follow, at a salary about equal to what I could earn as a journeyman printer, with two one-third benefits during the year. It was also arranged that my stage name should be Neville, that of Fecit not being considered eligible; and as Mr. Neville I was formally introduced to Mr. Finch and Mr. Fuzzy,

over a pot of porter a-piece, which Mr. Haresfoot insisted on providing in honor of the occasion.

General conversation ensued, in which old Finch bore his part, and I was struck with the manner and spirit of the old man's remarks. He was evidently a man of education, and the style of his conversation and movements betokened the gentleman. How such a man could ever have become a strolling actor was a mystery, and I determined to fathom it if possible. Finch was a stage name; what his real name was I felt certain I would yet know. I was not of a curious nature, in general, but here there was something that provoked prying.

I pass over our conversation. As soon as it closed I accompanied the party to the theatre, where rehearsal was about to begin, and was there introduced to Billy Nuts, who combined in his person the offices of prompter, property-man, and wardrobe-keeper to the rest of the company, male and female.

The rehearsal commenced. As it was manifestly to the interest of every member of the company that I should succeed, one would have naturally supposed that I should have received every assistance and encouragement. But actors have a contempt, generally well founded, for amateurs; and do not believe that any one can ever leap to a position in their profession. They think that the only way to attain eminence is to climb the ladder, round by round; a belief in the main correct enough, although those who have self-possession, occasionally form exceptions to the general conclusion. I knew of this feeling, and was therefore careful to make no attempt at act-

ing during rehearsal, but walked through my part in the most hurried and business-like manner. Modest as was my demeanor, it did not save me from sneers and contemptuous looks from every one on the stage except from Finch and his daughter. Instead of daunting me, this put me on my mettle, and I took no apparent notice of it, much as I chafed under the malicious looks and words of my colleagues.

The announcement of "a distinguished amateur, his first appearance on the regular stage," set the good people of Coppleton in a fever of excitement, and to the great delight of the manager, every seat in the lower tier of boxes was taken in advance. The treasurer informed me as I entered the theatre on Monday morning for the last rehearsal, that the box-sheet presented "a be-yu-tiful appearance," and Billy Nuts said to me, as I came on the stage:

"Ere's a go! Coppleton's waked up! There'll be a crushin' 'ouse, and if you fail after hall this blowin', my heyos! won't there be a jolly row!"

When the night came, the little house was jammed long before the curtain rose, and on my appearance I was warmly received, my stage-presence, being rather striking, and my features prepossessing. But, to my utter dismay, a powerful stage-fright took possession of me; the audience seemed to be sitting in a mist, my tongue refused to move, and my knees trembled so much that I was scarcely able to stand. A dead and painful silence fell over the house like a pall, interrupted by a titter from one of the side-boxes. I was about to turn and flee from the stage, when I caught a

glimpse of the face of Fuzzy, maliciously triumphant, at the wing.

It recalled my powers instantly. The stage-fright left me as suddenly as it had come. Through the part I rattled vivaciously, my spirits rose with every scene, never was I more mercurial; and every fresh round of applause gave me new spirit. The curtain dropped on the epilogue amid a deafening shout of the audience, and I was called before the curtain (a rare compliment in the town) with the utmost enthusiasm. I was announced to re-appear in the same character on the Wednesday following, to the apparent delight of the house; and the performers crowded around me on the stage to offer their congratulations on my success.

"Hit's the greatest 'it, sir," said Billy Nuts, "has 'as been made 'ere, by hall hodd's. You're no hamachure; you're a hactor."

And Billy, in the exuberance of his delight, qualified his assertion by an expletive more earnest than pious, and quite unnecessary to repeat.

CHAPTER XII.

Wherein Selgrove quite undoes the work of Coppleton, until we set two Richards in the field.

Our season at Coppleton was a great success. I became the fashion, and it was considered high *ton* among the glove-makers to witness the performance of Mr. Neville, "an artist," as the *Coppleton Journal* observed, "without a peer in his line of business." This should have been true, as Haresfoot was an undoubted judge of acting, and as he wrote the puff and paid for its insertion, it was naturally to be presumed that such was his unbiased

opinion. But the plain truth was merely that I was no actor at all, and owed my success to a fine figure, a rather handsome face, a strong verbal memory, and a full flow of animal spirits. So long as I pleased the public, the manager did not care to enlighten me as to my deficiencies; and because I pleased the public, my fellow-actors did not dare to; and so I believed myself to be a capital performer. I know better now; but fortunately I did not know then; and the occasional sharp criticism of the judicious few fell from my self-love as harmlessly as the rain-drops from the back of a water-bird. I did not forgive these candid critics, nevertheless, for I believed, as a matter of course, that each had an especial spite at me, and looked at my performance with the eyes of envy and hatred.

I became intimate with none of the company except Finch and his daughter, both of whom interested me very much—wonder mingling with the interest in his case, and delight mingling with the interest in hers. Cecilia Finch was at that time about the age of seventeen, and though her features were neither classical in their outline, nor striking in their general effect, they were nevertheless beautiful from their sweetness when in repose, and their archness of expression when lit up by conversation. I have said that her features were not regular, her nose being too small and her forehead too high; but she had clear, hazel-grey eyes, large and lustrous, and a pair of lips that were delightful to look at in repose, and were highly mobile under emotion. In general her manner was extremely quiet; but on the stage she was dashing, without being bold, and

piquant without being pert. She was a deserved favorite with the public, for she had a deal of talent, capable of still further development, while she was respected by the actors in the company, and petted by the actresses. This popularity was not courted. She kept herself apart from the rest, and devoted herself to her father, to whom she was a shadow—seeming never more cheerful than when with him.

That Finch had been born, or at least bred a gentleman, I had no manner of doubt. His manner, language, and evidently liberal education, betrayed the fact. It was not very long before I became sufficiently intimate with him and his daughter to gain his confidence, and, little by little, I obtained the leading points of his history. He had been the son of a man of wealth and family, and at the age of twenty had gone off to join a company of strolling players. His father, after endeavoring to reclaim him in vain, had left his whole estate, which was not entailed, to the younger brother, and shortly after died. Finch married a member of the company to which he was attached. This completely severed him from his family connections, and his lot in life was fixed.

I should have said, however, that my intimacy in the company extended to one more. I became well acquainted with Billy Nuts, necessarily; for Billy was the ubiquitous and energetic factotum of the company, and whether he prompted the performers, painted scenery, made properties, picked out dresses, or murdered the King's English, he did it with a thoroughness quite his own. I soon grew to be a great favorite with Billy, prin-

cipally, I believe, because I admired hugely a new scene—an interior—which he painted for us at Coppleton, and which, especially when we consider the scanty materials at his command, was a really clever bit of art. Billy was full of stories, too. He had been nearly everywhere, had tried almost every line of life, and had a yarn apropos to every occasion. I used to spend a deal of time, after rehearsal, in the paint-loft, where Billy, when he had nothing else to do, would patch and re-vamp the old scenery, changing a worn-out English landscape, by the introduction of a palm-tree here and a pyramid there, with divers daubs of ochre and amber, into a passable oriental view; and by a few upright strokes, surrounded by zig-zag lines, and some harlequin patches of color, converting a plain English interior into a Moorish palace. In all this my former intercourse with Paul Bagby enabled me to give Billy a hint or two at times, which seemed to increase his respect for me amazingly.

Finch, who had a taste for the fine arts, used to climb to the paint-room occasionally, and there we three held confabulation on various matters to our hearts' content.

I had been about two months in the company, and our season at Coppleton was about to close, when I learned the cause of Finch's continued melancholy. The poor man had been doomed to death by his doctor, who informed him that he labored under a disease of the heart which might take him away at any moment. This was the spectre that haunted him night and day; that clouded his life with a darkness the most terrible, and which neither the regard of those around him, nor the

affectionate ministrations of his daughter could for a moment disperse. If it fostered melancholy, however, it begat gentleness; and Charles Finch had never had a harsh or unkind word for any one, and never appeared, under any circumstances, to lose either patience or temper.

The very day after I had obtained these facts from Finch, we were in the paint-room, as usual, and I was sketching out a scene in charcoal on a flat, for the use of Billy, when the latter said:

"That's a werry good idear, Mr. Neville; Spanish, is it not?"

"No, Billy; it is a sketch of a spot where I was bred."

"It looks Spanish. Lord bless you, we haint no scenery here can hold a candle to some in Spain. That flat the Governor's so fly on, I painted from memory, but it don't come up to the real thing. If I could draw like you now, I'd show 'em some paintin'."

"So you've been in Spain, too?"

"I was a walley, sir, to a gent as traveled in the Peninzelay—an' that minds me of an event. I've been puzzlin' my 'ead hever since you've been with us, about your face, which I know'd I'd seen afore—and now I know why. I seed a young 'oman as looked as like you as two peas—let me see—the matter of twenty odd year ago. My master, Mr. Teignham an' I was in Cadiz."

Finch started, and colored, for some unexplained reason, but resumed his self-possession in an instant. Nuts went on with his story.

"One night, he sez to me, sez he, 'William, we're goin' to the Consulate.' 'Wery vell, sir,' sez I. Ven ve got there I found he vos to be a witness to

a veddin'. I seed the marriage myself. I didn't know their names; but the young 'oman vos the von as resembled you. There; that kind o' startled look you put on brings her face back to me right away."

"What kind of looking man was the bridegroom?"

"Vell, a tall, dark-complected man; a leetle stiff, but a nob, every binch of 'im, or I'm no judge."

"Were they Spaniard's?"

"I think not. They wouldn't 'a been married at the Consulate hunless they vos Henglish."

The conversation soon changed, but I thought over it for some time. Was I always to be reminding every one of some one else, and never to know even the names of the party to whom I bore so strange a resemblance?

Other matters drove the conversation away from my mind. Our season at Coppleton closed, and we next went to Selgrove. We had no regular theatre there, merely a temporarily-fitted room, used at other times for concerts and assemblies, spacious enough, however, and likely to afford ample room for our audience. For although Selgrove was a theatrical town, the residence of a population fond of amusements, circumstances robbed us of our power to attract. A religious revival had taken place just before our advent, and the clergymen of the place preached furiously against the drama. In spite of the reputation I bore from Coppleton, in spite of the most flaming placards, and the most labored advertisements, our houses were meagre at the commencement, and fell off visibly every night, until an audience of six, all told, caused the utmost consternation to both manager and actors.

Well might we be alarmed. The time for opening at Potterburn, our next town, was not for three months, and as all of us, except Finch, were rather improvident, there was but a gloomy prospect. Haresfoot managed adroitly enough, changing the pieces every night, and trying every expedient his wits could invent; but all was in vain. The theatre had been tabooed, and the people would not come. The treasury was soon emptied of the surplus gained at Coppleton, and though half-salaries were submitted to, the houses did not afford even these. At length a council was held to determine some plan by which we might retrieve our losses, or fight our way until the time announced for opening at Potterburn.

A most forlorn and distressed set of comedians, to be sure, gathered in council upon the stage one Saturday morning. Some had been confined for a week to a single meal a day, others were in debt for their lodgings, and none knew what to attempt.

"Now, gentlemen," said Haresfoot, when we had all assembled; "the treasury is barren. Unless some one can suggest a movement likely to be profitable, we shall have to suspend our performances until the season at Potterburn opens."

"I can think of nothing but an empty belly," growled Fuzzy. "I've been living for the last week off a pair of boots, and I can get through next week on a coat; but I can't eat everything I have on my back, you know."

I was aghast at this for a moment. I had read of people who had eaten leather and cloth in shipwrecks, but such a thing was strange in civilized England in the nineteenth century.

The explanation soon flashed over my mind that the articles had been sold and the money devoted to the purchase of food, and I grew easier. Then, as no one had any plan to propose, I spoke up myself and said:

"Have you ever given an entirely new local piece on the circuit, Mr. Haresfoot?"

"No, sir, never. In the first place there is never any occurrence here to dramatise, and in the second place the London play-wrights ask too high for their pieces."

"Why," I said, "the occurrences may be invented, and as for the piece, fudge something out of six or seven forgotten plays, give the thing a local name, paint new scenery, with views of all the principal places in town, announce it with a flourish of trumpets, and the thing is done."

The suggestion was hailed rapturously by all save Billy Nuts.

"Hit's all wery fine," said that worthy, "hit's a hidea; lots o' tin in it, I dessay; but where's the money to come from to paint the scenery? I can't daub up with nothin'. Prooshin blue and chrome yaller, an' rose pink, costs money. There's ten pound o' whitin', an' a paper o' lampblack, an' a pound o' glue in the paint-loft; an' them won't do. Mebbe Mr. Neville 'll show us how to make paint, as he's so clever."

"There's a chance to get money to mount a piece," said Haresfoot, "tho' I don't like the way. You know young Phipps, the butcher. That young man is bent on making an Edmund Kean or a Judy of himself, and he offers twenty pounds to let him play Richard for one night. It will be a sorry exhibition; but the money is tempting."

Still, Richard by Phipps—ugh!"

We all laughed but Fuzzy; he was indignant.

"Richard!" exclaimed the tragedian. "Why, who's to play Richmond?"

"We expect you to do that," answered the manager.

"Me! I'm only to play second to a London star, you know."

"True, Mr. Fuzzy, but under such circumstances, and on an occasion—"

"Occasion me no occasions, Mr. Haresfoot. Second to a butcher! Never! It's a desecration of the dramatic temple—an insult to the memory of Bill Shakspeare. My love for the glorious art will not stand it. Besides, Richard falls to me as the leading man."

"We can arrange all that," replied Haresfoot. "You two can play scene for scene alternately; and then all you have to do is to play him down."

"Yes, play him down," we all chorused.

"Well, I rather like that. I'll do it," shouted Fuzzy; "but I must have the combat scene."

"Unfortunately, Phipps, to whom I have already suggested the doubling, insists on being killed by Richmond. Mr. Neville is to revenge the murder of the tyrant, Gloster, on his representative, and butcher the butcher."

"That can all be arranged," I interposed, for a mischievous idea entered my head. "I'll undertake to bring Mr. Phipps to reason. Let us consider that as all settled, and now we'll sketch the plot and incident of the piece. The first point is the title."

"It'll have to be a taking one," growled Fuzzy, "or the jailor of Selgrove will take us."

"The very thing!" exclaimed Finch. "The Jailor of Selgrove—a superb title."

"Who is to be a miser and a ruffian?" I said, "and yet neither one nor the other. Supposed to be cruel to his prisoners, he is really studious of their comforts; and supposed to be a sordid miser, he spends the money he amasses by economy in secret charities to the deserving."

Haresfoot laughed, for he recognized the prototype of my character.

"And aids a young man," said he, "who is poor and deserving, and in love with a duke's daughter, who looks down on him."

"The young man turns out to be his neevy, to whom he leaves lots o' tin," suggested Billy Nuts.

"And the jailor an eccentric nobleman, who takes the position in order to effect good," chimed in Finch.

"And the young man is charged with murder, with the evidence strong against him; but it is all cleared up in the last scene," put in one of the company.

"The murder being really committed by his rival, a gloomy baronet, who commits suicide in the last scene but one, and, by way of atonement, leaves half his fortune to the young man aforesaid, and the other half to found a lunatic asylum," added another.

"With a screaming funny man," said our low comedian, "the miser's half-starved servant, who has two comic songs, and a hornpipe in fetters."

"And a duett with the lively maid of the duke's daughter," I said.

Thus suggestions were thrown in and noted down; incidents were stolen from other plays, and held ready

to be dovetailed in. Haresfoot and Finch agreed to put the thing into proper shape; I was to make sketches of the interior of the county jail, the market place, the main street, and other spots of interest, and Billy was to paint the new scenery.

The next morning "the first appearance of a young gentleman on any stage, in the character of the Duke of Gloster," was duly announced, and the bills were all underlined with the announcement of the new piece, "a startling local drama, to be produced with entirely new scenery, costumes, properties and effects."

The bait took. Selgrove woke up. The old taste for theatricals revived. There was every prospect that in addition to a crowded house to witness the debut of Phipps we would have a perfect jam on the first night of the new piece.

As to Phipps's night, it was soon placed beyond doubt, for every available place was bespoken long before, and when the doors were open the check-taker was kept busy for over an hour without intermission, and long before the rising of the curtain a large board, with the words chalked upon it, "No more standing room," had to be placed at the door.

Matters did not go so smoothly on the stage. Phipps had expected to be furnished with the proper costume, and was quite astounded, when he waited at the wardrobe, to be shown a red regimental coat and buff breeches, as the dress assigned.

"Oh, come!" said he, "that won't do, you know. I want my ten pounds' worth."

"Ain't you goin' to git it?" inquired Billy. "What have you, or any man,

got agin that dress, I'd like to know?"

"Why, that's a soldier's coat."

"Vell, vosn't King Richard a soldier? That's the identical coat that Garrick wore. I ope you don't think you're a better actor than Garrick, Mr. Phipps."

"Yes—that's all well enough; but Richard was king."

"So be vos; in course he vos. And didn't his late majesty wear a red coat an' bluff breeches? An' vosn't he a king? In course he vos."

"But look at the dress you've given Mr. Fuzzy."

"Fuzzy perwides that hisself; and if he's goin' to make a fool of hisself, by puttin' on such crinkums, that's his business."

There was no help for it; Mr. Phipps was obliged to don the regimentals, or go on in street costume. Of two evils, he wisely chose the least. He came to me with his troubles, and I comforted him by asserting that the costume was a minor matter, and that spirited acting would replace any deficiency in that line, especially among an audience made up largely of his personal friends. The summons of the call-boy cut short our discussion, and at it we went.

I had seen a few performances before, and a great many since; but I never beheld any so peculiar as that I witnessed on that evening. Phipps was not only an untaught amateur, but he had not a particle of natural genius, and bellowed, stamped and roared after a fashion which beggared description. The alternation of scenes made it worse, by contrast; for Fuzzy was an actor, though a poor one, and did not outrage all the proprieties by his performance. As a large number

of Phipps's friends were in the house, the hisses were always drowned by a storm of applause; but the whole scene was the most laughable ever witnessed there; a hilarious tragedy. The final scene was too much, however, for the most staunch friend of the debutant.

Both performers expected to have a monopoly of the last scene, and simultaneously made their entrances. The audience stared, and when the two frantic Richards demanded each a horse, some mad-cap in the audience shouted out:

"Better take a coach and pair!"

At this the house burst into a loud guffaw; but the Richards were too bent on their business to notice it. Besides, the blood of each was up, and they were determined to play each other down. When they simultaneously told me that they hated me for my blood of Lancaster, I was well satisfied that they hated me for something else, and so vigorously did they assail me, that I had some difficulty in preserving my head from being cut open by the foil of one or the other. However, I fought vigorously, the audience cheering at the unusually prolonged combat, until my arm grew tired, and I was forced to run for it. This they did not mean to let me do; both had their blood up at the trick I had played them, and assailing me from separate sides, cut off my retreat. Finding my strength failing, I dodged between the two, and overleaping the narrow orchestra, sheltered myself amid the audience in the pit. The two Richards would have followed me to wreak their revenge, but the fiddlers drove them back, and they attacked each other. How long they would have

continued amid the cheering of the audience, it is impossible to say, but an accident changed the character of the combat. Fuzzy's foot tripped on the edge of a trap-door which had not been entirely closed, and falling forward, his head struck Phipps full in the stomach. Both fell, and their swords flying out of their hands, the curtain fell on the rival crookbacks engaged in a supine position, in a game of fisticuffs.

To prevent the house from being torn down by the excited audience, the rival Richards were forced to appear before the curtain; Richard No. 1 with his left eye in mourning, and Richard No. 2 with the blood streaming from his royal nostrils, while the Earl of Richmond looked upon his late antagonists from his sure refuge in the centre of the pit.

CHAPTER XIII.

Which, after a brilliant success, brings about a catastrophe and a warning.

The performance of Richard, which I have described in the last chapter, was not only unique in itself, but serviceable to the company, since it drew attention to the theatre, and set the good people of Selgrove a-gog in regard to the new piece. I received no gratitude, however, but a deal of ill-will, in return for my share in this desirable result. The manager declared my conduct to be highly unprofessional, as no doubt it was, and took me roundly to task for having compromised the dignity of the stage, and the reputation of the theatre. Fuzzy was sulky and morose, and laid his bruised nose at my door. The offended amateur, whose friends informed him that he had been made a butt of, threat-

ened vengeance, and endeavored to organize a cabal for the avowed purpose of hissing me from the stage. A nice piece of hot water I had dipped in, to be sure; and though I was under no alarm as to consequences, I mentally resolved to allow my love of mischief less rein in the future. Finch spoke to me very sensibly on the subject, and pointed me out that the consequences of such freaks was to raise me up enemies who might at some inopportune moment do me an evil turn. At the same time he admitted the temptation to have been great for a lover of the ludicrous.

Partly to avoid expense, and partly to impress the public with the extent of our preparations, the theatre was closed for a week previous to the production of our new play—the actors, when rehearsal was over each day, lounging in knots on the steps, or betaking themselves to such porter-houses in the neighborhood as were liberal of their credit. As for me, I divided my hours between the pursuit of my favorite study of languages at home, the yarns of Billy Nuts in the paint-loft, and the conversation of Finch and his daughter at their lodgings, which I frequently visited. In the last case Finch was the main attraction, for though I was young, and Cecilia agreeable, I was not in the least in love with the young lady, nor had I the most remote reason to suspect that she regarded me in any other light than that of a pleasant acquaintance.

The new piece was announced for Monday night. The Saturday night previous I climbed to the paint-loft to watch Nuts give the finishing touch to the great scene of the Market-place of

Selgrove. Billy was as loquacious as usual, and Finch, who was there, more melancholy than ever. After Billy had got off one of his most marvelous yarns, he turned to me and said:

"An' that minds me, Mr. Neville, that there vos a gent as inkvired wery pertickler arter you yisterday."

"Ah! who was he?"

"That's vot I don't know. He's a gent as seed me lookin' unkimmon dry, an axed me to vet my vissle. I know'd he vos a gent by his behavior as sich."

"What did he ask?"

"Vy, he said you vos a clever young hactor, an' ax'd if you 'adn't some other name besides Neville, an' vere you come from, an' vere you lodged, an' if you were steady or fond of a drop. 'Vell,' sez I, 'most young hactors takes fancy names; but vere Mr. Neville comes from I never ax'd, an' vere he lodges you'll git from the box-hoffis,' sez I, 'an' has for his steadiness, there haint a steadier or a properer-behaved young man in the per-fession,' sez I, 'though Mr. Fuzzy does think he's a leetle too fond of a lark.'"

"What kind of a looking man was the questioner, Billy?" I inquired.

"A short, stout gent; kvite the gent in his dress an' manner he vos too; kvite nobby."

Finch said to me:

"When you have been in the profession as long as I, you won't mind these sort of inquiries. Some people take an absurd interest in the history of actors, and their sayings and doings off the stage, especially if they be popular favorites. It's only a troublesome way of showing their regard."

"A very impertinent way."

"The penalty of popularity; nothing more."

I thought that probably the conjecture of Finch was correct; but the circumstance gave me some uneasiness, nevertheless. This was momentary. Finch left the paint-loft, and I followed and joined him on his way home, as I had promised to take tea with him at his lodgings.

On our way Finch said:

"I have a trust for you, if you will execute it."

"Certainly; if I can."

"I have been troubled with a difficulty of breathing for several days past, and so I consulted a doctor about it."

"And he told you that you had the phthisic, I suppose," I rejoined.

"Nothing of the sort, I am sorry to say. He sings the same tune with the rest. He says that—well, I can't remember medical jargon, but it is something about valves and auricles—and the long and short of it is that I shall not last long."

"That has been the doctors' prophecy for a long while, hasn't it?"

"Yes; and a true one it will prove. I am prepared for the worst. I have endeavored to do my duty, and the old stroller is ready to have his bones laid in earth whenever it pleases Providence to so order it. I have looked death so long in the face that he has no terrors for me. But Cecilia—"

"Have no fears for her, my friend. She has talent, determination, and good sense, and there is no one in the company who would not guard her from harm."

"True; but she is young, and I have the fears of a father. I do not wish her to remain on the stage. If any-

thing should happen to me, there is a slight favor that you can do me."

"Name it."

"Here is a letter which I have prepared. It is addressed to Adolphus Teignham, Esquire. Here is his proper address on this card. If I should be carried off suddenly, enclose it in one announcing my death, and post it as soon as possible. It is addressed to my younger brother. He is a widower, but has no children; and I think he will take charge of Cecilia, from pride of blood, if not from affection."

I took the letter and gave the promise required, though at the same time I tried to disperse the cloud of fears which hung so heavily on the old man. It was a vain attempt.

The night for the new play came, and the theatre was crowded. As a drama the piece was good for nothing, having neither unity of plot, coherence of incident, nor novelty of character; but the local scenery which illustrated it, and the telling hits which had been ruthlessly plundered from all authors, tickled the public fancy, and won a complete success. For weeks and weeks it filled the house nightly, until the close of the season, when the final performances was marked by a tragic incident.

The drama closed with the discovery of the jailer's true character, the frustration of the villain, and with all those who were good being made happy, and all those who were bad being made miserable—a most conventional ending.

Finch played the old miser, while Cecilia and myself were the lovers of the piece.

The last words of Finch, which

brought down the curtain, were :

"I owed my self-mortification to the past. I have endeavored to atone for my former follies, by a course of good to others. How I have succeeded is for the future to determine; but for to-night it is enough if our kind friends are pleased with the Jailer of Selgrove."

During the entire performance Finch had hesitated several times, and seemed to find difficulty in utterance. In the last scene he had got so far as the words "for the future," when he stopped, burst into tears, and staggered. I caught him on the instant. His features were convulsed—he repeated the words "the future," and then uttering with great difficulty, "the letter," fell back. Cecilia sprang forward shrieking, and clasped his hand. He smiled on her, and the next moment was dead.

The stage was in confusion in an instant, and the house, which divined the event, was hushed to stillness, as the curtain fell. Haresfoot went in front and announced the unexpected tragedy, when the audience quietly dispersed.

That night I posted the letter to Mr. Teignham, and in forty-eight hours Cecilia's uncle arrived. He took charge of Finch's, or rather Frederic Teignham's body, which was to be interred in the family vault at Staffordshire; at once acknowledged his niece, thanked me for my attention in a polite but cold way, and left on the following day.

The morning of Mr. Teignham's arrival, I received by mail, bearing the Puttenham post-mark, the following letter :

"Honored sir—I have learned from a conversation which I have over-

heard, the place you are at, and the name you bear, and that some harm is meant you. My lady, to whom I told it, has ordered me to write and let you know. So no more at present from yours to command."

The epistle had neither date nor signature, but I felt well assured that it came from Gifford. The inquiries, then, had been made with an object, and probably by an agent of the earl, or Osborne. After reflection, I concluded the best thing for me to do was to seek my original destination. I sought Haresfoot in order to tell him my determination, and found him not in the best of humors.

"Here is a nice piece of business, to be sure," said the manager. "They have made Miss Finch break her engagement, and here I shall have to open at Pottenbury with no chambermaid nor juvenile lady. Who's to fill her place, I wonder? There's Parker, whose place you took, wants an engagement; but he's no lady."

"I'm glad to hear you can get him," I answered, "as I will have to leave."

"What! what!" exclaimed Haresfoot, firing off a dozen winks in his dismay. "You going too?"

"I shall be obliged to. I am glad that my going won't inconvenience you."

"But I don't choose to have you leave in that way. If I suffer every one to violate engagements in that kind of way, I shall be at the mercy of the company."

I explained my reasons as well as I could without letting him know too much of my history; and as Mr. Parker was really the better actor of the two, left him mollified. My affairs

were soon arranged, and in a few hours I was in the city of London.

CHAPTER XIV.,

Which brings back little Zara, and introduces a real Duke.

The sensations of a provincial on his first entry into the metropolis, soon change. At the beginning there is an impression of vastness, of hurry, of bewilderment, and the apprehension that his dress, person and manner, are the subject of the crowd's contemptuous observation; but this is soon followed by a sense of dullness, the novelty wears off, indifference follows, and the self-assurance that the glances around have no meaning, and that he is in some measure invisible to those who have no time to spare from their own affairs by wasting a thought on him.

I found no trouble in regard to lodgings, readily engaging a scantily furnished room in an obscure and quiet street. After making the necessary arrangements about coal and candles, I went to bed early, and enjoyed a quiet sleep.

I started early in the morning to seek employment. I found printing-houses enough, but no vacancy at a case, and became rather disheartened. As I was wandering along I came to Rathbone Place, and looking up saw that I was at No. 38. I saw the sign of Winsor & Newton, the leading artists' colormen in London, and in fact in all Europe. As I knew that Paul Bagby used their tube colors in preference to all others, it occurred to me that he might deal there direct, so I went in and asked his address. One of the shopmen was kind enough to

write down the street and number for me, and to tell me the distance, and by what omnibuses I would reach nearest the spot. I set off, and in the course of a half hour was at Paul's studio.

It was situated on the first floor of a rather handsome house, in a fashionable thoroughfare. I climbed the stairs, and seeing the words, "Mr. P. Bagby, Artist," on a door, knocked. The summons not being answered, I repeated it, when the door suddenly opened. A tall man, his face nearly covered with a thick beard, grasped the door-knob with one hand, and held his palette, brushes and mahl-stick with the other.

The bearded gentleman, whom I did not at all know, inquired my business by the monosyllable, sharply uttered, "Well?"

I was about to apologize, and state whom I expected to find there, when he released the door-knob, grasped me by the hand, and dragged me into the room.

"Why, what wind blew you here, Ambrose?" he asked, as we mutually recognized each other. "You're the last one I expected to see."

"I'll tell you that," I answered, "when I am quite sure this is Mr. Paul Bagby, and not el Conde O'Samayer."

He laughed.

"All your provincial friends shave, I suppose; but London just now is visited with an overflow of beard. Esau is a man-about-town. But you shall dine with me to-day. As the dinner hour is some time off, we'll have a famous confabulation first."

He turned the key in the door.

"There, bring yourself to an anchor in that easy chair. I won't see any one until we've had our talk out, that's

flat. Tell me what brought you here, and I'll listen while I work away on the face of this fat dowager. It would be a superb portrait, only it lacks color—on the nose. If I only dared to paint her grace's proboscis in all its radiant glory, it would illuminate the place like ten wax candles. But, proceed. As my Yankee friend and patron, Archbold, would say, 'Go a-head!'

"Do you know my early history?"

"Bits of it. Found like Moses in the bulrushes, or something—wasn't it?"

"I'd better begin at the beginning, so you'll understand what follows."

"By all means. Begin at the beginning, and Cousin Sally Dilliard it as little as you can."

"What's that?"

"Oh, one of Archbold's queer stories. I'll recite it for you at another time. *Commencez, mon ami!*"

I narrated briefly the main points of my life, he commenting from time to time. When I came to my parting shot at the earl, and expressed my regret at my folly, he said:

"Don't concern yourself. He and I are no more friends, and I defy him."

"Now," said I, when I had closed, "What do you think of it all?"

"Think! why that you would have been a mine of wealth to Mrs. Radcliffe. You are no doubt the long-lost heir to the crown of China, and I expect, on your accession to the throne of your august ancestors, to be appointed court-painter, with an income of a million a minute. Seriously, I see no mode at present of fathoming the mystery. If we had that packet. As this new play of Richelieu says, 'your witness must be that same dis-

patch.' But I can possibly assist you a little. Have you a copy of those inscriptions with you?"

"I have the things themselves with me, that is, the ring and brooch."

Very absurd that; leave them here or you may lose them. Let me see—yes, copy them on that slip of paper for me. I remember 'Bugunda Jawa'—let me have the others. I know a sort of Dr. Dryasdust who knows several times more languages than you—can talk fluently in fifty tongues or more, and yet in general he hasn't words enough to throw at a dog. I'll make it my special business to see him to-night, and force him to translate. But where are you staying?"

I told him. He knew the place very well, apparently, for he curled his lip, and said:

"Miserable locality. You must have better lodgings."

"They're fully as good as prudence warrants at present."

"Oh, no, they're not. Bring your traps—they're portable enough, I fancy—here. There is a good bed in the other room, which is principally used by friends of mine—late gentlemen, benighted on this side of town. There is a chest of drawers for your clothes, a small drawer in it, with a lock and key, for your papers and trinkets. Stay with me until you get settled employment, and as long after as you like."

"You are very kind, and I thank you; but a poor printer shouldn't lodge with a fashionable artist."

"Printer! why, man, it is an art imperial; the monarch of all crafts and mysteries. If I were not an artist, I would be a printer. Then, you're the heir to the empire of China, you

know and, if your majesty will deign—but you must come. If you don't, you shan't see Zara."

"Zara!"

"Ha!" I thought I should bring you. Fetch your things to-morrow, and take possession, and you shall see the pretty Spaniard."

"Where is she? Tell me about her—and him."

"About her—very easy. About him—impossible! Zara is at a ladies' school in the suburbs—a parlor boarder. She is under the joint guardianship of another and myself. Several months after I saw Espinel in the Park—as I wrote you, you know—I met him at a *conversazione*. I found that he was very intimate with the Duke of Sillingbourne, one of my patrons. He declared that he did not recognize me, when he saw me in the Park, and I had no reason to doubt his word. We became intimate. I soon learned that he was a Spanish nobleman, and had been a monk, but had been released from his vows, for family reasons, shortly before he came to England. I cannot tell you his object here, nor who Zara really is; for that is a secret confined to two others beside himself—that is, to the Duke and me. All that I can tell you is, that she is his niece."

"Then your old conjecture proved to be right after all."

"Precisely so. Just previous to my last letter to you, Espinel went from his lodgings one day for a stroll, and never returned. We have traced him to a certain part of London, where he was met by a person, whose description tallies with that of Osborne; but your information that he was so many miles off on that day has relieved him."

"I am not so sure," I said, "but what, from my friendship to you, the object of my inquiries, carelessly made though they were, may have been suspected; and I may have been intentionally misinformed."

"That must be looked to. I thought you wrote to me from personal knowledge. But come here early in the morning, and we'll see Zara."

About ten o'clock next morning I removed my scanty luggage to Paul's apartments, and took possession of the chamber assigned to me. I had no more than locked up Sharp's letter and my trinkets in one of the drawers, before Paul called me into the studio. There I saw a tall, thin and sickly-looking, but nevertheless commanding old gentleman, who scanned with earnest but not offensive curiosity.

"Ambrose," said Paul, "I wish to present you to the Duke of Sillingbourne. This, your grace, is Mr. Fecit, of whom I spoke."

The Duke shook my hand.

"I am glad to meet you, young gentleman," said his grace. "I may as well mention that it is not merely your singular history, which Mr. Bagby has confidentially mentioned, which interests me; but the acquirements which he tells me that you possess, and your general character."

I bowed; I, a poor young printer, and a foundling, complimented by a duke. It was like a dream.

"I have had my *Œdipus* at work on your riddle," said Paul. "The words of the Countess were Malay. 'Bagan-da Jawa,' mean literally, 'The Prince of Java.' The inscriptions, the Professor says, are in the Korinchi character, though they give Malay words. The Malays, it appears, use the Ara-

bio characters, but it is supposed that they formerly used the Kōrinchi letters. The words on the ring are, 'chinchin baganda,' meaning 'the prince's ring;' and the letters on the brooch stand for 'piniti baganda,' 'the prince's pin.' After all, it does not amount to much."

"It is a step in the investigation," remarked the Duke.

"Can it be possible," I inquired "that I am Javanese?"

"Quite impossible, I should say," answered Paul. "The Javanese face belongs to a peculiarly marked race; its features are as distinctive as those of the Mongolian or African. Yours bears no resemblance to it whatever. Your face is as thoroughly European as mine. But we must visit Zara, and you had better get ready."

It was not long before I made the necessary changes in my dress, and rejoined them. As we were going down stairs, I said apart to Paul:

"Do you know that I have been thinking a deal about the old Countess noticing my ear?"

"Poh! don't let that mislead you. Your ear is slightly malformed; the back of the lobe is drawn tightly to the jaw. She has a quick eye, and was attracted by an unusual trifle. The oddity of the thing struck her—that was all."

"The Earl, you know," I suggested, "asked me if I were quite sure I was born in England."

"Merely because he didn't know what else to say."

I had great confidence in Paul's judgment, but I weighed all these little things in my mind a great deal.

We soon reached the "Home Seminary," and on sending up our names,

the principal, a formal and precise middle-aged maiden lady, joined us. With a triple air, compounded of deference to the Duke, courtesy to Paul, and graciousness to me, she engaged us in conversation while Zara was summoned from the school-room.

Presently the door opened—Zara made her appearance, hesitated at the sight of a stranger, and then advancing, laid her hands in those of the duke and Paul.

She had grown in height, but had not changed in features. Though not yet fourteen years of age, she had reached the height of woman, and had a woman's form, although lacking in roundness of outline. And she was so beautiful. I fairly drank in her wondrous beauty, as I had done between three and four years before on the high road to Puttenham.

"You don't recognize old friends, Zara," said Paul, smiling. "Have you forgotten Ambrose Fecit?"

Her eyes dilated, the blood rushed to her face—a single glance, and she sprang to me impulsively, and grasping both of my hands, carried them to her lips.

She recovered herself presently, and seeing the scandalized look of the lady principal, said, with the slightest amount of foreign accent in her speech:

"It is my good adopted brother, Madame; and my dear uncle loved him so much."

"Come, Mr. Bagby," said the Duke, "we will leave these youngsters to talk awhile. They haven't seen each other for so long, that an hour will be little enough for their conversation. Miss Myrtle, I have heard much in praise of the perfect arrangement of this institution. Will you honor me by tak-

ing my arm, and accompany us over the house and grounds?"

Miss Myrtle was only too much delighted to oblige his grace, and so Zara and myself were left together.

It was delightful to sit there and listen to the dear child, as with her dark, lustrous eyes beaming with pleasure, she told me the simple story of her life from the time we parted until then. I returned this with much of what had happened to me, and there we both chatted with full hearts—both children of mystery—both feathers blown hither and thither by the breeze, ignorant of our origin, and uncertain of the future. What a dear memory that hour is even now! We could scarcely believe our hour had passed when the Duke and Miss Myrtle, followed by Paul, returned.

"Now, Zara," said his grace, "I have made arrangements with Miss Myrtle, by which Ambrose will spend an hour with you on every Saturday afternoon; and you must continue to be a good girl as Miss Myrtle says you have been hitherto."

"She is very docile, your grace, and all her teachers and school-mates are delighted with her. I hope, the Count, her father, is well."

The Duke bowed to avoid an answer, and Zara's lip quivered. She knew, then, of her uncle's disappearance.

As we retired, Zara and I were somewhat in the rear of the others—Miss Myrtle relaxing her dignity so far in favor of a duke as to attend his grace to the door—and I bent over and kissed Zara on the forehead. She drew down my head gently, pressed her lips to my cheek, and then, frightened at her own temerity, glided blushing away.

Miss Myrtle was horrified to find that Miss Espinel had gone in without bidding her noble guardian a respectful farewell.

The Duke undertook to set us down at the studio. On our way there, he said to me:

"Mr. Fecit, you must really abandon your tr— business for the present."

"How shall I live, your grace, without a mortifying sense of dependence on others?"

"That is easily arranged, sir, without the necessity of your incurring any obligation. I have at present no secretary. It is the situation of a gentleman. We shall not disagree about the amount of salary attached. Will you accept the position?"

Young as I was I had the power of prompt decision, but the proffer was one I could not well refuse; so I answered:

"I think I understand your grace. I accept your kindness gratefully, and shall not forget the obligation."

I was soon installed as his grace's secretary. It was merely a delicate way of providing for my support. The Duke had very little correspondence, was not in public life beyond his duties as a peer of the realm, and lived retired from the busy world. His financial affairs were under his steward's supervision, and I had next to nothing to do. The greater part of my time was spent with Paul Bagby, in whose charge my papers and trinkets remained, with the exception of hours devoted to my favorite study, and the pleasant ones passed with Zara on the afternoon of each Saturday.

CHAPTER XV.

Introducing a new acquaintance and more mystery.

In despite of the privacy of life sought by the Duke, his grace had numerous visitors. While I was nominally acting as secretary, although my years and station gave me no intimacy with these, yet the contact with so many of high rank and position was likely to be useful. Paul pointed out to me the chance that this speaking acquaintanceship with distinguished personages might turn to account at some time. I did not build on that, but I felt that the casual conversations I held with these men, all of them well-bred, and the insensible example of their manner, served to give me greater personal confidence, and ease of demeanor. My intimacies ran in another way. Among Paul's many acquaintances I found some who, without being entirely congenial, attracted me. These were artists and literary men half way up the ladder of reputation—men who had undergone a deal of privation on the road to distinction, and who had a certain gay and almost reckless manner which amused me exceedingly. Now and then some of them seemed to remember that they had a body to care for in this world, and even a soul to care for in the world to come; but the majority lived for to-day solely, taking good and ill-fortune with philosophical indifference. Paul, at first, was rather uneasy at my taking so kindly to these roistering fellows; but he possibly reflected that I had no inclination to semi-vagabondism, that I drank but sparingly, and had the habits of quiet life, for he soon ceased to trouble me with advice about my companionship.

One afternoon I had been dawdling

about the studios of several artists, and wound up by a visit to Paul's apartments. The first thing that I noticed there was a sketch in oil, which I knew was not in Paul's style. It represented a scene in an eastern court, showing the audience given by the ruler. So far there was nothing striking about the composition. But what was surprising was the fact that the face and costume of the vizier beside the throne was unmistakably that of the Baganda Jawa, having even the very pose of the figure in the portrait at Landy's Castle.

"Wonder away, old fellow!" said Paul, as he caught my eye, "you can't possibly wonder more than I do."

"But where did you get it, and what does it mean?"

"I'll tell you where I got it. I received a note yesterday from a German artist, named Diemer. I never heard of the man before. He said that he was a stranger here, and in distress; that he knew me by reputation, and thought if I would call that I could render him a service with little inconvenience to myself. Well, I went. He has miserable lodgings enough in a house over in Milton street, up three pair back. I found him in bed. He said that he was subject to sudden attacks of paralysis of the lower limbs, accompanied by neuralgia in the face. He had been taken off his pins the week before, but expected the disease would pass off in a day or so. He had come to England from Dusseldorf, hoping to find sale for his pictures, of which he had two completed, together with the studies for several more. The pictures were not much—a little clever, perhaps—both bearing the Dusseldorf stamp, and both in entirely

different styles of treatment. This sketch struck me more than the pictures. He says it is a mere fancy picture, but I don't believe it. I borrowed it to show you. I tried to pump him, but failed. And now you've had the whole story."

"I should like to see him."

"So you shall. I am going to return the sketch, and you can accompany me. You must wait awhile, however, as he prefers to receive visitors at night it seems."

At night-fall we started. The German was found in a chair, into which he told us he had been helped, and was seated before an easel, on which was an unfinished picture, with the paint dry, as though no one had worked on it recently.

I did not notice that particularly then, but I recalled the fact afterward. The artist himself made a rather queer picture. His face and jaws were muffled up in cloths, to sustain the anodyne applications, as he told us, that were necessary in his case. From these his hair escaped in one or two places, but all the features of his face that were visible were his eyes, his beard and heavy moustache, and a huge, red nose. The face, or what little we could see of it, was strange; but the eyes seemed wondrous familiar, though I could not tell where I had seen them before.

I addressed the man in German, but he spoke a kind of patois, very difficult to make out. His English I could understand better, so we used that. Our conversation turned upon the strange similarity between the face of the vizier in the sketch and mine. He told me so often that this similarity

was entirely accidental, that I felt quite sure it was not. I offered to buy the sketch, but he replied that it was a study—the base of a picture in which other figures would be introduced to complete the story. Hence it was not for sale.

I asked him the locality intended.

He hesitated, looked at the sketch, which we had brought back with us, and said, "Persia."

"You'll have to alter the costume, then," I remarked. "The dresses are Javanese."

"Do you think so?" he inquired.

"I am sure of it," I said; "you will find them in the quarto book of plates appended to Sir Stamford Raffles's book on Java."

He made no answer to this, and after a little more conversation we left. As we were going he specially invited me to come speedily again, which I promised to do.

"How did you learn about the costume?" asked Paul, as we were going homeward.

"By inspection. The book I cited is in the Duke's library."

"What do you think of my German?"

"I don't know what to think, but I intend to visit him. Perhaps he may drop something at some time or other."

"Do you know, Ambrose," resumed Paul, after we had walked some distance further in silence, "I think I have seen this Herr Diemer somewhere before."

"I have seen his eyes," I rejoined, "though I can't tell where. I intend to find out."

And so I did, but not in a hurry, nor in the way I expected. I could learn

nothing at my various visits, for I called on him frequently during evenings, but I patiently waited. I noticed one thing more, namely, that though the palsy went off, the neuralgia remained, for the head of Herr Diemer was kept muffled, and some kind of tincture freely applied.

One evening when I called I found him in bed. He told me that he had just experienced another attack of palsy in the legs, and asked me to remain awhile. I had gotten to be quite familiar with him, but on that night I found him even more communicative than usual. I drew him on, and at length brought up the subject of the sketch.

"I can tell you now," said he, "where I must have caught the face so like yours. There, hand me down the bottle of Rhine wine from yonder cupboard, and a couple of glasses. Do you ever drink Rhenish?"

"Rarely," I answered.

"It is good for the health. Try it."

I sipped it, and told him that it had a peculiar flavor which I did not like.

"It will change when you drink the first glass," he said.

I drank a glass as he desired, but it seemed to me as though the taste grew stronger at every mouthful. He went on, meanwhile, to tell me how he had been in England some years before, and while in the southwestern part had visited the various show-places, among the rest, Landys Castle. The narrative, though tedious, and full of digressions, was interesting, because I was trying to detect where the falsehood lay; but I felt all the while a drowsiness stealing over me.

"The wine has affected you," he said.

"It is headier than it seems, but it will pass away."

It did not, however. I grew drowsier every moment.

"I can remedy that," said he. "Pray hand me that bottle and sponge from the table. It contains ammonia and other things that I use to clear the head in such cases."

He poured out a liquid, with a peculiar, penetrating odor, on the sponge, and loosely folded it in a napkin.

"There," said he, "let me hold that to your nostrils. Draw it in strong a few times."

I obeyed him, for I was desirous of getting to the end of his story. I felt my head soothed, but not cleared. I grew more drowsy, and made an ineffectual attempt to remove the sponge. He held it firmly, and I struggled slightly. As I did so the cover and false nose fell from his face. I recognized Osborne, and at the same moment lost both sense and motion.

CHAPTER XVI.

Which tells of close confinement, a mysterious gnawing, and how we all scampered.

My return to consciousness showed me that I was lying in bed. There was a dull light around me, which came apparently from a round hole at a short distance. I felt for the edges of the bed. One was clear, the other was bordered by a cold wall. I arose, and stepped on the floor. As soon as I could determine the point, I found that I was in a narrow room, and that the hole was in the door, immovable, and apparently fastened from the outside. I shouted aloud, but received no answer. At length, I heard a number of cries, confused and smothered,

with a dull echo, as though they came from a number of apartments opening on a common corridor.

I thought it must be all a dream; but a second thought showed that it was real, for in a dream we never doubt whether we are dreaming or not. Where, then, could I be?

By the dim light I saw the apartment was narrow, high, and arched. The narrow bed on which I had lain was a hard mattress, resting upon a frame, or lattice-work of strips of iron, and let into the wall at the head and foot. There was no other furniture in the place, not even a chair. Back of the bed was a door which would not open. I tugged at it, when it slid, and showed a private closet about two feet square. Though there was no trace of fire-place, furnace, nor flue, the temperature of the apartment was mild.

Could it be the cell of a prison? I thought not. There was a grated window high up and beyond my reach, over my bed; but the grating was not made prison-fashion, being merely a piece of ornamental iron-work.

I tried again to call the attention of some one, but received no response. I put my hand to my head in thought, and to my surprise and dismay, discovered that my head had been shaved close. In an instant the truth flashed over me.

I was in a lunatic asylum.

I shuddered, and felt a sickening sensation crawl over me. All the stories I had read concerning unhappy victims who had been buried in these horrible bastiles, recurred to my memory. I staggered to the bed, yielding to a nervous prostration, and cried like a child—no, not like a child; but with

the noiseless, burning, bleeding, agonizing tears of a man.

Those tears relieved me. My mind grew clearer, and I sat myself down to deliberately shape some plan of action. I could see no way visible, nor even conjecture any. I drew the counterpane over me, and lay there. Singularly enough, it was not long before I fell fast asleep.

It must have been near day when I awoke. It was several minutes before I could realize that I was shut up in a cell, a helpless prisoner. The glimmering light still came through a hole in the door, showing that there must be a light burning all night in the corridor, and I looked at it as a sort of comfort.

Close by the head of my bed there was a rat gnawing in the wall. It seemed a singular taste of his, too. I could hear his teeth working away at the mortar between the bricks. If I could only pick so! But I had nothing—not even a rusty nail. Ha! my pocket knife!

I felt around. Clothing was on the bed, but not mine. It felt as though made of some coarse cloth. They had stripped me while I was insensible, and left me these instead. I laughed convulsively at my own folly. Why, of course they would leave their prisoner no tool, no weapon—they were too wise for that. Still the gnawing went on. How I envied the rat his sharp teeth!

Day came at length, the light in the corridor was extinguished, and the sunlight, crawling in through the grating in the upper part of the cell, met and wrestled with the colder rays that crept in at the little hole in the door. I could see the cell very clearly then.

It was about six feet by eight; the walls were naked, plastered rough-cast in mortar, and washed with lime. I examined the closet to see if I could communicate with my fellow-prisoners by that way, but the iron drain-pipe ran outwards and downwards, and was set firmly in cement.

The rat stopped his gnawing with the approach of light.

About an hour after day-break, the light before the round hole was darkened, a key turned in a lock, a square portion of the door below the hole was let down, forming a kind of shelf, and a tin can, with a square ingot of bread was placed upon it. A face appeared at the aperture, the features stolid, coarse, and by no means well-favored.

"Breakfuss!" growled the newcomer.

"Pray," said I, "why am I here, and what place is this?"

"You're a new man, an' doesn't know the rules," was the reply. "No talkin' of payshins to attendins, nor wisy warsy, which I doesn't mean to explain to you no more. I'm a goin' of my rouns. If the tin's here empty when I comes back, I takes it away. If the wittals is here, why I takes them away. Them's the rules."

The face disappeared.

I reflected a moment. Now, I had not much appetite under the circumstances, yet it would be rank folly to starve myself; I might want all my strength. I tried the bread—it was not unpalatable. The tea was liberally qualified with sugar and milk—it was of a fair quality. I ate the one, and drank the other—a meagre breakfast, quality considered, but sufficient in quantity. I laid the tin cup on the shelf, and looked through the aperture.

The hall was about six feet wide. As far as I could see, there appeared to be no rooms on the opposite side, and there were certainly no doors there. I put my head through the aperture—the man was returning, and I withdrew it.

He came up to take the can.

"See here," said he, "keep your head inside, or I'll punch it. It's agin rules."

"To punch my head?" I inquired.

The man grinned, and closed the aperture. As he locked it, I heard him mutter to himself:

"Rum young chap that; werry."

I put on the clothes which lay on the bed—a loose, grey jacket, with strings instead of buttons, and loose, wide trousers—and then sat down. I reflected carefully on the whole affair, and at length came to the conclusion that the best thing to do was to remain quiet, and let events take their course. In fact nothing else could well be done; but men under such circumstances are not always rational in act. I took the common sense view of the case, and acted accordingly. Had I screamed, yelled or raved, it wouldn't have been an unusual thing to have done; but I mastered all impulses of that kind. My first attempt would be to gain a gradual intimacy with my grim jailor. I did not hope much to soften him. He would scarcely have been placed there if made of penetrable stuff; but I hoped to throw him off his guard, and by that means pick up something as to the place of my detention, and the object of my imprisonment.

I was not without conviction as to who was the author of my confinement. That was easy enough. Mr. Osborne was, of course, the Earl's

agent, and as he had been concerned in putting away Espinel, who might, indeed, be there under the same roof with me, the cause of our imprisonment was similar.

Espinel was evidently the master of some secret highly dangerous to the Earl of Landys, and his lordship thought me to be privy to it. I assumed that his mistake would be discovered, and that my release would come at some time, and all I could do meanwhile was to wait.

At noon the same face made its appearance; a pan of soup was put on the shelf, and a horn spoon and large slice of bread placed alongside of it. It was not part of the system to starve me, at all events, for the soup was good, and there was enough of it.

I kept up my plan of amusing my keeper, and as he was taking away the pan and spoon I said to him, in a mock dramatic style, "remove the banquet." He grinned again, but said nothing.

Supper was similar to breakfast; but a tin full of water was added, which I retained, understanding it to be for drink during the night, and the remainder for ablution in the morning.

I lay down to sleep that night with a terrible sense of loneliness and weariness. About midnight I awakened, and felt no more disposition to sleep. The rat had resumed his work at my bed-head. I lay and listened to him, or got up and paced the narrow limits of my cell, and thus the dreary night passed away.

The solitude and want of occupation threatened to make me really mad. So on the third day I asked the attendant, as he brought my dinner, if I could have a book.

"Talkin' to attendins is agin the rules," he answered.

"Oh, very well," said I. "All right; but if anybody calls, send up their cards."

He grinned as usual, and left.

So then I was to be buried alive there; no companionship, no books, no relief. I sat on the bed-side and thought of my early days; of honest old John Guttenberg and his wife, of Mary, of my schoolmates, of the heaths and fields on the outskirts of Puttenham, and of my meeting with Espinel and Zara. Zara! at the thought of her, and the pleasant life I had led for a short while before, my tears flowed again. Those tears seemed to save me from frenzy.

There were two spiders, rivals in trade, who had established fly-traps far up in the cell, in opposite corners. I watched them curiously, and speculated as to what kept them awake at that season, and alive at any time, for the place was too gloomy for flies. Then I got in the habit of dozing by day, and lying awake at night, waiting for the rat to begin. There was companionship in him. About midnight he would commence work, and keep on indefatigably until day-break. He was an industrious rodent. I tried to make a calculation how long it would be, admitting that he wore off the thousandth part of an inch from his teeth every night, before he would get them even with his jaw, and so perish miserably. Then I should lose the companionship of his labor, and have neither company nor amusement. I grew very anxious to see that rat.

About six weeks had passed away in the same monotonous round. Once a week, however, my attendant thrust

a brush and narrow dust-pan through the square aperture, just after breakfast, with the words :

"Sweep your room!"

That was a great luxury. I used to protract the operation as much as possible. The day after the sweeping, the coarse bed linen was changed. I made my bed, as the door never opened.

About six weeks had passed, as I said, when I thought I had secured a sufficient amount of my jailor's good will by my forced fun, to get him to listen to me. So when he came that day to remove my dinner dish, I whispered :

"The Duke of Sellingbourne would give a hundred pounds to find where I am."

The man chuckled, and before he closed the aperture, put his thumb to his nose, and waved his fingers in a derisive motion, classic through age, but not picturesque. I thought the bait might still be swallowed; but when one, two, three, four weeks had gone, and he did not in any way allude to the offer, I began to despair.

At length, one night it struck me that my rat had nearly gnawed his way through, the sound of his teeth growing plainer and plainer. I listened, and heard small pieces of the plaster falling to the floor. I leaned over the bed and tried to peer underneath, but the light from the corridor was too dim. Suddenly the truth flashed upon me. Some one from the next cell was breaking into mine.

I was startled. This might be a real maniac, desperate and dangerous. Should I cry out? It might be a fellow-prisoner trying to escape. And yet what folly, merely to get from one

dungeon into the next. I determined to wait and watch.

The loosened bricks were cautiously removed. Some one was coming through. I bent over and grasped the intruder by the shoulder, saying :

"Who are you? What do you want?"

The only reply was a despairing groan. I spoke again.

"Tell me who you are. I am immured in this cell. Are you a prisoner too?"

A hoarse whisper answered me :

"Yes. Santa Maria! is there another cell yet?"

"Come through," I whispered, for I thought I recognized the voice.

The man crawled in, and we were presently standing together on the floor of the cell.

"Who are you?" he whispered.

"Ambrose Fecit."

"Cosa rara! Caspita! I am Espinel."

We hurriedly consulted together. He had been under the hope that the one left was the last cell on the range, and had worked through his own and the others succeeding, which happened to be vacant, by means of a strip of iron which he had detached from his bedstead. He had been at work for over four months; but a part of the time his labor had been interrupted by the tenancy of an intermediate apartment. He thought, if mine were the last cell, we could get through in four to six weeks more.

"But why," I inquired, "did you not try the outer wall, the back part of the cell?"

"Because I know the plan of the building. It is an oblong quadrangle,

the cells backing on a garden well-hole, from which there would be no escape. There is a corridor completely around, and we can get into it at the end without attracting observation. Then we must fight, if necessary."

I was too impatient to wait for this slow burrowing, and struck on a bolder plan.

"Do they ever open the cell doors?" I asked.

"I think not," he answered, "unless you are sick. I was unwell the week after I came here, and the doctor, the keeper of the place, I think, came and prescribed for me. That was the only time my cell has been opened."

"We might seize him, and force our way."

"No! he is always armed, and they are continually on the watch."

"Armed! so much the better. With his arms we can fight our way out."

"But how to take them."

"I will be sick to-morrow. Watch, and when the attendant goes to bring the doctor, arrange your bed clothes so that a passing glance would make any one think you were lying there, remove the bricks and come to me at once."

"And then?"

"And then I will show you on the instant what to do. Now go, and replace the bricks carefully."

He left, and I quietly went to bed, where I lay awake, quietly maturing my plan, and leaving it to be modified by circumstances. I fell asleep at length, but woke at day-light.

I did not go to the grate when the attendant came, but lay under the covers with my clothes on, tossing and moaning as though in great pain.

"Sick?" inquired he.

I muttered that I was dying—a doctor.

He removed the victuals, and I heard him hurry off. In a couple of minutes Espinel was in my cell. It was the first time that I had seen him since our imprisonment by day-light, and a very bearded savage he was, to be sure.

The door of the cell was not in the centre, but a little to the right. I placed Espinel on the side next its hinges, close against the wall, and crouched down. Presently, some one came to the door, and I resumed my tossing and moaning. I heard the attendant say :

"Shall I wait, sir?"

The face of the doctor placed itself at the hole.

"No," said a strange voice, "I shan't want you, Bill. If I do I'll call. Go on with your rounds."

As he opened the door I rolled in a fresh paroxysm of simulated agony, so as to draw his gaze on me. He came forward to the bed, and said, sharply :

"Now, then, Number Twenty-eight, what appears to be the matter with you?"

The answer was given in a startling way. Espinel leaped upon him like a tiger, and clasped his throat so tightly that not only could he not cry out, but was in imminent danger of strangulation. His face began to blacken, his tongue protruded, his eyes seemed bursting from their sockets, and his arms made convulsive efforts to free himself from that fearful grasp. I passed my hands over his person. There were a pair of small pistols in his skirt-pockets, and a short club, like a constable's mace, in his bosom. As I secured these, he fainted. We saw that he was not dead. Espinel re-

leased his throat. We gagged him with a rude contrivance made of the piece of broken iron brought by Espinel, and his own cravat; and hastily tying his hands and feet with strips torn from the sheets, we threw him on the bed, and covered him with the counterpane. I then went to the door and peered out. The attendant was delivering food at the cell doors. I imitated the doctor's peremptory tone as near as I could, and called out:

"Bill."

He came at the summons. As he neared us I handed a pistol and the club to Espinel, and with the other pistol cocked stood waiting. As Bill came, I sprang out, and my left hand was on his collar, and my right had the remaining pistol at his head in an instant.

He was too much petrified by terror, which intensified at the sight of Espinel, to make any attempt at escape.

"Silence!" I said sternly, "if you value your life. You know what this pistol holds; it is cocked, and my finger on the trigger. A cry, a motion more than I bid you to make, and I spatter the floor with your brains. We will not be retaken alive. You must lead us out by the shortest and safest way. Attempt to betray us, and I kill you on the spot. Now, lead us out."

"I hadn't the keys of the private doors, sir; the doctor has 'em," he replied, trembling.

"Espinel, get them."

The Spaniard re-entered the cell to rifle the doctor's pockets, and soon re-entered with the keys.

"Now," said I, "quickly and silently."

With one hand on the collar of his

coat, and the other grasping the pistol, I followed him down stairs to a private entrance, with a double door. Espinel opened these, and by my direction, closed and locked them after him. It was well to take this precaution, for no sooner had we done so than a thundering upon them from the inside showed we were pursued. We emerged on a back street, and led our man to a corner where we dismissed him. He needed no advice to hurry off. We were now in a crowded thoroughfare, where our strange, wild figures, no less than our dress, drew a mob around us. Fortunately a policeman was near, and came up. We surrendered ourselves to his custody, and desired to be transferred to Bow street. It was not long before we were safe under the guardianship of the magistrates.

Our story was soon told. Policemen were at once sent to the asylum, and messengers despatched to seek the Duke, the Spanish minister, and Paul Bagby. The former came back to report that the doctor had escaped, but that the attendants were in custody. No direct charge was made against them—they were mere hirelings—but they were held to testify. The messengers from our friends returned, followed by Paul Bagby, and an attache of the Spanish legation. These identified us at once. Our parole was taken to send sureties for our appearance against the doctor, if he were apprehended; a coach was procured; and we were driven, amid the parting cheers of the crowd, to the Duke's house.

The further particulars of the interesting personages referred to in the preceeding chapters will be found fully described in another book entitled: "COUNTESS OF LANDYS."

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