

THE LOCKET:

A ROMANCE OF NEW YORK.

BY

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INGTON," AND ONE HUNDRED OTHER POPULAR TALES.

NEW YORK:

P. F. HARRIS, PUBLISHER,

298 BROADWAY.

1855.

Dedication.

TO

GEORGE LAW,

TO WHOM THE EYES OF THE WHOLE AMERICAN PEOPLE NOW TURN

AS THEIR

SOLE PRESERVER

FROM UNIVERSAL POLITICAL CORRUPTION:

TO WHOM WE LOOK FOR SALVATION FROM

THE ACCURSED EFFECTS OF FOREIGN INFLUENCE,

This Work

IS RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED BY HIS FRIEND AND FELLOW-CITIZEN,

THE AUTHOR.

GIRARD HOUSE, PHILADELPHIA, *June*, 1855.

P R E F A C E

THIS work is the commencement of a *series* which may possibly extend through five or six successive tales, each one complete in itself, but forming a *link* in a *chain* of narration. The Author hopes and thinks that this story, founded on fact, will prove acceptable to all his old readers and friends. The interest of the plot will increase towards the *denouement*; and I humbly flatter myself that the entire Romance constitutes a literary performance of which no man need be ashamed.

G. T.

PHILADELPHIA, *June*, 1855.

ENTERED, ACCORDING TO ACT OF CONGRESS, IN THE YEAR 1855, BY

P. F. HARRIS,

IN THE CLERK'S OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT COURT OF THE UNITED STATES
FOR THE SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF NEW YORK.

THE LOCKET.

Chapter One.

SMUTTY TOM, THE CHIMNEY-SWEEP.

"SWEEP O!—sweep O!" cried little *Smutty Tom*, the chimney-sweep, as, wrapped up in his dingy blanket and bearing with him the various implements of his profession, he trudged along through the streets of New York, in search of a "job," the proceeds of which might afford him the means of procuring what he very much needed, but what he seldom enjoyed—a breakfast.

"Sweep O!—sweep O!" and the not unmusical cry rang cheerfully through the silent, empty streets—for it was early in the morning, and the bustle of the day had not yet commenced. The season was winter—the month, December—the weather, clear but intensely cold—and the sharp, frosty air echoed and re-echoed the cry of little *Smutty Tom*, the chimney-sweep, as shiveringly he wrapped his old blanket still more closely around his diminutive form and pursued his journey. Occasionally he would pause a moment or two, just to look down through the kitchen windows of some fine house, and survey with a longing gaze the glowing fire in the grate, the warm-looking and bright-colored carpet, the inviting rocking-chair with its soft cushion, and, more than all, the table spread with a snowy cloth upon which the plump servant-girl was arranging the breakfast-things, preparatory to the morning repast of the family. All these comfortable arrangements caused the little sweep to sigh deeply, so great a contrast did they present to his own cheerless, wretched condition—for he had no regular home, no friends, and no means of gaining even a scanty subsistence except by the miserable occupation which we now find him engaged in. Poor Tom! the cold ground was often his

bed, and the broad canopy of heaven his only covering; clothed in filthy rags, his face begrimed with soot, and his form reduced to almost skeleton proportions by starvation, he was indeed a pitiable object to look upon. Tom was about fourteen years of age, although he was no larger than most boys of ten. At the first glance, he would have been taken for a little negro, so black was his face in consequence of habitual neglect of his ablutions, and the accumulation of dirt, produced by ashes, soot and smoke. But a closer examination would instantly have removed the impression that he was of Ethiopian extraction, for his eyes were blue, his hair straight and soft, and his features delicate and strikingly handsome. Yet, after all, he was nothing more than a dirty little sweep—intelligent, it is true, but ignorant as a beast, and having no hopes of ever bettering his condition. For aught that *he* knew to the contrary, he had been born a chimney-sweep; and he expected to live and die one. His first recollections of himself were connected with the remembrance of an old black man with whom he had lived, and who had, when he became old enough, imparted to him the art and mystery of sweeping chimneys. The old negro died, and Tom was left alone to battle with the world, his only weapons being his brush and scraper. As a natural consequence of his forlorn and uncared-for condition, he had grown up to the age of fourteen in perfect ignorance—knowing not a single letter of the alphabet, and scarcely able to distinguish between right and wrong, except so far as the perpetration of the latter, in certain cases, involved legal punishment if discovered. It was no harm to *commit* crime, he thought; the only wrong thing about it was, *its being found out*. Thus, if he had a chance to steal, it was all right for him to do so; but, if he were so unfortunate as to get caught at his pilfering operations, then he was in the wrong; and, blaming himself most severely, he would repent of that particular offence, but that repentance would not prevent him from availing himself of the very next chance that came along. In this, his code of honesty, Smutty Tom did not so widely differ from many financiers who call themselves his betters, although they have no right to do so, for they have education which should teach them to do right, while Tom could plead ignorance as his excuse. Some of these financiers, like Tom, never repent of their sins of omission and commission until they get detected, and find themselves involved in difficulties from which it is hard to extricate themselves.

"Oh, crackey!" cried Smutty Tom, as he stood looking through the window of a kitchen belonging to a splendid house, which was evidently

the abode of aristocracy and wealth—"my eyes and breeches! Vot a jolly nice place that is, to be sure! Sich a rousing good fire for a feller to warm his shins by! And that 'ere cat, snoozing in front of it—blessed if she isn't better off nor a Christian! She sleeps on a nice, warm carpet, and has plenty to eat, while I sleeps in an old shed, and has nothing to eat but cold wittles, and precious little o'*that* either. I vish I was a cat, blowed if I don't. See that 'ere gal spreading the grub on the table! How I'd like a chunk of that bread and butter! And them silver spoons—I'd like to have a chance to steal 'em, but I shouldn't want to be *ketched* doing it, 'cause they say the *Island* is a hawful place to be sent to for six months or so. Oh, dear! I'm so cold and hungry! But I won't *beg*—no, I'm too independent for that; I'd much rather steal—that's more honorable. I'm tired of sweeping chimnies, 'cause there's so much competition that a feller can't earn a living at it; I'm always cold and hungry—besides, the nigger sweeps beat me, 'cause they say a white feller has no right to belong to their perffession. But I'll foller it in spite of them—so here goes. Sweep O!—sweep O!"

Tom was about to move off, when he saw a fat-faced man poke his head out of the front-door of the house to which the inviting-looking kitchen belonged. This house was, as we have before remarked, a handsome and aristocratic edifice. Immediately adjoining it, and affording a striking contrast, was an old wooden building that appeared to be falling into rapid decay and ruin. In olden times, it had been a fashionable house; but, in these modern days of refinement and progress, it was merely regarded as an encumbrance soon to be torn down, and, meanwhile, fit only to be occupied by those very low and vulgar people—the poor.

"Hullo!" said the fat-faced man.

"Hullo yourself, and see how you like it!" responded Smutty Tom, who imagined that the fat-faced man was going to abuse him for loitering around the house.

"None of your impudence," remarked the proprietor of the fat face, sternly—"come here; you're a sweep, ain't you?"

"Well, I ain't anything else, old hoss," replied Tom, more civilly, for he began to scent a job, and delightful visions of two shillings and a warm breakfast arose in his empty stomach, and, ascending to his brain, beamed forth out of his eager blue eyes.

Tom's happy presentiment proved to be a true one, for he of the corpulent visage said—

"Then you're the very chap I want. I've a job for you, so follow me, young mud-turtle, and be careful not to touch anything, for you'd dirty the very devil himself. You look like one of Beelzebub's imps, anyhow. Come, shuffle along, this way!"

Tom obeyed with alacrity, and followed the man up one flight of stairs and into a large room containing thousands of books, all systematically arranged upon shelves.

"My eyes!" cried Tom, in astonishment—"there's more books here than there is in all the stands around the market, put together. Oh, what fine pictures, too! And then them old codgers, made out of white stuff, up on the shelf there—who is them old buffers, any way?"

Mr. Jowls—for that was the name of the fat-faced man—was rather a good-natured fellow, considering the high, dignified and responsible position he held, which was that of a gentleman's private and confidential body-servant;—so the sweep-boy's verdancy amused him, and he replied, with affable condescension—

"Them old buffers, as you call them, are Washington, Lafayette, Napoleon, and other great men, cut out of marble by Hiram Powers, the celebrated sculptor. But don't stand chattering here—go to work and sweep this chimney, and mind you do it clean, for my young master don't wish to be annoyed by the chimney taking fire. Up with you!"

The fire-place was one of those old-fashioned concerns, which are so comfortable and so superior to new-fangled "improvements," that even modern luxury hesitates to remove them, in order to give place to more stylish but less genial arrangements. It was wide and high, and had many a time and oft sent forth the ruddy glare of crackling hickory logs, while before its hearth sat the old and the young, the thoughtful and the gay, listening to the howling winter's blast without, or to the tales of former days, that fell from the lips of the gray-haired grandfather.

"There was an old and quiet man,
And by the fire sat he;
'Come, listen now, and I will tell
Things passing strange, which once befell
A ship upon the sea!'"

Smutty Tom approached the fire-place, threw off his blanket, grasped his tools, and began to ascend the chimney—a task in which he was materially assisted by certain projecting bricks which had been purposely left by the masons when building. Up, up climbed the little sweep until he arrived at the very top of the chimney, from which elevated position

he was enabled to enjoy quite an extensive prospect. The morning sun gilded with the hue of gold the spires of the church-steeple and the roofs of the houses; but the wintry air seemed sharp as the blade of a knife, causing Smutty Tom to shiver and draw in his head. He began to perform his appointed task with an alacrity inspired by the anticipation of the good warm breakfast which he expected to earn. Down, down he slowly descended, literally working his passage as he travelled, by scraping and brushing away the soot which adhered to the sides of the chimney, and which fell to the hearth, far below, in a black and dusty shower. When about half way down, he discovered something which had escaped his notice on his upward journey; and he stopped to examine, as well as the darkness of the chimney would admit of his doing so.

It was a low, narrow passage which he had discovered; and this narrow passage, just large enough for him to crawl through without much difficulty, he began to explore, being determined to find out where it would lead him. He soon came to the end of it, and found himself in *another* chimney communicating with the one he had just left. Curiosity still urged him to pursue his investigations; down the newly-discovered chimney he crept, and cautiously emerged into an apartment which, at first glance, he knew to be a bed-chamber.

Our inquisitive sweep had intruded into the humble tenement which we have described as adjoining the stately mansion whose kitchen he had so admired, and whose chimney he had engaged to clean. Making no more noise than a mouse while engaged in its depredations, the sooty young rogue began to examine the room which he had entered in so strange a manner.

It was, as we have said, a bed-chamber. Although very plainly and humbly furnished, the utmost neatness prevailed, and the elegant taste displayed in some of the arrangements proclaimed that the occupant of the room was a lady—a fact that was also announced by the female garments that were hanging about. Curtains of white muslin concealed the bed from view; by the bed-side stood a table upon which was a lady's work-box and an unlighted lamp.

The deep silence that prevailed led the intruder to suppose that the bed was empty; but, on cautiously drawing aside a corner of the curtain, he discovered, somewhat to his terror, a young lady fast asleep.

"My eyes!" thought Tom, as he retreated from the bed towards the fire-place—"ain't she a beauty, though! If I was a little older, I should fall in love with her, sure! But I must get out of this, mighty quick,

for she might wake up and catch me here, and then the devil would be to pay. But, before I go, I'll just see if there isn't anything worth carrying off. It won't do to let any chances slip, these hard times."

Taking good care to make as little noise as possible, the young reprobate began to rummage the apartment in search of plunder. His labor, however, was but poorly rewarded, as he could find nothing which he regarded as "worth carrying off," excepting one little article that he took from the work-box by the bed-side. That article was a Daguerreotype likeness of the young lady who was slumbering in the bed—and it was contained in a plain gold LOCKET.

Our thievish young adventurer hastily concealed this locket under his rags, muttering, as he did so—

"There's small pickings here, that's a fact. Howsumever, this 'ere picture which is sot 'round with gold, will do to *shove up* for something at my *uncle's*—him as keeps the *spout crib* at the sign of the *three balls*, in Chatham street. He's got a good many nephews, and is always willing to lend them money, perwiding that they give good s'curity. But I must go back into my own chimney, finish sweeping it, get my pay, and then clear the coop, or I shall starve. Oh, crackey! maybe I won't walk into the sassengers, and coffee, and hot cakes!"

As he finished delivering this muttered soliloquy, the young epicure smacked his lips over his anticipated savory breakfast; and entering the chimney, he ascended and returned to his own proper place in the chimney which he had engaged to clean. Soon he finished his task, and re-entered the library where Mr. Jowls was impatiently waiting for him.

"Well, young bull-frog," growled the man with the fat face—"you're done, eh? You've been long enough about it, and made dirt enough, in all conscience. Here I've been shivering in the cold, not daring to light a fire on the hearth for fear of suffocating you, and not daring to leave the room for fear that you might take it into your head to come down and steal something. Here's a quarter of a dollar for your job—and now take your old blanket and start your boots—leave!"

Smuttty Tom hastily wrapped his blanket around him, and prepared to depart. But oh, luckless dog that he was! not having properly secured the gold locket which he had stolen from the next house, the trinket fell from his person to the floor, and was instantly pounced upon by the vigilant Mr. Jowls.

"Hullo!" cried that gentleman, in mingled amazement and indignation, as he looked first at the locket and then at the trembling thief—"hullo!

what have we here? A golden locket, as I'm a sinner! How came this in your possession? I don't think it belongs in this house—but you've stolen it somewhere, that's certain. Down on your knees, you young rascal, and confess the whole truth, or it will be the worst for you"

"Kneel down to *you*!" cried Smuttty Tom, his terror giving place to fury, for he was a fiery youngster and entertained some strange notions of his own personal independence—"kneel to such a swell-headed old flunkey and dish-washer as *you*!—a thing that never did a decent day's work in his life, but always earned the grub of a pauper by brushing boots and clothes, opening the front door and sneaking about the house like a fat old rat in a cheese-store! I'm a chimney-sweep, but I'm independent. As for how I got that locket, I'll see you d——d first before I tell you!"

These insolent words caused the ample visage of Mr. Jowls to become purple with anger. Under the influence of the burning indignation that swelled his bosom and expanded his waistcoat, he seized upon the person of Smuttty Tom, and began to shake that young gentleman in a very violent and uncomfortable manner.

Tom, however, was not to be vanquished quite so easily. Notwithstanding his tender years and slender frame, he was somewhat of an adept in the science of wrestling. Applying his foot with a vigorous jerk to the shin of Mr. Jowls, who was very fat and heavy, down came that individual to the floor with a thundering noise and howl of anguish that resounded throughout the house, actually jarring the doors and rattling the windows in their frames.

Before Mr. Jowls had time to recover his feet, a third party entered the library and regarded the scene with a look of stern inquiry.

Chapter Two.

WALTER DE LACY.

THE new-comer was a young man of twenty-five, or thereabouts, possessing an appearance particularly distinguished and commanding. Tall and well formed, though somewhat slender—having a handsome, manly face, well set off by his luxuriant moustache and imperial, and by the black hair that hung in rich clusters over his lofty forehead—with a pair of brilliant eyes that seemed to penetrate every object upon which they chanced to rest—this young gentleman, who was the proprietor of that lordly mansion, was a person to excite admiration in whatever circle of society he happened to move. He was attired with careless elegance in a magnificent dressing-gown and embroidered slippers; and in his hand he held the morning newspaper which he had been perusing in another apartment, when the noise of the downfall of Mr. Jowls had aroused him, and attracted him to the scene of the disturbance.

"What's all this, Jowls?" sternly demanded Mr. Walter De Lacy, for that was the name of the young gentleman—"how came you to be prostrated to the floor, and who is this black little vagabond?"

Mr. Jowls, making a powerful effort, succeeded in regaining an upright position; and, as he rubbed his shin with a rueful look, he replied—

"May it please you, sir, and begging your honor's pardon for kicking up such a racket, I employed this young imp of Satan to clean the chimney, which was very much needed; and when he had finished the job, I paid him, and, just as he was going to leave, he dropped a picture in a gold locket on the floor, by accident. I naturally charged him with having stolen the locket, when he flew at me and knocked me down before I knew it. He has the strength of a giant, although he is so little—or else how could he have floored me?"

Mr. De Lacy, notwithstanding his vexation, could not help smiling as he contrasted the diminutive form of Smutty Tom with the great, burly figure of Mr. Jowls.

"Let me see the locket," said the young gentleman.

Mr. Jowls handed over the article, and his master examined it with the most earnest attention.

"Good heavens!" he muttered—"what a divinely beautiful creature the original of this must be? What a world of tenderness, intelligence and soft sensibility those bright eyes express! They are the faithful mirrors that reflect the purity and loveliness of her soul. And then her face—her form—even the tasteful arrangement of her splendid hair, and her plain but elegant and becoming dress—all are perfect. Who can she be? I do not think that I have ever seen her—and yet the sight of this, her beauteous image fills my soul with a strange, unearthly rapture—just as if I had known her for many years, and had met her after a long separation. This fair face, so gentle yet so proud—so modest yet so full of womanly courage—is one of those which I can never forget. Yet, pshaw! is it possible that I am fool enough to have fallen in love with a picture! This is worse than love at first sight, for in that case a man is fascinated by the *substance*, while here I am charmed by the mere *shadow*. The young girl from whom this picture was taken may be, after all, a wanton—— No, by heavens! I do her foulest wrong;—I'd stake my life that she is pure and sinless as an angel, for vice could not dwell in so lovely a temple. Virtue is inscribed upon her tranquil brow, and beams forth from those meek eyes of hers. This locket must have been *stolen* by the young vagabond in whose possession it was found. I'll question him, and perhaps elicit information which may enable me to trace out this adorable divinity."

Mr. De Lacy now turned to Smutty Tom, who was amusing himself, and at the same time satiating his thirst for vengeance, by "squaring off" at Mr. Jowls, and making other signs expressive of a strong desire to damage the head and maltreat the body of that very respectable and excessively fat individual.

"Sirrah!" said Mr. De Lacy, sternly addressing Smutty Tom—"if you wish to avoid being instantly carried to prison, you will tell me where you stole this locket. Confess the whole truth, and no harm shall befall you—for I am inclined to be merciful to so very young an offender."

Mr. De Lacy's dignified and stately manner—and a slight accent of kindness that marked the last sentence which he had spoken—made some impression upon the obdurate heart of Smutty Tom, who answered respectfully—

"Well, sir, I'll tell you all about how I got the locket—that is, I'll tell *you*, sir, and no one else."

"Very well," said Mr. De Lacy—"leave the room, Jowls."

Jowls left, wearing quite a crest-fallen air; and the aristocrat was left alone with the chimney-sweep.

Smutty Tom now proceeded to relate to Mr. De Lacy the exact manner in which he had become possessed of the locket. When he had finished his narration, the young gentleman seemed to reflect deeply; after a brief silence, he said aloud, although he was but communing with himself—

"Then it seems that the beautiful original of this picture lives in the next house—in that old wooden tenement which I own, and which my friends have repeatedly urged me to have pulled down, because, as they say, its presence detracts from the beauty of my own mansion; but I have spared the old building on account of its being occupied by a widow lady who has resided in it many years, and who has become so attached to it that she cannot endure the thought of being driven from it. Unlike most landlords, who care for nothing but their own interest, I pay some attention to the wishes and comforts of my tenants, and therefore the old house shall stand as long as the poor widow lives—that is, provided it does not fall down of its own accord, which it might possibly do, for it is in rather a dilapidated condition. Now that I know it to contain such a charming young girl, I would not have it disturbed for the whole world. This fair creature must be the daughter of the widow, whom I thought to be childless, although I never questioned her on the subject—seldom, indeed, seeing her at all, as my agent attends to all the business with the tenants. How strange it is that I, a devoted worshipper of pretty women, and a notorious gallant among them, should have so long lived in the very next house to a perfect angel of loveliness, without knowing it! But I must make up for lost time—I must contrive to gain access to the old house, and behold the jewel which is contained in so rough a casket. Now I remember that I have sometimes seen a youthful female figure passing in and out of the old building—but always wearing a veil which concealed her face. That must be my beautiful unknown. Now, how shall I manage to form her acquaintance? It will not do to pay her an abrupt visit, for that would alarm her modesty, and induce both her and her mother to suspect me of cherishing evil intentions. She is poor and lives in an humble sphere, while I am rich, fashionable and gay; and therefore an intimate acquaintance between us would be obviously improper and compromise her reputation, even though there should be no true cause for scandal. Yet I *must* see her, or be forever

miserable. Ah! a happy plan suggests itself to my mind—a plan which will enable me to see her without her being conscious of my presence. *That chimney*, which admitted the thief to her chamber, will also afford an entrance to the lover. Yes, for her sake I'll become a chimney-sweep. That sooty passage shall become the flower-path of Cupid. There will be romance in the adventure.—But what shall I do with this little black-amoor? I will not cause him to be arrested for the theft, for that would result in giving publicity to the whole affair, and perhaps destroy my plan by putting the young lady on her guard against chimney intruders. Besides, I promised the young rogue that no harm should befall him provided he would confess the truth and tell me where he stole the locket. This he has done, and he is therefore entitled to my merciful consideration. I think, too, that I owe him a small debt of gratitude for having been the means of my knowing of the existence of a being so surpassingly lovely as my neighbor next door. I'll question the dirty youngster, and see what I can do for him."

Mr. D. Lacy now addressed the chimney-sweep, who, during the utterance of the foregoing soliloquy, had been engaged in taking a critical survey of a large painting representing the city of New York; and he wondered how much money was expended annually in the cleaning of so many chimneys, at the same time wishing that he was a contractor on an extensive scale in that line of business.

"My boy," said Mr. De Lacy, kindly—"attend to what I am going to say, and answer all my questions truly. Do what is right, and I will be a friend to you. What is your name?"

"Smutty Tom, sir—that's all the name I ever was called by," replied the little sweep, who was charmed by the kindness and condescension of Mr. De Lacy's manner towards him.

The gentleman smiled, and continued his interrogations:—

"Where do you live?"

"Nowheres in partic'lar; I eats whenever I gets any grub—and when I can't, I generally goes without. Sometimes I sleeps in one place, and sometimes in another—most of the time on the wharf, or under some old shed."

"You have no friends, I suppose?"

"No sir—ee!"

"Your parents are dead, I presume; do you know anything about them?"

"Never had no parents—if I had, I don't know nothing about them,

and don't want to. I was brought up by old Black Sambo, the chimney-sweep—but he's dead now."

"Brought up by a negro, eh? But you are a white boy, are you not?"

Smuttery Tom did not wish to have a "falling out" with Mr. De Lacy and therefore he stifled his indignation. Anxious, however, to convince his new friend that he was a genuine white boy and no mistake about it, he wet his thumb in his mouth and applied it to his dingy countenance, leaving a white streak that looked like a chalk-mark upon a stove-pipe.

"I am perfectly satisfied," said Mr. De Lacy, laughing heartily—"and now, Smuttery Tom, I shall cause you to be scrubbed and cleaned up, so that I may see what you look like. When you are made neat and tidy, you must drop the title of Smuttery Tom, and I will find another name for you. Now, my boy, if I catch you misbehaving yourself in any way, or trying to steal anything about the house, I'll cut your ears off, as sure as you're alive. You *can* be honest—can't you?"

"Don't know, sir—I *never* tried!"

The candor and simplicity of this reply greatly amused Mr. De Lacy, who continued:—

"Don't you know that it is very wrong to steal?"

"Yes, perwided a feller gets *ketch'd* at it, it is."

"No matter whether a fellow gets caught at it or not—it is wicked. If you are not punished in this world, you will be in the next. Where do you suppose bad boys go to, when they die?"

"Well, sir, I s'pose they goes to h—l and shovels brimstone."

"Humph! And where do the good people go?"

"If there *is* any good people in the world—and I kind o'doubt it—they goes to heaven, and has plenty to eat and nothing to do but lay off in the sun and smoke cigars!"

"Ah, well—we'll talk about your religious belief some other time. But remember, you must behave yourself in this house, or I'll cause you to be severely punished. I must now give some directions concerning you."

Mr. De Lacy rang a bell, and Mr. Jowls made his appearance.

"Jowls," said the young gentleman—"take this boy, put him in a bathing-tub, and see that he is thoroughly cleansed. Then have his measure taken, and cause him to be provided with a new and handsome suit of clothes, including an abundance of linen and every article necessary for his comfort. We'll see if we can't transform the little savage

into something like a civilized being. Feed him well, for the poor child seems to need it, being a mere skeleton. Treat him kindly—it is my request. But hark'ee, Jowls; I fear that those fingers of his are rather light and nimble; therefore keep your eye on him—you understand?"

Mr. Jowls bowed, and, accompanied by Smuttery Tom, left the room. The little sweep was, of course, in high glee at the prospect of having a new suit of clothes and being well fed; and he resolved to testify his gratitude towards Mr. De Lacy by behaving himself and learning to be honest—if he *could*.

Walter De Lacy threw himself upon a sofa; and, while gazing at the portrait of his beautiful neighbor, he abandoned himself to a delicious revery.

Chapter Three.

EDITH HARGRAVE.

LET us now pay a visit to the young lady whose portrait has created so much interest, admiration and love within the bosom of Mr. De Lacy.

Shortly after the departure of Smuttery Tom the chimney-sweep from her chamber, with the stolen locket in his possession, Edith Hargrave—for that was the name of the young lady—awoke. Little suspecting that she had been honored by a visit during her sleep, she arose and quickly dressed herself in a neat and most becoming morning costume. Having performed her ablutions and arranged her simple toilet, she proceeded to build a cheerful fire on the hearth. Then she passed into another room, where her widowed mother was sleeping.

Finding that her mother was awake, Edith greeted her with an affectionate kiss, and then assisted her to arise and dress. Mrs. Hargrave and her daughter then entered the chamber where the cheerful fire was blazing and crackling on the hearth.

"Ah! my dear child," said Mrs. Hargrave, as she seated herself in a rocking-chair and enjoyed the agreeable warmth—"how comfortable is such a nice fire on a cold morning like this, and how thankful we ought to be for the many blessings which Providence bestows upon us! It

is true that we are very poor; but then all our wants are supplied. While we have bread to eat, and a shelter to protect us from the horrid storms of winter, how many of our fellow creatures are houseless and starving! And yet, after all, our lot is a hard one, reduced as we have been from affluence to poverty. To think that we cannot even afford to keep a servant, and that you, my poor child, should be compelled to get up in the morning and build a fire with your own hands! During the lifetime of Mr. Hargrave, your father, who would have predicted that his wife and child would ever experience the evils of poverty?"

The good lady could not help repining sometimes, in this manner, in view of her altered circumstances, for she had formerly known all the luxuries of wealth and high station. After her husband's death, she had experienced a series of misfortunes which had made her comparatively poor, and forced her to live very economically. Still she had a small property remaining, which was just sufficient to keep her and her daughter above the reach of want, provided they observed the closest economy in their way of living. The widow's little property—the last remains of a large fortune—was placed in the hands of a financial gentleman with whom the deceased Mr. Hargrave used to transact business, and in whom Mrs. Hargrave had the most implicit confidence. Once every month would the widow draw from this gentleman a small sum of money, being the interest of the funds which she had placed in his hands. Thus was she enabled to pay the rent of the house she occupied, and to which she was strongly attached, it having been her residence for many years. Her daughter Edith was born in that house, and her husband had died in it. In the good old-fashioned times which were past and gone, that ancient tenement was considered quite a respectable and stylish edifice;—but, in the days of "modern improvements," (heaven save the mark!) it was looked upon with contempt, "as being behind the age."

Although Mrs. Hargrave could not help occasionally contrasting the present with the past, she was generally contented with her lot, and thankful for the comforts which she still enjoyed. She was a truly excellent and pious woman, and the chief cause of her gratitude to heaven was the fact that her daughter Edith was all that a doting mother could wish—dutiful, affectionate, and possessing the gentle disposition and holy purity of an angel.

After partaking of a frugal breakfast, the mother and daughter sat down before the fire to sew, and beguile the time by conversing together. As they never went into society, and seldom received a visit from any

one—for the "friends" who had known them in the summer of their prosperity had deserted them in the winter of their adversity—they depended entirely upon each other for the pleasures of company; and in the constant companionship between the lonely widow and her admirable daughter, there was something peculiarly interesting, beautiful and affecting.

Having, we trust, given some idea of the *characters* of these two ladies, let us avail ourselves of the present opportunity to describe their personal and external qualities.

Mrs. Hargrave was not quite forty years of age, and time had dealt very leniently with her. Not a gray hair nor a wrinkle did she display; her handsome face was still fresh and blooming, her fine eyes still retained the soft light of love and kindness, and her plump form, so voluptuous in its matronly fullness, indicated activity and robust health. In short, Mrs. Hargrave was in an excellent state of preservation, and a more charming and attractive middle-aged woman could scarcely be produced. In her younger days she had been celebrated for her beauty; and that beauty was now reflected in the face and form of her daughter.

Edith Hargrave was in her eighteenth year. It was no wonder that her portrait had produced so profound an impression upon the mind of Walter De Lacy—for she was perfection itself. We shall not enter into a detailed account of the fairness of her complexion, the brightness of her eyes, the richness of her hair, the rosy hue of her cheeks and lips, the graceful symmetry of her form—and all that sort of thing, which some writers are so fond of describing. Suffice it, then, to say that she was as splendid a specimen of the Almighty's workmanship as ever graced the earth to give poor mortals some idea of the celestial loveliness of heaven's fairest angels.

Such were the mother and daughter, whom we have introduced to the reader's notice.

Edith, while looking in her work-box for some article which she wanted, suddenly missed the little gold locket that contained her Daguerreotype likeness. Thinking that she might have mislaid it, she began to search for it, about the room; and not succeeding in finding it, she uttered an expression of surprise and vexation.

"What is the matter, my child—what are you searching for?" inquired Mrs. Hargrave, looking up from her work.

"My Daguerreotype locket," replied Edith—"what can have become of it? I am certain that I left it in my work-box, and yet I cannot

find it. It is very strange! Do you know anything respecting it, mother?

"I was looking at it last evening, and am quite positive that I put it back in your box," remarked Mrs. Hargrave. "I should be sorry to lose it, although we can easily have another taken, for the expense is not so very great. Therefore, my dear, do not suffer the loss to annoy you."

"Oh! mother," cried Edith, with some agitation of manner—"I care but little for the loss of the locket itself, but the strange and unaccountable way in which it has disappeared—that is what frightens me! Mystery is always terrible, and this circumstance, however trifling it may seem, troubles me more than I dare confess."

"Why, Edith," said Mrs. Hargrave, with a reproving smile—"how very childish you are! You are not usually so timid."

"Listen to me, my mother," said Edith, with increased agitation—"this morning, before I awoke, I had a singular dream. I thought that a small, dark figure was hovering about my bed, for some evil purpose which I could not clearly comprehend. Something now seems to tell me that this figure was not altogether the creature of a dream. Oh, mother! if robbers should get into the house, and——"

"That is scarcely possible," interrupted Mrs. Hargrave, with a look of some uneasiness—"for last night, as usual, before going to bed, I saw that all the doors and windows were properly secured. How, then, could robbers enter the house? As regards your dream, my child, let not that trouble you, for dreams are but idle vagaries of the mind, and signify nothing."

"But my locket—who could have carried *that* off? It certainly could not have gone without the aid of hands to take it," said Edith, with an air of perplexity.

"True," rejoined her mother—"but let us search the house thoroughly, and satisfy ourselves that it is gone, before we worry ourselves to death about it."

The search was accordingly made; but nothing could be found of the missing locket.

Mrs. Hargrave herself now began to feel somewhat alarmed, fearing that robbers *might* have contrived to gain an entrance into the house through some opening unknown to her.

"During the last two weeks," remarked the good lady—"we have not had a single visitor, and we have been entirely alone in the house.

Neither you nor I have taken the locket; therefore *who, in heaven's name, could have taken it?* I am puzzled—bewildered—frightened. It seems as if an unseen enemy were hovering about us, ready with its invisible dart to strike us dead."

"It is indeed terrible," murmured Edith, with a shudder. Her mother continued:—

"Admitting the supposition that robbers have entered the house and carried off your locket, there must certainly be some secret passage through which they gained access. This old house, like some ancient buildings of which I have heard and read, may contain *secret panels in the walls!* If it does not, some of the hidden mason-work may have crumbled away and left apertures sufficiently large for a human being to crawl through—for you know that the house is in a very rickety and dilapidated condition. I fear that it will be unsafe for us to reside in it much longer, even leaving the robbers entirely out of the question, for it may fall in upon and crush us. I have become much attached to the old place, and shall be sorry to leave it.—To-night, my dear child, we will sleep together in your chamber, for, being together, we shall feel greater security. We are poor, harmless, feeble women, and God will protect us and preserve us from all harm."

"Amen," said Edith, fervently—"your words tranquilize me much, dear mother. But speaking of the old house, reminds me of our young landlord, Mr. De Lacy, who lives next door, you know. I have never seen him; but *you* have, I believe. He is very handsome, is he not?"

"It is true," said Mrs. Hargrave, with a smile, "that I have seen him a few times; but then, not liking to stare at him,—and perhaps feeling a little confused in his presence,—I obtained so imperfect a view of his features that I hardly think I should know him again were I to meet him, unless his name should be announced to me. It is said, however, that he is a young man of singular personal beauty. He is reputed to be generous and noble in his disposition, although somewhat addicted to fashionable dissipation; but *that* can be pardoned in view of the many good qualities which adorn his character. Time will correct his errors. Your father, my dear child, hired this house of *his* father—and the two gentlemen, both of whom are now dead, were, I believe, intimate friends. By the way, child, our rent will be due to-morrow, and the agent of Mr. De Lacy will call for it, for you know that he is very punctual. What a strange-looking person is this agent, Mr. Snarley! I confess that I do not like his appearance at all."

"Nor I," said Edith, with an expression of disgust—"whenever I am so unfortunate as to meet him—and I can scarcely go abroad without encountering him—he always stares at me with a licentious freedom and an insulting boldness that make my blood boil with indignation."

"And the last time I handed him the rent," remarked Mrs. Hargrave, "he attempted to retain my hand, and was actually about to kiss me, when I broke away from him and motioned him to leave the house, which he did with a horrible frown of rage and disappointment."

While relating the liberty which the agent had attempted to take with her person, the handsome countenance of Mrs. Hargrave became suffused with the crimson hue of indignation and offended modesty.

"Yet," she continued, "we must not allow ourselves to be prejudiced against Mr. Snarley. Although his manners and appearance are somewhat repulsive, he must be a respectable man, or why would Mr. De Lacy employ him in a position so important and responsible? Well, he will be here to-morrow for the rent; and, as we have not enough money in the house to pay it, you will go down to Wall street this afternoon, my dear Edith, and draw from Mr. Monk a sufficient sum to liquidate the demand. How fortunate we are, in having a kind friend like Mr. Monk to take care of our little fortune—and with what scrupulous fidelity and integrity does he discharge his trust!"

Accordingly, that afternoon Edith set out on her way to Wall street, where the office of Mr. Monk was located. As she passed down Broadway, dressed with all the quiet elegance of a true-born lady as she was, the beauty of her face and the grace of her every movement attracted the notice and won the admiration of the people who thronged that fashionable avenue—for the weather, though cold, was exceedingly fine. When near the corner of Wall street, she was accosted by an elderly and well-dressed man, who almost forced her to shake hands with him, although it was evident that she viewed him with strong dislike.

"Ah, pretty one!" said the old man, in a tone of great familiarity—"whither are you hastening so fast? This nipping air has imparted a rich glow to your cheeks, and you look superbly handsome!"

"I want none of your compliments, sir," said Miss Hargrave, with dignity—"for I have no time to listen to them. Good afternoon, sir."

With these words she turned to depart, but Mr. Snarley—for he it was—laid his hand upon her arm and detained her, saying—

"Pray, sweet one, let me have the honor of escorting you, for the streets are crowded."

Edith proudly drew up her fine form to its fullest height; and, regarding Mr. Snarley with a look of such intense scorn that he seemed to dwindle up into the smallest possible compass, she said—

"When I want your company, sir, I will inform you. Meanwhile, you will oblige me by not addressing me at all when we chance to meet. You force me to be plain with you, and therefore I assure you that your presence is disagreeable to me."

Having, in this unequivocal manner, informed Mr. Snarley of the repugnance which she felt towards him, Edith went on her way, while the financial agent of Mr. De Lacy vented his spite by cuffing the ears of a poor little bare-footed newsboy who wanted to sell him a paper.

"Here's the *Evening Blower*, only one cent!" bawled the youthful disseminator of daily useless knowledge under difficulties.

"Get out?" shouted Mr. Snarley, as he slapped the boy on the side of the head—"the stuck-up jade, to treat me in that contemptuous manner! D——n her, I'll fix her, and that big-feeling mother of hers, too!"

"*Evening Blower*, sir," persisted the boy, who was not to be easily disconcerted—"got the full particulars of——"

"The devil take you!" vociferated Mr. Snarley, dealing the urchin another blow—"will you leave me? Yes, Miss Hargrave, I'll yet have you in my power, and cause you to curse the day you saw fit to offend me!"

"Full particulars of the great flare-up in Wall street," yelled the persevering newsboy, who seemed resolved either to sell Mr. Snarley a paper or perish in the attempt—"flight of Mr. Monk, the great Wall street financier, with three hundred thousand dollars belonging to——"

"Give me a paper!" shouted Mr. Snarley, in great excitement, as he snatched a copy of the *Evening Blower*, from the hand of the newsboy, and threw down a cent in payment thereof—"Monk a defaulter—sloped with three hundred thousand dollars—the devil! I shouldn't have dreamed of such a thing; for Monk was reputed to be one of the soundest men in Wall street. I saw him this morning, and everything seemed to be all right. De Lacy had nothing in his hands—neither had I, which is devilish fortunate for us both. Ah, the cunning rogue!—but he did it well—he did it splendidly! Everybody had confidence in him—and almost everybody has been bamboozled! Good—ah! good—I like to see a grand swindle, provided that I am not included in the operation. It will be my turn, one of these days, to withdraw myself abruptly from society and bid an eternal farewell to my creditors and

to De Lacy, who has been fool enough to place such a golden prize within my reach. Ah! there's nothing like swindling on an extensive scale! He who steals thousands of dollars is merely an *honorable defaulter*; he goes abroad, and lives in royal magnificence, while his victims are reduced to poverty, and want; but the starving wretch who steals a dollar or a loaf of bread is sent to the penitentiary. Rather a queer state of affairs—but it is all right for us financiers. * * * * *

Why, what a confounded blockhead I am, to have almost forgotten one fact in connection with Monk's running away—a glorious fact—a fact worth a thousand dollars in hard cash—a fact, the recollection of which almost makes me dance upon the side walk for very joy! Monk was the holder of widow Hargrave's funds—his flight has ruined her and made her penniless—and now I shall be able to triumph over the saucy, stuck-up minx who left me in scorn a few moments ago! Ha! ha! the game is in my hands now; and the widow and the daughter shall feel my power. Yes; and perhaps both the voluptuous widow and her superb daughter may be glad to purchase my favor and friendship by the sacrifice of their charms to my embraces. To-morrow, as their rent will be due, I'll call on them, and push matters to a desirable issue. But now I must read the particulars of Monk's affair."

Meanwhile, Edith Hargrave, blissfully unconscious of the terrible shock that awaited her, had reached the office of Mr. Monk. Here she found everything in the utmost confusion—clerks running about half distracted, people indignant and clamorous, book-keepers frantically examining immense ledgers, newspaper reporters eager to procure "additional particulars," and, as the old saying is, "the very devil to pay generally." Edith, with a sad foreboding of what was to follow, asked for Mr. Monk; and the gentleman to whom she addressed the inquiry courteously informed her of the actual state of affairs. The poor girl's heart grew faint within her when she heard this disastrous intelligence; and, as she staggered out of the office and regained the street, she murmured—

"My poor mother's little fortune is swept away, and we are beggars. Who will now be our protector? What is to become of us! God of heaven, look in mercy upon us!"

Edith returned home, and communicated the mournful news to Mrs. Hargrave, who was completely prostrated by an event so unexpected and so peculiarly afflicting. We shall not attempt to describe the agony of these two unfortunate ladies, on thus finding themselves suddenly

deprived of their only means of subsistence, in the midst of a dreary winter and during a season of universal pecuniary depression. At last, however, they became calm, and ceased to shed the tears which had started unbidden from their eyes. Then did the beauty of their religious faith manifest itself in all its sublimity. Trusting in God, and believing that He would not desert them in this dark hour of their sorrow, they kneeled down together at the domestic altar; and, with their arms twined affectionately around each other, they lifted up their voices in prayer, and implored divine guidance through the gloomy valley which lay spread out before them. Oh! how touching—how holy was the spectacle then presented by that pious mother and her admirable daughter!

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Chapter Four.

THE MIDNIGHT VISIT.

It was midnight, and Walter De Lacy sat alone in his chamber, which adjoined the library. The stolen locket belonging to Edith Hargrave lay on the table before him; and he was regarding it with looks of rapturous admiration. It was evident that the image of the young lady had made an impression upon his heart not easily to be effaced.

The singularity of De Lacy's attire, upon this occasion, seemed to announce that he was about to engage in some strange adventure. He was dressed in the tight-fitting costume usually worn by gentlemen while exercising in a gymnasium. His reason for having assumed this garb will soon appear.

"Twelve o'clock," said he, looking at his watch—"it is time for me to be on the move. I must perform the part of a chimney-sweep to-night—or, at all events, I must crawl through a chimney. Love will make a man do anything, I believe. Here am I, Walter De Lacy, a man of wealth and high station, who can pick and choose out of a thousand ladies, all beautiful and rich, and all dying for me—here am

I, dressed like a circus clown, and about to creep like a thief through a dirty chimney, in order to gain access to the chamber of a young girl in humble life whom I have never even seen! Ah! but what are the painted and showy dames, who have fluttered around me like gaudy butterflies—with their hollow smiles, unmeaning compliments and silly coquetries—what are *they* in comparison with the angelic being whom I soon hope to see! But stop!—will I not be guilty of a dishonorable action in thus invading the sanctity of a young lady's private apartment? Ah, well—love will sometimes drive a man even to dishonor. I will behold her once, and then try to suppress the flame of passion that has been kindled in my heart. Heaven knows that I meditate no wrong against this young girl—but I *must* see her, for the happiness of my life is involved. This enterprise will require great caution on my part, to prevent discovery, which would be unpleasant, to say the least. Before I step from the chimney into her chamber, I must be perfectly sure that she is fast asleep. Then just one look at her, and I shall be satisfied. Ha!—a thought strikes me—I will leave *my* portrait in exchange for hers. Could anything be more truly romantic?"

De Lacy arose, and taking from his dressing-case a gold locket containing *his own* Daguerreotype likeness, he secured it about his person. Then, after having carefully put away Edith Hargrave's locket, he took up the lamp and passed out of his chamber into the adjoining library.

"Now comes some of the *drudgery of love*," thought our hero, as he placed the lamp upon the hearth and stood upright in the chimney, preparatory to ascending. We must confess, it was with considerable repugnance that he began to climb that rough, dark and dusty place; the soot which still clung to the brick-work, and which he disturbed in his progress upward, nearly choked him, while his hands and knees, and other portions of his body were much bruised by the rough surface with which he was necessarily brought in contact. Nevertheless, he persevered manfully, and soon had the satisfaction of arriving at the passage which Smutty Tom had described as leading into the chimney of the house next door.

De Lacy here paused to rest a few moments; and, while he was recovering his breath, which had been pretty well spent by his laborious exertions, he could not help smiling as he thought of the oddity of his position—stuck up in a chimney, at midnight, in the dress of a circus clown, and intending to commit burglary upon the apartment of an unsuspecting young lady!

"What would my fashionable acquaintances say," thought he—"if they were to behold me in this ridiculous situation? Ah! the *male* portion of them would envy me, did they but know of the beauteous creature whom I am going to see. But I must push forward, for I am impatient to reap the reward of my toil."

De Lacy thrust himself into the narrow passage, and began to crawl through it with much difficulty. His form was, as we have before said, rather slender, or he would have found the task utterly impossible. When about half way through, the passage became somewhat smaller, and, to his consternation, he discovered that he was stuck fast, without the power of either advancing or receding. This was truly a terrible predicament, and the young man's blood almost froze with horror, as he thought of the possibility of his dying a lingering death of suffocation and starvation. Bitterly did he curse his folly for having engaged in so insane an adventure, as he now thought it. Although the idea of being discovered in that situation was particularly hateful to him, as involving the humiliating exposure of his infatuation, still, not knowing of any other alternative, he resolved to call out for assistance, in the hope that his voice might be heard by some one and lead to his extrication. However, before calling out, he determined to make one more desperate effort to force his way through the passage. Summoning together all his energies, he exerted himself so tremendously that he succeeded in passing through; and, in his progress, a quantity of bricks and mortar became dislodged, rendering the passage so much larger that he apprehended no difficulty when he should return. He was now in the chimney belonging to the house next his own; noiselessly he descended to the hearth, and paused to listen. Hearing nothing, he stepped forth into the chamber of Edith Hargrave. The curtains of the bed were closely drawn around it;—he could not therefore tell whether it was occupied or not. A lamp was burning dimly upon the table, casting a faint and uncertain light upon the objects in the room. Peace, purity and holiness seemed to have taken up their abode there; and De Lacy almost felt that his intrusion was an act of guilty sacrilege. Upon ordinary occasions of peril, he was brave even to rashness; yet now he trembled because he feared that he might possibly be discovered by a weak, defenceless girl. Advancing to the centre of the room, he again paused and listened; then he heard the sound of gentle breathing, such as usually proceeds from a person while sleeping. With a beating heart he softly approached the bed, and partially drew aside the curtains

that concealed it. He started back when he saw that it was occupied by *two persons*, both of whom were fast asleep. Those two persons were, of course, Edith and her mother, who had concluded to sleep together for the purpose of feeling a greater degree of security.

Recovering from his surprise, and feeling satisfied that both the ladies were sleeping soundly, De Lacy again drew near, and bending over, closely examined them. He easily distinguished which was the mother, and which the daughter. The comely face of Mrs. Hargrave was serene as that of an infant, for her Christian faith and fortitude had enabled her to rise superior to her precarious worldly affairs, and no unpleasant dreams haunted her peaceful slumbers. But it was upon the countenance of the lovely Edith that the eyes of De Lacy chiefly rested. Never before had he beheld a face of such ravishing loveliness as hers; she was even far more beautiful than her portrait had led him to suppose. He gazed upon her like one entranced—her charms seemed to have cast about him a magic spell, which prevented his moving and rivetted him to the spot on which he stood. His breath came hot and thick, and his blood rushed like burning lava through his veins. Hardly could he restrain himself, in the delirium of his passion, from ravishing a kiss from those ripe and luscious lips of hers, which, slightly parted, revealed the pearly teeth within. The traces of recent tears were upon her cheeks, imparting a mournful and affecting character to her beauty. One of her white and exquisitely formed arms rested beneath her head, from which flowed the rich tresses of her dark and magnificent hair all over the snowy pillow. A slight disarrangement of the coverlid revealed a naked shoulder as white as alabaster, and exhibited just enough of her virgin bust to add fresh fuel to the flame of passion that had been kindled in his breast. As he gazed, a celestial smile rested upon her rosy lips like a sunbeam reposing upon a flower; for her pure spirit was wandering in the golden land of happy dreams, blissfully forgetful of this world and its harrowing cares.

De Lacy, almost crazed by the sight of so much voluptuous loveliness, and fearful that he might, in a moment of phrenzied passion, commit himself by some injudicious action, tore himself away from the bed-side and replaced the curtains in their former position.

"I dare not remain here any longer," muttered he, wiping away the perspiration that streamed from his hot forehead, and pressing his hand to his heart as if to check its tumultuous pulsations—"I must hasten to quit this place, for the atmosphere seems to be impregnated with

intoxicating odors that rob me of my senses, and the devil, in the form of a beautiful angel robed in white, is tempting me to perpetrate crime, which I dare not name. I must not injure that fair girl, even in thought. She is too pure, too holy, to be assailed, even by a *thought* of evil. But gracious heavens! can the imagination of poet, painter or sculptor conjure up the conception of a being more divinely beautiful than this object of my mad adoration? Impossible! She is unapproachable! She far exceeds in reality the wildest exaggerations—the most enthusiastic descriptions, contained in oriental tales of enchantment. Ah! fool that I was to imagine that *seeing her once* would satisfy me! I am like a starving man whose craving appetite has been provoked to madness by just one taste of a delicious morsel. This glimpse of my divinity, as she lies there in the unconsciousness of slumber, has increased my passionate love for her, and I must often feast my eyes upon her, or die. *Would that I could make her mine!* And why cannot I? Other fair ones have yielded to my solicitations—and *why not she?* Many women have sworn to me that my appearance, manners and conversation render me irresistible among their sex. Will not the fascinating qualities which I am reputed to possess, have the same effect upon *her* as upon others? She is an angel in beauty; but then she is merely a human being, after all, and undoubtedly has all the amorous susceptibilities common to humanity. But what am I saying!—Base wretch that I am, to cherish such foul thoughts concerning this incomparable young girl! How dare I make any comparison between *her* and the wanton creatures who have become my willing victims, and who always met my advances half way? This young girl is the only child and comfort of a poor and lonely widow, and it would be dishonorable, ungenerous and villanous in me to attempt to injure her. My better nature revolts against the idea. What shall I do to drive her image from my mind? Shall I plunge into excitement, dissipation and licentiousness, in the hope of forgetting her? No—rather let me woo her honorably, and make her my wife! I cannot live without her; and, although I am rich and she poor, I will—but stop! Let me not be too hasty in forming such a decision. This matter requires deep reflection on my part. Her affections may be already engaged; or, if not, she may not be able to love me sufficiently to accept me as her husband. My gold and personal advantages may not dazzle *her*. Something tells me that she is an exception to the general rule which governs the female sex. Pride, and vanity, and ambition, and coquetry, and heartlessness, and

duplicity, and inordinate love of pleasure—and the thousand and one other vices which are too often found in the female character—all these detestable qualities are, I am sure, strangers to *her*. Well, I will now retire, and give the whole matter my serious consideration. Shall I take just one peep at her before I go? No—I must learn to practice the virtue of self-denial; and, besides, my brain is already more than sufficiently dazzled by the contemplation of her transcendent charms. Farewell, most lovely sleeper—may we meet again ere long! May rosy dreams linger around thy pillow while thou art slumbering, and, while thou art awake, may joy make thy heart its throne! Before I go, I will leave my own portrait on the table by the side of her bed, so that her eyes may rest upon it in the morning. The exchange is a fair one, at all events; and, if she values my likeness one-half as much as I do hers, she will wear it in her bosom and never part with it.

So saying, De Lacy placed the locket containing his portrait, upon the table by the bed-side. Then, heaving a deep sigh as he took a farewell look at the curtains which concealed the object of his adoration from his view, he entered the chimney and regained his own apartment with comparatively little difficulty, in consequence of the accidental enlargement of the passage, as already described.

The enamored young gentleman retired to bed, but not to sleep. He could not banish from his mind the image of Edith Hargrave. She seemed to hover about his couch in all the witchery of her loveliness. Again and again did he press her portrait to his hot, feverish lips. His brain burned and his blood was on fire with the intense ardor of his passion; and it was only by a powerful exercise of the virtue of self-denial that he could restrain himself from returning to the chamber which contained the enchantress who had so unconsciously enslaved him.

Towards morning he fell into a light slumber; but Edith haunted him in his dreams. He awoke, feverish and unrefreshed; and, as he sat with his untasted breakfast before him, he almost wished that he had never seen that Locket, which, he feared, had been the means of destroying his happiness forever.

Chapter Five.

A LOVE SCENE ALL ON ONE SIDE.

THE golden rays of the morning sun were streaming into the chamber of Edith Hargrave when she awoke. She arose; and the first object that met her gaze was the portrait of Walter De Lacy, which that young gentleman had left on the table by the bed-side.

If Edith had been surprised and alarmed by the unaccountable disappearance of *her* locket on the previous day, how much greater was her astonishment and dismay on finding in her chamber *another* locket containing the portrait of a young gentleman who was an entire stranger to her!

"This must be witchcraft!" said her mother, as she examined the portrait—"I have surely seen this face before; but where, or when, I cannot for the life of me remember."

"I have something mysterious to relate, dear mother," said Edith, with a deep blush—"last night I dreamed that a young and handsome man, precisely resembling this picture, was bending over my pillow and regarding me with a look of the deepest admiration and love. Do not scold me, mother, nor laugh at me, nor say that I am the victim of absurd fancies; I cannot control the thoughts that pass through my mind during sleep, however much they may annoy me when I am awake. I surely dreamed that a person, of whom this picture is the exact reflection, was present in this chamber; and, instead of feeling the least alarm, I thought that his presence afforded me pleasure. But *now* I am terrified; an invisible influence seems to surround me, which I cannot resist. Oh, mother! what can be the meaning of these mysterious occurrences!"

"God only knows, my child," responded Mrs. Hargrave—"His ways are inscrutable, and what is so dark now may one day become clear. But I have no belief in supernatural agencies. I am convinced that some person has found the means of entering this house through a secret passage that is unknown to us. Who this person is, we know not;

but I do not think that he designs to injure us in any way—for he has already had the opportunity to do it, if he were so disposed. One would naturally imagine him to be a love-stricken individual, from the fact of his having taken your portrait and left another—probably his own—in exchange. How you came to *dream* about this man, is one of those profound mysteries which not even the greatest philosophers can explain. Even if our strange visiter's object be perfectly harmless, it is very disagreeable to be subjected to his intrusions; and we must try and find some means of putting a stop to them. This annoyance, in connection with the terrible pecuniary loss which we have sustained makes me truly miserable. But, as I have so often said, we must put our trust in Providence;—He will not desert the widow and the orphan in the hour of need. God is now our only friend."

"Our rent is due to-day," remarked Edith, with a sigh—"and the dishonest conduct of Mr. Monk has rendered us unable to pay it. The agent, Mr. Snarley, who so annoyed me yesterday when he met me, will be here to-day for the money. What shall we say to him?"

"We must throw ourselves upon his generosity and forbearance," replied Mrs. Hargrave—"we must entreat him to wait until something shall turn up which may enable us to pay him. We have always heretofore paid him regularly; and now, when we have explained to him our deplorable situation, he surely will not refuse to grant us a little indulgence. The man *may* possess some human feeling, notwithstanding that his looks and actions are decidedly against him. I regret that our dealings are not directly with Mr. De Lacy himself, for he is said to be the very soul of generosity, and I do not think that he would treat us harshly, or turn us out of doors. Ah! it is a great pity that landlords do not make themselves personally acquainted with the condition of their tenants, instead of entrusting all their business to agents, who in too many cases become petty tyrants, oppressing and abusing the poor people under them. Many of these wealthy landlords are good-hearted, benevolent men, but too indolent, or too busy, to look after their houses in person; and they are often blamed for acts of cruelty which are entirely the fault of their agents."

"What shall we do with this portrait?" inquired Edith, with a blush. It is nothing in the least degree derogatory to the gentle girl to say that the manly beauty of De Lacy, as faithfully depicted in the likeness, had produced a deep impression upon her mind. Whenever she gazed upon it, those magnificent eyes seemed to penetrate her very soul; that lofty

brow indicated a vast and comprehensive intellect, while the entire countenance, so frank, handsome and noble, announced the possession of every admirable quality that can adorn human nature.

Mrs. Hargrave, who could read her daughter's artless, guileless heart as readily as an open book, replied, with a smile—

"Keep it, by all means, my dear child; it will not harm either of us, I am sure. And who knows?—perhaps the original may yet prove a friend to us; but I do wish he would cease his secret visits to us, and honor us with a call in broad day-light, when we are awake and ready to receive him with all due ceremony."

Edith, unobserved by her mother, and urged by an irresistible impulse, attached a ribbon to the locket, suspended it around her neck, and concealed it in her bosom. Ah! had De Lacy been aware of the fact that his portrait was deposited in so fair a sanctuary, the mad rapture which he would have experienced might have endangered his reason. Let prudish damsels say that Edith acted improperly in thus wearing next her heart the likeness of a stranger; those excessively modest young ladies might, it is true, have rejected the *likeness*, at the same time longing to clasp the *living original* in their arms!

It was early in the afternoon when a loud, impatient knocking at the front-door announced a visiter; and the thundering summons seemed to proclaim the consciousness of authority. Edith and her mother both became somewhat agitated, for they knew too well that Mr. Snarley had called for the rent, which they had not the means of paying him.

"Oh, how I dread to meet that man!" said Edith, with a shudder.

"You shall not meet him, my dear," said her mother—"his business is more particularly with *me*, and there is no necessity for his seeing you at all. He shall not annoy you with his licentious glances. Do you remain in the chamber; I will admit him, and converse with him in the sitting-room. If I should find it necessary to call you, do not fail to come to me instantly. If the man is unprincipled, there is no telling what advantage he may strive to take of our dependent and impoverished situation."

Accordingly Edith remained in the chamber, while Mrs. Hargrave went below and admitted Mr. Snarley. As she opened the front-door and asked him to walk in, a feeling of deep humiliation came over her—for being a high-born woman, and one who had formerly enjoyed all the advantage of wealth and station, she could not, without experiencing a pardonable emotion of shame, perform a service usually allotted to

menials—that of opening a street-door to admit a visiter. And the circumstance that the visiter was a person whom she disliked, and who had come on disagreeable business, increased the unpleasantness of her feelings. Mr. Snarley saw her embarrassment, and enjoyed it. His ugly face wore a diabolical smile as he followed the lady into her little parlor, where he seated himself without ceremony.

Mr. Snarley's *character* is already sufficiently understood by the reader. Let us try to describe his outward looks. He was a tall and singularly awkward man, knock-kneed, and walking with a shambling gait. His clothes, which he had probably purchased second-hand from some Chatham-street Jew, fitted him badly, his coat being several sizes too large and his vest a great many sizes too small; the latter article was made of a whitish material, embellished with large figures which looked like Egyptian hieroglyphics. A black silk handkerchief, tied in a huge bow-knot, ornamented his neck, which a halter would have decorated more appropriately. His face, entirely destitute of beard, expressed a low cunning and the most unbounded sensuality. Eyes of a reddish color, heavy eyebrows, a large pimple on each cheek, and a profusion of coarse iron-grey hair that covered his forehead and hung down his back, increased the repulsiveness of his aspect. He wore an old, dirty-looking white hat, which, with mock politeness, he pulled off in Mrs. Hargrave's presence.

Mrs. Hargrave, who was dressed with extreme neatness and even elegance, saluted her unwelcome visiter with cold and dignified politeness, and then waited for him to begin the conversation.

The worthy agent, who seemed to be in no hurry whatever, crossed one leg over the other, and stretching himself back in his seat, he took a deliberate survey of Mrs. Hargrave's person, from head to foot. He evidently admired the handsome and voluptuous widow; and an amorous smile rested upon his monkey-like visage as he contemplated the fine outlines of her form and the decided comeliness of her face.

Mrs. Hargrave saw and understood the man's impertinent scrutiny; but, restraining her indignation, she averted her eyes from his lascivious gaze, and said, in order to terminate a silence which was becoming extremely painful to her—

"I can easily guess your errand, sir. You came to collect the rent, as usual."

"Why, yes," replied Mr. Snarley, trying to look amiable, and failing miserably in the attempt—"partly that, my dear madam, and partly

for the purpose of seeing you and your charming daughter. Where is she?"



Mr. Snarley, the Agent, calls upon Mrs. Hargrave for the Rent.

"Mr. Snarley," said the lady, with quiet dignity, and paying no attention to the agent's allusion to her daughter—"let us avoid all unnecessary words, and come to a definite understanding at once. You probably

know that all the property I owned in the world was placed in the hands of Mr. Monk; well, he has absconded, leaving me entirely destitute and penniless."

"Indeed!" cried Snarley, with well-affected surprise—"this is bad news; I did not hear of it until now."

This was, of course, *a lie*; for he knew all about it, having learned the full particulars on the preceding day. Some people love to lie, "just for the fun of the thing." They prefer using falsehood to fact, even when there is no special object to be gained by a deviation from the truth.

"I sincerely sympathize with you, my dear madam," continued the detestable old hypocrite, in a whining tone—"had I been aware of this painful fact before, I might have——"

"I thank you for your sympathy, sir," interrupted Mrs. Hargrave—"as the misfortune has disabled me from paying the rent just at present, I must crave your indulgence for a little while. I trust that my circumstances may soon undergo a change for the better; if they do not, then Heaven help me and my poor child!"

"Amen!" cried Mr. Snarley, rolling up his eyes in a manner sometimes facetiously ascribed to a duck while contemplating thunder—"both you and your sweet daughter, my dear madam, have my best wishes for your prosperity and happiness. I hope that you may soon recover from the unpleasant effects of this calamity."

"Then," said Mrs. Hargrave, as a gleam of hope illuminated her countenance, which was before so desponding—"you will not press this matter now? You will grant me time to make up the amount which I owe? Oh, thank you—thank you, a thousand times!"

"Not so fast, if you please," said Snarley, with a bluntness that was positively rude—"I merely expressed a hope that you might get over your difficulties. I didn't say anything about waiting for the money. I *can't* wait; it is impossible. The fact is, I am a soft-hearted creature—too much so for my own good; and, if I were acting for *myself*, mind you, I don't know as I should ask you for any rent at all, I am so fond of you and that pretty puss, Miss Edith. But I am merely the agent of *another party*, and must obey his orders to the very letter, or lose my place. Now, Mr. De Lacy, whose agent I am, has given me explicit directions not to wait a single day—not even a single hour—for rent, after the moment it becomes due. Oh, he is very strict—very strict in such matters! No excuse will go down with him, nor promises, either. His motto is, down with the dust, or clear out of the crib!

It really cuts me to the heart to enforce his harsh measures—to be compelled to act directly contrary to my own humane impulses. I almost shed tears the other night, when I was obliged to turn a delinquent tenant out into the street. The weather was horrid cold, but out I bundled the lot of them, consisting of a widow woman who was sick, and three or four little children. I *did* bellow like a baby the next morning," continued the lying villain, as he brushed away an imaginary tear from his eye with the cuff of his coat—"when I learned that the widow had died in the street, and that her children had been crippled for life by having their limbs frozen. I told De Lacy of the affecting circumstance, but he only shrugged his shoulders, and said that he didn't allow such trifles to disturb him in the least. Ah! if I were a rich man, I'd spend my whole fortune in alleviating the distresses of the poor."

"But," said Mrs. Hargrave, who was pretty well convinced in her own mind that Snarley was telling her a series of the most outrageous lies, "how is it that Mr. De Lacy, whom you represent to be so hard-hearted, bears the reputation of being so benevolent? His name is almost synonymous with all that is charitable, generous and noble."

"Ah! my dear madam," said Mr. Snarley, with a deep-drawn sigh and a sad shake of the head, indicating that he tolerated and forgave, while he deplored, the wickedness of mankind in general, and of Mr. De Lacy in particular—"this is a deceitful world, and in it there are many whited sepulchres, fair without but full of rottenness within. Artful hypocrites often gain a reputation for virtues which they do not possess. Mr. De Lacy—alas! that I should be compelled to say it!—is one of these. Ostentatious donations to public and private charities have built up his name as a philanthropist; but, in reality, he is avaricious, mean, stingy, and cruel. When he is solicited to contribute to any measure of popular benevolence, which will give publicity to his name, oh! *then* he is very liberal! But let a starving beggar ask him for a morsel of bread—let a poor tenant apply to him for a reduction of rent, or implore him to wait a few days for its payment, *then* he will exhibit his true character, and show the heartlessness of his disposition. He indulges in many grovelling and selfish pleasures, which are as expensive as they are disgraceful; and, in order to supply himself with the means of supporting his career of extravagance and debauchery, he grinds all the money out of his poor tenants that he possibly can. *Self* is the idol of his worship; and he will sacrifice any sum of money in order to procure for himself a single gratification; while, at the

"same time, not a single penny will he ever bestow upon suffering humanity, unless it will enhance his false reputation for philanthropy. There, my dear madam, you have the true character of Walter De Lacy, from one who has had every opportunity of knowing him. You see that it will be impossible for me to grant the indulgence you ask; I cannot wait for your rent, even for a single day."

"What, then, am I to do?" demanded poor Mrs. Hargrave, with a bewildered air; "I positively have not a dollar in the world, and there is nothing in my possession which I would be willing to sacrifice in order to raise money. It is true that I have a few articles of jewelry, which were presented to me by my poor husband, who is now in his grave; but I would suffer almost anything rather than part with those sacred mementoes of one I dearly loved. What am I to do? If I could but pay the rent which is now due, Edith and I might possibly provide for the next rent-day by doing fancy needle-work, teaching music, or something of that kind; but how, meanwhile, are we to live? I have scarcely the means of procuring another meal for us; the times are dreadfully hard, and employment is scarce. Even if we were to get work to-day, that would not enable me to pay the rent immediately, as you insist upon my doing."

"It pains me to hear you talk about *getting work*," said Snarley, as he shifted his quarters close to the side of Mrs. Hargrave, and took her hand in his with an affectation of friendly emotion, although the motives which prompted him were of the most licentious character—"these fair hands of yours, and those of your delicious daughter, should never be polluted by vile labor!"

"Honest labor is always honorable, sir," said Mrs. Hargrave, warmly, as she withdrew her hand from that of Snarley, who had begun to toy with her soft palm in a manner that was too significant of his vile thoughts to be mistaken—"but a plan has suggested itself to my mind which I intend to carry out without delay. You have represented Mr. De Lacy as being the very worst of men—vile, cruel, and destitute of one single feeling of humanity. Now, this is so entirely contrary to his reputation, that I am curious to behold with my own eyes so accomplished a hypocrite—so clever a villain, who has, notwithstanding the bad qualities and vices which you ascribe to him, succeeded in establishing and maintaining a firm belief in the public mind that he is a noble and generous man. Yes, I will boldly encounter this moral monster, who so adroitly conceals the real hideousness of his character beneath a

smooth and comely mask. I will demand an interview with him—I will explain to him my unfortunate position—and then, in the name of the friendship which existed between his father and my husband, both of whom are now dead, I will ask him to grant me time to raise the money which I owe him. He will not refuse—for something tells me that he is not so bad as you have represented him!"

Snarley did not by any means relish the idea of Mrs. Hargrave's going to Mr. De Lacy, and he determined to prevent it if possible, for he knew that such an interview, if obtained, would expose the infernal lies which he had been telling, by revealing the true nobility and generosity of De Lacy's character. Besides, Snarley, for the furtherance of his own vile purposes, desired that the widow and her daughter should look exclusively to *him*, and have nothing to do with De Lacy whatever.

"Permit me to advise you *not* to go to Mr. De Lacy," said Snarley, lowering his heavy eye-brows over his red eyes, and speaking with a fierce emphasis—"you *will not* seek such an interview, madam, if you have any regard for your own feelings as a woman. You do not know this De Lacy, as *I* do. Excuse me, madam, for my bluntness; but I am a plain man, and, particularly in a matter of this kind, will speak my mind, without regard to any foolish considerations of delicacy. You are beautiful, attractive and voluptuous; De Lacy is a libertine, looking upon woman merely as the legitimate slave of man's sensual passions. If you go to him soliciting his favor, he will instantly insult you—he will assail you with base proposals—and, like a violent ruffian as he is, he will attempt to take liberties with your person, and seek to *force* your compliance with his diabolical wishes. Yes, this satyr is capable of perpetrating any outrage which can minister to his gratification—trusting to his wealth and the poverty of his victim to save him from the legal consequences of his crime. As to the friendship which you speak of as having existed between his father and your husband, he knows nothing about *that*—and, even if he did, he would pay no regard to it. And your charming daughter—ah! you would not wish to make *her* also the object of his impure desires—you would not want to subject *her* to his persecutions. In short, madam, you would not sacrifice her virtue and your own, in order to obtain the favor of this licentious aristocrat. Avoid him, as you would a venomous serpent. Purity itself cannot encounter him without being defiled. The very atmosphere which he breathes is full of the foul odors engendered by moral corruption. You could not even enter his house without seriously injuring

your reputation as a virtuous woman.—Madam, I swear to you that you could only procure De Lacy's favor by the sale of your person, or that of your daughter!"

Mrs. Hargrave shuddered as she listened to these words, which were uttered with an energy and an apparent sincerity that almost made her believe De Lacy to be a dreadfully bad man. At all events, she abandoned the idea of going to see him, fearing that he *might* insult her by a base proposal concerning either herself or her daughter; and, rather than to endure even an *insult*, this excellent woman resolved to meet with patience and fortitude all the evils and hardships which fate might have in store for her.

"Well," said she, in a tone of resignation—"as Mr. De Lacy is so hard a man, and as you cannot wait for the rent, I suppose that I and my daughter may consider ourselves houseless."

"Why—yes—so it seems," said Snarley, hesitatingly—"that is, unless you agree—ahem! in short, madam, I have a proposition to make—a very fair and desirable offer—and, if you accept it, this business of the rent need cause you no further trouble whatever. You and your daughter can remain in the house, and your happiness will be increased to a ten-fold degree."

The last sentence of Mr. Snarley's speech was accompanied by a look which was designed to be expressive of tenderness and affection, and so did Mrs. Hargrave understand it. Naturally thinking that the man was about to make some infamous proposal, the blood rushed to her face, and she became deeply agitated. Snarley noticed her agitation; and, thinking to remove it, he hastened to say—

"Hear me, madam—my proposal is a strictly honorable one, and one which you will not blush to hear."

"Then, sir, you may go on, and I will listen to you," said the lady, recovering a portion of her usual calmness, yet still fearing that the man was about to make an offer, which, even if it were not positively insulting, might prove odious and impossible for her to accept.

Mr. Snarley deliberately got down upon his knees, "sighing like a furnace," and looking so excessively comical that Mrs. Hargrave, under different circumstances, most certainly would have found it difficult to restrain her inclination to laugh. Placing his hand upon that portion of his waistcoat beneath which he supposed his heart to be located, (the creature actually thought he had a heart!) he rolled his eyes about in unconscious imitation of an expiring frog, and held forth as follows:

"Madam, behold a wretched, forlorn widower, kneeling at your feet. I repeat it—a wretched, forlorn widower. Once I had a wife—once I was happy in the society of my Peggy—she was not beautiful, in the world's opinion, for she had red hair and squinted, but she was an angel—ah! how she could darn a stocking, or snatch the jacket off a potato, or brew whisky punch!—she died one day, and went to glory—yes, she passed away from earth to heaven like a summer cloud, having unfortunately broken her neck by falling down stairs while slightly *corned*—she had the devil's temper, and I felt resigned when she was taken away—I gave her a decent burial, regardless of expense, although I was falsely accused of having disposed of her remains to a medical practitioner, for the benefit of science, and for the sum of ten dollars—madam I want some one to fill her place, in my heart and chimney-corner—I am alone now—pardon these tears, they are unmanly, but they gush unbidden from my heart's deep fountain—without a wife, I am as miserable and as useless as one-half of a pair of snuffers, a boot without a mate, or a school-boy without his molasses-candy. Madam—my dear, adorable, sweet, bewitching Mrs. Hargrave—I have long loved you—I have long in secret pined for you—nay, fair enslaver, don't look offended nor turn away your head—our respective ages fit us for each other—I am a brisk widower, and you are a plump widow—come and be my Peggy—let the holy ties of matrimony unite us, and, while I shall be the father-in-law of your adorable daughter, we will raise up offspring of our own to bless the union that was the cause of their existence. I am pretty well off in the world—have a few dollars stowed snugly away—we will all live in this house together—you shall have just as much as you can eat of the very best of fodder, and your daughter shall pay for her board by taking in washing, or working at any other light and genteel employment which she may select. Say the word, and you are *Mrs. Snarley*. Ah! you blush—you consent—then I am happy, and thus do I ratify the bargain upon those rosy lips!"

With these words, the enamored swain sprang to his feet, and, before Mrs. Hargrave could prevent him, he caught her in his arms and attempted to ravish a kiss. But, by a violent struggle, in which Mr. Snarley received a severe scratch on his cheek that tapped a pimple and let the claret flow, the lady extricated herself from his embrace, and thus addressed him, in a tone of indignation that almost amounted to fury—

"Yes, I do blush with shame for having listened to your ridiculous

and insulting nonsense so long. My answer to your insane proposal shall comprise but a very few words. I have solemnly resolved never to marry again; and, even if I had not made such a determination, sooner than wed with *you*, I would select a partner from among the lowest dregs of this city's vagrant population—yes, I would, sooner than sacrifice myself to *you*, by the mockery of a marriage ceremony, perish of starvation in the frozen streets, with the drifting snow for my winding sheet, and the howling winds of winter to sing a requiem over my stiffened corpse!"

"Is this your final answer?" demanded Snarley, his face becoming pale with disappointment and rage.

"It is," replied Mrs. Hargrave, with emphasis—"and now, as this interview has lasted sufficiently long, you will suffer me to show you the street-door, and to wish you a good day."

"I shall show *you* the street-door, very soon, if you are not careful," muttered the discomfited Snarley; and then he added, aloud—

"But your daughter—are you willing that *she* should perish in the streets, as well as yourself?"

"My Edith is prepared to share her mother's fate, whatever that fate may be," was Mrs. Hargrave's dignified reply, as she waved her hand impatiently, for she was anxious that her detested visitor should take his departure.

"But," persisted Mr. Snarley—"do you consider it right to involve *her* in the terrible consequence of your own folly?"

"Be it right or otherwise, she never will leave me," said Mrs. Hargrave—"you weary me out of all patience, sir; *will* you go?"

"Not until I have made *another* proposal, as honorable and as advantageous as the one which you have rejected," said the indefatigable Mr. Snarley, folding his arms, compressing his lips, and looking, he imagined, as firm and as immovable as a solid rock which was not to be stirred from its foundation by any human agency—"my second proposal has reference to your daughter, and a dear, sweet, delicious girl she is—just like a ripened peach, ready to be plucked and devoured. Oh! be it *my* happiness to break her from the parent stem and eat her up—not literally, but metaphorically and matrimonially. You, madam, have seen fit to decline the honor of becoming my wife, and I respect and admire you more than ever for the candor of your objections and the delicacy of your refusal, couched in such soothing language, and so

indirectly flattering to my personal vanity. Well, I have already transferred my affections from you to your daughter. Yes, she is so fortunate as to have become the object of my love. Let me tell her so, without any delay; let me kneel at her feet, and entreat her to become my Peggy—she shall become my wife, instead of my daughter-in-law, and you, madam, shall be my mother-in-law instead of my wife. Thus, you see, the arrangement will be all in the family, and make no difference, after all. Don't tell me that it will be useless for me to see her—that she won't listen to my proposal; I know that she will not be able to resist the power of my eloquence—I am satisfied that she will consent to become Mrs. Snarley.—Ah, my dear Mrs. Hargrave, you shall be made a venerable grandmother before you know it, and, in the darning of stockings and the patching of trowsers, you will pass the evening of your days in peace and contentment, surrounded by your grand-children, who, to the number of a dozen or so, will dote upon their dear *old granny*! Not a word, my dear madam—not a word—just let me have a few minutes' private conversation with Edith, and the matter will be arranged to the satisfaction of all parties concerned."

"Well, sir," said Mrs. Hargrave, who was very angry, and who on account of the extravagance and impudence of the man's speech, began to suspect that he must be deranged—"you *shall* have a few minutes' private conversation with Edith, if that will satisfy you. She will, I know, reject your proposal with as much disgust and indignation as I did. I will send her to you directly."

Mrs. Hargrave quitted the room, and repaired to the chamber where Edith was anxiously awaiting the result of Mr. Snarley's visit.

"Well, dear mother," said the young lady—"is everything all right? The agent will not be so unreasonable as to press his demand at present, will he?"

"He says that he *must* do so, in obedience to the strict orders of Mr. De Lacy, whom he represents as being a very wicked and hard-hearted man," replied Mrs. Hargrave, sadly—"but I am inclined to suspect that this Mr. Snarley is a most unscrupulous liar; and I think he might grant us time, if he were only so disposed. I don't believe that Mr. De Lacy is one-half so bad a man as this agent tries to make him out.—But what do you think, my dear? You won't know whether to laugh or grow angry, when I tell you that Mr. Snarley offered to relieve my pecuniary embarrassments on condition that I would become his wife!

Yes, the ridiculous old fool got down on his knees, made violent love to me, and portrayed the advantages which he said I should derive from a marriage with him. When I spurned him and his offer with contempt, he had the astonishing effrontery to declare that he had suddenly transferred his affections from me to *you*, my dear; and he insisted upon having a private interview with you, in order, as he expressed it, that he might kneel at your feet, and entreat you to become his wife—his *Peggy*, which seems to have been the name of the lady who first had the felicity of calling him husband. Well, my dear, I consented that he *should* have a private interview with you; and he is now waiting for you in the sitting-room."

"Mother!" cried Edith, in a reproachful tone, and with a look of surprise—"how could you? You know that I detest the man, and that the very sight of him is hateful to me. Why should I be subjected to the annoyance of listening to the clown's obscene and insulting nonsense?"

"I wish him to hear, from your own lips, your rejection of his preposterous offer," said Mrs. Hargrave—"that will satisfy him of the hopelessness of his wishes, and put an end to his persecutions, so far as his matrimonial projects are concerned. Repulse him with all the contempt which he deserves, my child, and act as a woman of spirit *should* act, under such circumstances. But your own honor, and that of your family, is safe in your hands, I know; and you need no instructions from me how to treat such a man."

"Well, mother, I will go to him," said Edith—"but I dread this interview, and wish that it were over."

With these words, the young lady quitted her mother's presence, and repaired to the apartment where Mr. Snarley was waiting to receive her.

Chapter Six.

MR. SNARLEY'S AMIABLE TRAITS OF CHARACTER BECOME MORE AND MORE CONSPICUOUS.

EDITH HARGRAVE was always charming;—but, upon this particular occasion, Mr. Snarley, who professed to be a judge of female beauty, thought her ten times more bewitching than ever. Her fresh and rosy countenance wore a pensive expression, for it reflected the sadness of her heart, but, instead of detracting from her beauty, it rather added to it. Her hair fell in natural ringlets upon her neck and shoulders, framing her sweet and girlish face with pleasing effect. Her dress, like that of her mother, was neat, and tastefully elegant. Altogether, her appearance was so exquisitely lovely and attractive, that old Snarley rubbed his greasy hands together with joy, and chuckled with glee.

"Ah, ha!" said he to himself—"the cunning little puss has been taking extra pains with herself, so as to look uncommonly nice. She wants to captivate me, and make sure work of getting me for her husband. Egad! I'll have her! Her mother pretended that she didn't like me herself, and said that Edith wouldn't like me either, just to make me more eager in the pursuit of this little witch. Ah, curious creatures are women! They say *no* when they mean *yes*, and affect to be offended with a man's forwardness, while at the same time they are secretly delighted with it. It takes *me* to understand them, the sweet deceivers!—Ah! I am neither young nor handsome, but they can't resist my winning ways! I must possess this beautiful young girl;—but why need I make her *my wife*? Can't I have her otherwise? A *wife* is apt to become a burden which a man can't easily shake off; while a *mistress* he can get rid of at any time when it suits his inclination or convenience. Edith's stately mother, with her lofty airs, awed me so that I did not dare make the proposal which I wanted to make; but I needn't be afraid to say to this girl just what I mean. I'll come to the point at once—for "faint heart never won fair lady."

"My mother informs me that you expressed a desire to see me, sir," said Edith, quietly—"I am ready to listen to you. You will oblige me by being as brief as possible."

"Fair enslaver!" said Mr. Snarley, approaching the young lady with the look of a hungry wolf about to devour a lamb, "you must be aware of my object in demanding this interview. I want to lay my fortune at your feet, and my person in your arms. Ah! you blush, and I like to see you do it, for it increases your wondrous beauty. I am glad, now, that the old woman rejected me, for I like *you* much better. Metaphorically speaking, she is old and tough, like a hen in the decline of life; while, literally speaking, you are young and tender, like an infantile chicken. Come, then, pretty chick—be mine, and you shall be fed upon the crumbs of my devoted love! Abandon the wing of the hen which can no longer shelter you, and keep company with the gallant rooster—meaning myself—who is able to afford you a snug resting-place in the barn-yard of perfect felicity. Come—chick, chick, chick!"

As he uttered those words, the "gallant rooster" approached the "infantile chicken," pleasantly scattering, for her refreshment, grains of imaginary corn, which he affected to take from his pocket. This pleasing pantomime was not, however, properly appreciated by Edith, who, silly little chicken that she was, shrank back from the gallant rooster in alarm and disgust.

In truth, Snarley's speech was so brutal, and his actions were so extravagant and absurd, to say nothing of the repulsiveness of his personal appearance, that the young lady became at once indignant, astonished, and frightened. She really began to believe the man was insane; and the possibility of being alone with a maniac appalled her. She would have fled from the apartment, had she not been restrained by the fear that the supposed madman would pursue her, and injure her in some way or other. Controlling her agitation as well as she could, and retreating from Snarley as he approached her, she said, in a tone that was very quiet and almost coaxing,

"Please do not act so, sir; such singular conduct annoys and frightens me, for I am not accustomed to it. The amount of the business is, you want me to become your wife; my answer is, plainly and briefly, I cannot do it, for I do not love you, and never can. Now be kind enough to let me return to my mother."

"Stop!" cried Snarley, who was in the wildest state of excitement; "you must hear me out. I do not ask you to become my wife. I despise

the hollow, empty forms of matrimony, with which fools trammel themselves. I have tasted the bitter drug of marriage once, and have no desire to repeat the dose. We can live together as long as we are pleased with each other, and enjoy all the sweets of love, without the aid of a parson. When we can't agree, we can separate, you know, and there's no harm done. This house shall become a Turkish Empire on a small scale; I will be the Sultan, and you and your lovely mother shall constitute my harem. But stop!—where are you going in such a devil of a hurry?"

"I cannot remain and listen to such language," replied Edith, in a choking voice, as she walked towards the door. The flush of offended modesty suffused her virgin cheeks, and her eyes were filled with tears.

"You must not go!" cried Snarley, as he sprang forward and seized the young lady by the arm; "you are mine, and had better submit to your inevitable fate at once. Don't put on your prudish airs with *me*, miss: they won't serve you. I have dilly-dallied with you long enough. Come, I must taste the sweetness of those lips, which poutingly invite the salute."

With these words, the ruffian attempted to pollute the lips of Edith with a kiss, but she struggled desperately in his grasp, to prevent the accomplishment of his purpose. Excited almost to madness by rage and lust combined, Snarley attacked the poor girl with the most brutal violence. Terror deprived her of the power of calling out to her mother for assistance, while, at the same time, it seemed to endow her with supernatural strength to resist the scoundrel's attack upon her honor. During the struggle, that portion of her dress which covered her bosom became disarranged and torn; and the eyes of Snarley were fixed gloatingly upon the snowy and voluptuous charms which were exposed to his view, and which increased the intensity of his unhallowed desires. Audaciously did he thrust his profaning hand into that sanctuary of purity, and the locket which Edith had placed there came into his grasp. Hastily he drew the locket forth, and as he glanced at it, an exclamation of surprise burst from his lips. Taking advantage of this slight circumstance in her favor, Edith broke away from him, leaving the locket in his hands, the ribbon by which she had suspended it from her neck having been snapped in twain.

"Think not to escape me," said Snarley, as he quickly locked the door of the apartment and placed the key in his pocket, while poor Edith, panting for breath and burning with indignation and shame, threw

herself into a chair and tried to adjust her disordered apparel—"you go not hence until you become fully *mine*! There is no one in the house to help you, excepting your mother, and she dare not interfere with my proceedings, even if she were to overhear them, which is not likely. Besides, she told me that I might do with you as I please, and that is why she sent you to me."

"Infamous liar!—contemptible coward!" cried Edith—"to take advantage of a helpless girl! Oh, that I were a man, to punish you as you deserve! But you shall repent this outrage!"

"Keep cool, pretty one," said Snarley, as he examined the locket he held in his hand—"save your breath, for you will have need of it soon. Where got you this portrait of Mr. De Lacy?"

"The portrait of Mr. De Lacy!" cried the astonished Edith.

"Yes, *his* portrait," rejoined Snarley, with a sneer; "just as if you didn't *know* that it is his portrait. Oh, you are mighty innocent, Miss Edith. I can see through this whole business without the aid of spectacles, and so you need not try to make me swallow any lies, for they won't go down. Mr. De Lacy, who is notorious as a man of pleasure, has been the recipient of your favors, and has given you this locket, containing his likeness, as a keepsake. This rather surprises me, for I was not aware that he knew you at all. Being a lover of yours, I wonder why he has not supplied you and your mother with money enough to pay the rent. How came he to make your acquaintance? Where did he seduce you, and how long have you been his mistress? If he has known you any length of time at all, he has probably grown tired of you, and that accounts for your being poor. Well, I am not ashamed to take up with his *leavings*. Like master, like man. He has cast you off, and I will take you under my protection. Now let us have no more of your affected opposition to my wishes. If you resist me any more, I shall become angry, and might do you harm. Therefore, like a sensible girl, yield to me, for I love you; and think no more of Mr. De Lacy, who cares nothing about you. Having inhaled the perfume of the flower, he tramples it under his feet. But I will restore its fragrance and its bloom. Come to my arms—or shall I come to yours?"

"Do not approach me!" cried Edith, as she arose and boldly confronted the villain, who stood by the door with folded arms, and with a mocking smile upon his lips; "detestable, odious wretch, touch me not again!"

"And why not, pray?" demanded Snarley, with a most provoking grin; "why should I hesitate to approach or touch a common * *?"

The word was spoken—that black and damning word, which forms the worst name that can be given to a woman—and which, when applied to a truly virtuous female, drives away the timidity natural to her sex, inspires her with the courage of a heroine, causes fury to shoot forth from her eyes, makes her blood boil with justifiable rage, and creates within her heaving breast a thirst for vengeance. Woe, woe to the base calumniator, should he then fall into the power of that wronged and slandered woman! It were better for him that he had never been born, or that his mother had strangled him in his infancy. "Blistered be your lying tongue, that uttered the foul word!" cried Edith, whose graceful form seemed to swell out into majestic proportions, and in whose eyes sparkled the fires of holy wrath. Mr. Snarley became somewhat terrified, for experience had taught him that a woman, fairly aroused to fury, was a dangerous enemy—and, besides, Mr. Snarley was a craven, white-livered coward—but he repeated the accursed name, as if in defiance, and added—

"Will you come to my arms, or shall I come to yours?"

Inspired by a sudden impulse, that arose in her mind with the rapidity of the lightning's flash, Edith ran to the grate, in which there was no fire, and taking up a quantity of coal ashes, she rushed towards Mr. Snarley, and, before that individual could comprehend what she was about, or stand upon his guard, she dashed the ashes into his face and eyes, completely blinding him for *that* time, at least.

Uttering a cry of mingled rage and pain, Snarley began to rub his eyes furiously, which of course only made matters ten times worse. Not being able to see Edith, he placed himself against the door, which was locked. He determined that she should not escape him. Meanwhile, as he vainly tried to remove the blinding ashes from his eyes, the baffled villain gave utterance to the most horrid oaths and threats of vengeance.

"Beware!" cried Edith, whom rage had seemingly transformed from a gentle girl into a perfect young tigress; "beware, wretch! You are now helpless, and completely in my power; restrain that foul tongue of yours, or I may be tempted to pluck out your eyes with my fingers, and so blind you forever!"

This terrible threat, which Edith seemed capable of executing, so thoroughly was she aroused, caused Snarley to cease his fierce ravings;

yet still he continued to grind his teeth together with rage and pain, while he maintained his position at the door, and occasionally spread out his arms, to assure himself that his prisoner was not trying to escape.

The noise of this uproar having reached the ears of Mrs. Hargrave, she hastened to the parlor, the door of which she found fastened. This alarmed her greatly, and, as she knocked with violence, she exclaimed—

"Edith, my child, what is the matter? Why is this door locked? Open immediately, I beg of you."

"Mother," answered the young lady, "calm yourself, for I am safe and unharmed. Your daughter knows how to protect her honor. This villain Snarley has insulted me, but I have disabled him for the present. I cannot open the door, for he is guarding it; but that shall not prevent my escape."

With these words the heroic girl threw up a window that overlooked the desolate garden in the rear of the house. This garden—a dreary place enough in winter—was separated from the premises of Mr. De Lacy by a wall, which had gone somewhat into decay, one portion of it having crumbled and fallen down almost to a level with the ground. Edith seized a long scarf that chanced to be lying upon a chair; quickly fastening one end of this scarf to a heavy table that stood by the window, she threw the other end out. Then, undaunted by the danger of the attempt which she was about to make, she passed out of the window; and clinging to the scarf with the tenacity of desperation, she began to descend. But, as the window was high, she discovered that the scarf was far from being of sufficient length to enable her to reach the ground. This was certainly a frightful predicament to be placed in; but, as there seemed to be no help for it, she summoned up all her courage and was about to let herself drop, at the risk of breaking her limbs, or perhaps being killed outright, when she heard a manly voice exclaim—

"Hold on just one moment, miss, for God's sake, and I will catch you in my arms!"

Edith, on hearing these encouraging words, tightened her grasp upon the scarf; and looking down, she beheld a young and handsome man, with his arms upraised, ready to receive her.

Our heroine, notwithstanding the peculiarity and peril of her situation, blushed when she beheld this means of deliverance; yet she availed herself, without hesitation, of the assistance so opportunely offered. Relinquishing her hold upon the scarf, she dropped down and was safely caught in the arms of the young gentleman, whom she instantly recognized



Edith, in escaping from the arms of Mr. Snarley, falls into arms that are far more acceptable.

as the original of the portrait which had been placed in her chamber in so mysterious a manner.

Snarley's question "Where got you this portrait of Mr. De Lacy?" had in a great degree prepared Edith for the discovery of the fact that the locket which had so strangely come into her possession was the property of the young gentleman who resided next door, and who was her mother's landlord.

"This, then, is Mr. De Lacy," thought she, "and it was *his* portrait which Snarley took from me. Ah! he is even handsomer than his pictured likeness—but how came it in the place where I found it? But perhaps the mystery may soon be explained."

De Lacy, on his part, knew the young girl whom he held in his arms to be the lovely creature whose portrait, then in his possession, had inspired his heart with such passionate adoration. He recognized the same angelic countenance which, a short time previously, he had beheld in the sweet repose of innocent slumber. How wildly did his heart beat, as he pressed her graceful form to his breast, before releasing her from his arms! He thanked his lucky stars for his good fortune in being enabled to rescue her from a position of peril. His opportune appearance at that moment is easily explained. Chancing to look out of the rear windows of his mansion, he saw, to his inexpressible amazement, Edith lowering herself from a window of the adjoining tenement by means of the scarf. Recognizing at once the original of the portrait, and naturally supposing that something extraordinary must have happened to induce the young lady to adopt that means of egress from her dwelling—De Lacy did not pause a moment to reflect. Rushing from his house, he easily passed over the broken wall that divided the two gardens, and received Edith in his arms, as we have stated.

"Sir," said our heroine, with a deep blush, as her deliverer reluctantly released her from his arms—"how shall I thank you for this kind assistance? You doubtless wonder at finding me in this strange situation—excuse my agitation, sir—when I have explained——"

"Lady," interrupted De Lacy, with respectful earnestness, as he took her trembling hand in his, and gazed admiringly into the depths of her lustrous eyes, while the honesty and noble benevolence of his motives shone in every lineament of his fine countenance—"lady, you are in distress, and that fact is explanation enough for me. Accompany me into my house, and rely upon the honor of a gentleman for protection and respectful treatment."

As Edith looked timidly up into the splendid face of the speaker, she saw Truth written there as if in characters of gold. She knew that such a noble countenance could not veil a false heart. But she hesitated, saying—

"My mother, sir, remains in that house, and——"

"She shall be instantly rescued from whatever danger may threaten her," said De Lacy, again interrupting her—"come into my house, and I swear that your mother shall be with you in a few minutes."

Edith hesitated no longer. De Lacy conducted her over the broken wall and into his mansion, where he placed her under the care of his housekeeper, an excellent old lady who had held him in her arms when he was a prattling child.

"Now," said De Lacy to our heroine, who was seated by a comfortable fire in the housekeeper's own room—"I am going to bring your mother to you."

Without waiting to listen to Edith's heart-felt thanks, De Lacy, who felt convinced that something extraordinary was going on in the house of his tenant next door, hurried out into his garden, crossed the wall, entered the rear door of Mrs. Hargrave's residence, and rapidly ascending the stairs, found Mrs. Hargrave herself endeavoring to force open the door of the room in which was the half-blinded Mr. Snarley.

De Lacy did not waste time in useless ceremony.

"You are Mrs. Hargrave," said he—"I am Mr. De Lacy, who resides next door. Your daughter has escaped from a window, and is now safe in my house. I will conduct you to her, madam, as soon as I have ascertained the cause of all this trouble and annoyance."

"Sir," said Mrs. Hargrave—"your arrival here is most opportune; for you, the owner of this house, can punish the wretch who has dared to abuse its peaceful inmates. Your agent, Snarley, has dared——"

"Snarley!" interrupted De Lacy, in a tone of mingled surprise and anger—"I begin to comprehend it all. I have been greatly mistaken in that man's character. He, then, has created all this disturbance. But he shall be severely punished—I will however reserve his punishment for a future time. Allow me, in the first place, to conduct you to your daughter—after which, I will attend to Mr. Snarley."

Mrs. Hargrave briefly murmured her thanks, and following De Lacy into his house, she had the satisfaction of pressing her daughter to her heart.

Both the mother and the daughter were kindly cared for by Mrs.

Barnes, the housekeeper, who needed not the orders of her young master to induce her to treat the ladies with due respect and the most abundant hospitality.

Leaving Mrs. Hargrave and Edith comfortably quartered in the elegant mansion of Mr. De Lacy, let us follow that young gentleman, who re-entered the house next door for the purpose of attending to the case of Mr. Snarley.

De Lacy, having ascended to the apartment in which Snarley had been left, burst open the door and entered.

There was the respectable "agent," floundering about the room in a state of complete bewilderment and terror, digging his knuckles into his half-blinded eyes, wondering what had become of Edith, and vainly trying to find the door.

He had heard the short conversation which had passed between De Lacy and Mrs. Hargrave, on the outside of the door—but, while he heard the sound of their voices, he could not distinguish what was said. When the door was burst open, his fears increased, particularly as he had previously recognized the voice of his master, who, he doubted not, was now coming to upbraid and punish him for his base conduct towards the two ladies—Mrs. Hargrave and her daughter.

In what manner De Lacy had chanced to appear upon the stage of action just at that particular crisis, puzzled Snarley, who thought that at all events the intrusion was very annoying and objectionable.

De Lacy, in the first place, picked up from the floor his portrait, which had fallen from the hand of Snarley, who, it will be recollected, had rudely torn it from the bosom of Edith.

The portrait our hero put into his pocket, resolving to restore it to Edith when he should behold her again. He conjectured that she must have lost it from her person in some way or other.

De Lacy had already made up his mind what course of conduct to pursue with reference to his villanous agent, whose cowardice and superstitious weakness he well knew, and whom he resolved to punish in a protracted and extraordinary manner.

The plan will be developed as this narrative progresses.

"Mr. Snarley," said De Lacy, in a tone of affected sympathy—"some one has been abusing you, that is very clear. A short time ago, I saw a young lady in the act of lowering herself out of one of these windows; and, when she had reached the ground, she scampered off as if she had been doing mischief, and was afraid of being pursued and punished.

Thinking that something must be wrong, I entered the house; and, at the door of this room I found a woman conducting herself in a very violent manner. She was trying to force her way into the apartment, the door of which you had locked in order to keep her out, as you justly imagined that she wished to injure you. I refused to listen to her explanations, but turned her out into the street, and then came back and burst open the door in order to release you. My dear sir, tell me what has happened—the whole affair wears an aspect of deep mystery."

Snarley was completely deceived by the manner and words of De Lacy, and he thought that his villany was undiscovered. He congratulated himself on what he conceived to be a lucky termination of a very disagreeable and rather hazardous affair.

"Sir," said he, with his accustomed lying assurance, "had you not fortunately arrived just as you did, I believe that those infernal women would have killed me outright. You must know that to-day Mrs. Hargrave's rent becoming due, I called here for the purpose of collecting it. The daughter received me in this room, and coolly informed me that the rent would not be paid at present. I mildly remonstrated, whereupon she became very insolent—but soon changed her tone, on finding that I preserved my temper unruffled. Her design probably was to provoke me to strike her, or something of the kind, so that she might charge me with having committed an assault and battery upon her. Failing in that design, she approached me with wanton looks, and in plain language offered to sacrifice her person to me on condition that I would not press the demand for the rent. From this infamous proposal I recoiled with horror, whereupon the depraved girl locked the door of the room, swearing that I should not quit it until I had accepted her vile offer. She doubtless wanted me to compromise myself, so that she might swear that I sought to commit an outrage upon her. But my virtue and integrity were proofs against her insidious arts, and in a paroxysm of fury, she demon-threw ashes into my eyes and escaped out of the window, as you saw. Her mother, who was quite furious at the failure of a plan which she probably had formed in the first place, tried to break in the door in order to wreak her vengeance upon me, when your fortunate arrival saved me. There, sir, you have all the particulars of the affair. The women have both fled, it is likely;—and you, sir, as the landlord, and I as your agent, have reason to congratulate

ourselves on being rid of such dishonest, unprofitable and dangerous tenants. What say *you*, sir?

"I fully agree with you," replied De Lacy, who could scarcely refrain from punishing the lying scoundrel on the spot. "Well, now that the women have taken their departure, we may consider this house as empty. You must try and get a tenant as soon as possible, for I cannot afford to have it remain unoccupied upon my hands."

"Sir," said Snarley, who had by this time contrived to remove the greater portion of the ashes from his eyes—"this affair, after all, is perhaps fortunate for me. My present residence does not suit me, and therefore, if you have no objection, I myself will become your tenant and move in here. The house will suit me, and, as next door neighbors, we will get along very well together."

Now, this proposal was the very one wished for by De Lacy, and the one which he hoped to elicit. He of course accepted it instantly; and it was arranged that Snarley should take possession of the house as soon as he could remove his personal property into it.

This matter being settled, the parties separated—De Lacy to return to Mrs. Hargrave and her daughter, and Snarley to prepare for his removal.

Our hero at once caused all the personal effects of the two ladies to be conveyed from the old house into his own mansion; and the goods were safely deposited in the spacious apartments which had been allotted to Edith and her mother, who scarcely knew how to thank the generous young man whose noble benevolence had reached them when it was so much needed.

It was evening, and a December storm was raging wildly without, but light, and warmth, and comfort reigned within the luxurious dwelling of Walter De Lacy, who, in company with his two lady friends, was seated in the parlor before a glowing fire. Edith had never looked more superbly beautiful; while hope and happiness caused her handsome mother to look more charming than ever.

Most interesting was the conversation that passed between the parties. Every mystery was cleared up in the most thorough and satisfactory manner, for all necessary explanations were made. The ladies were enlightened as to the manner in which Edith's locket had disappeared; and they smiled and blushed while De Lacy related the singular way in which he had entered the chamber and left his portrait, which he now restored to Edith, who received it with so much evident pleasure, that

her lover—for such we may as well call him at once—was delighted beyond measure, and gazed upon the beautiful girl with such intensity of love and admiration, that she cast down her eyes in sweet confusion, and traced imaginary figures upon the rich carpet with the point of her delicate shoe, whose smallness Cinderilla herself might have envied. Mrs. Hargrave looked on in silent satisfaction, being well pleased with the progress of affairs between the young people, while she mentally thanked Heaven for the happy aspect which her affairs had so strangely, so suddenly and so unexpectedly assumed.

The next day, Mr. Snarley took possession of the old house, totally ignorant of the fact that Mrs. Hargrave and Edith were under the protection of Mr. De Lacy, next door. He supposed that the ladies had gone away, never to return.

Mr. Snarley's domestic household consisted of himself and his housekeeper, cook, chambermaid, laundress, valet, and private secretary—all of which offices were filled by an aged but not venerable female, whose name was Muff—who contemplated the world exclusively through green goggles—who abused mankind generally and her master particularly, in a cracked voice that issued from a snuffy nose—who invariably, even while in the house, wore an old black bonnet and bear-skin gloves, and had her jaws tied up as if she were afflicted with incessant mumps—and who was so outrageously deaf that Snarley had to bellow in her ear in tones of hoarse thunder to make her hear, and even when she heard, she was generally sure to misunderstand.

Leaving Mr. Snarley, for the present, in the agreeable society of the amiable Muff—who quartered her master in the chamber which had been occupied by Edith, and took up her own abode in the coal-hole under the sidewalk—that being an airy location and quite convenient to the street in case of fire, of which she had a horrid dread—we now return to the young gentleman who was the first actor that appeared on the stage of our narrative. We mean *Smutty Tom*, the chimney-sweep.

Chapter Seventh.

A RAKISH YOUNG GENTLEMAN OF FASHION.

We will suppose that a month has elapsed since the opening of our story. Smutty Tom—or, rather, Thomas De Lacy, Esquire, for our ex-chimney sweep had rather impudently assumed that aristocratic title—had undergone such a change in his appearance and habits, that his most intimate friends would not have recognised him. No longer the squalid chimney-sweep, Tom was a handsome and elegantly dressed youth, whose delicate features, fair complexion, blue eyes and curling hair—to say nothing of his devil-may-care speech and manners—rendered him the admiration of all, and the especial darling of the ladies. Availing himself of the indulgent kindness of his generous patron, Tom became a young gentleman of the highest fashion, although he was but fourteen years of age. He grew particular about his broadcloth, excessively fastidious with reference to the construction and adjustment of his Byronic collars, and painfully accurate in the arrangement and perfuming of his hair. His mode of speech, too, had become quite refined and grammatical, for association with well-educated persons had polished him, and besides he attended a private academy in the neighborhood, where his progress was very rapid, for his memory was very retentive and his intellect of a superior order. Besides, he was ambitious to become, in every respect a well-bred *gentleman*; and, consequently he applied himself to his studies with great ardor and industry. Thus far, Tom had decidedly improved; he had been so fortunate as to secure the favorable opinion of Mr. De Lacy, who rather liked his pride and independence of spirit, and who allowed him a liberal allowance of pocket money. Tom also became an immense favorite with Edith Hargrave and her mother; cheerfully rendering them every assistance in his power, and causing them to laugh heartily at his wit, humor, and assumption of “French airs.”

But it must not be imagined that Tom had grown faultless. His mischief-loving propensities still clung to him, and he let pass no opportunity to gratify them. He had one method of beguiling his time, during the midnight hours, which was as follows:—He would *angle* from his chamber window, in the third story of the house, for vagrant dogs, and

he was generally sure of his game, for having baited a large fish-hook with a junk of meat, he would throw the tempting morsel down into the street, firmly holding on to the end of the fishing-line. Thus prepared for “sport,” he would impatiently await the arrival of some canine victim. Soon, perhaps, a hungry cur would come shuffling along, trying to smell out a supper; the odor of the meat containing the fatal hook, would salute his olfactories—one gulp, and the meat would be transferred to his empty stomach—Tom, feeling a “bite,” gives a tremendous jerk, and if the beef does not come forth from its place of deposit, the poor “old dog Tray,” who, in the ballad, is supposed to be “ever faithful,” is made to perform an aerial flight to the third story window, much against his will, but to the immoderate delight of the juvenile angler, who prepares for a fresh victim. Tom one morning boasted, in confidence to Mr. Jowls, that he had, during the preceding night, bagged six mongrel curs, three cats, and a vagrant rooster.

It is probable that Mr. Jowls communicated the nature of Tom's midnight amusements to his master, for De Lacy sought an interview with the precocious youth that very day, and sternly told him that he must quit such “fun,” or else quit the house; and Tom wisely promised to “sin no more;” for he was not such a fool as to make an insolent reply and thereby lose a luxurious home and prospects for the future, that were rather fair to contemplate.

Believing that Mr. Jowls had betrayed him, Tom hated that gentleman more than ever, and resolved to “get square” with him at the first convenient opportunity. Now it so happened that Mr. Jowls had fallen warmly in love with a pretty servant maid, Peggy by name and coquettish by nature. Under the influence of the tender passion which had taken possession of him, Mr. Jowls was wont to “sigh like a furnace,” and, had he been poetically gifted, he in all probability would have made “sonnets to his mistress' eye-brows.” But, as he was not a poet, he contented himself with swearing that she was a “pooty gal,” and entreating her to become Mrs. Jowls. Peggy coyly postponed her answer to this proposition, from time to time, thereby inducing Mr. Jowls to threaten to blow his brains out, or enlist in the marines, or embrace religion, or do something equally desperate. The truth was, Peggy did not like to be in a hurry about giving her decision. She did not like her lover, for he was fat, old and ugly; but she was equally averse to shaking him off too abruptly, it being reported that he was pretty well to do in the world, having, by dint of economy and good

luck in his master's service, accumulated a considerable sum of money. Now, Tom being well acquainted with all these affairs, determined to wound his adversary in a tender spot. He accordingly set himself diligently to work to transfer the affections of Miss Peggy to himself; and in this he succeeded beyond his most sanguine hopes, for the girl thought it a high honor to be wooed and won by a young gentleman of Master Tom's consequence, figure and personal beauty. Poor Jowls suddenly found himself thrown entirely in the shade, the brilliant attractions of his young and handsome rival being too much for him. Peggy—the pretty inconstant!—no longer even condescended to speak to her rejected lover, who lost flesh, privately took to drink, and went about the house weeping and wailing.

Thus did Master Tom succeed in making his enemy thoroughly miserable; and thus did he begin to taste the “sweets of revenge,” which some people talk about, although persons who indulge in such “sweets” are generally full of gall and bitterness.

Tom visited the theatres occasionally; and at last, becoming “stage-struck,” he joined an amateur dramatic company, which was an association of aspiring young gentlemen who amused themselves by assassinating Shakespeare and other unfortunate dramatists, in a spacious garret fitted up with a stage, scenery, and all the other appointments of a regular theatre. Now it happened that the company had no ladies attached to it; the female characters were therefore represented by boys, who were selected with reference to the delicacy and effeminacy of their appearance. Tom was just the youth that was wanted; he was duly instructed, and requested to provide himself, at his own expense, with the necessary female wardrobe. This he accordingly did; and when, on the first night of his appearance, as *Desdemona*, he “made up” as the gentle bride of the jealous Moor, his disguise was so perfect and his voice and actions so graceful and appropriate, that any person, unacquainted with the deception, would have taken him for an uncommonly fine and attractive woman.

When the moment arrived for Desdemona to be smothered in her bed, the young gentleman who enacted Othello, and who was a rough customer rather drunk, was unnecessarily violent in his proceedings, nearly smothering Tom in reality, with the pillow. Hereupon the voice of Desdemona was heard, issuing from beneath the murderous pillow, and swearing dreadfully.

“Bully Buffer, what in h— are you about?” shouted Desdemona, to

the astonishment of the audience,—“do you want to smother a fellow with that infernal sack of feathers—say?”

“Dry up!” growled Bully Buffer, in a rage, as he pressed the pillow still harder down upon the head of the struggling Desdemona—“it is all in the play; you mustn't spoil the effect. Lie still, and die like a lady, or I'll bat you over the mouth!”

“You will, eh?” exclaimed Desdemona, in a fury; and jumping out of bed, the “gentle lady” threw herself into a sparring position and favored Othello with a punch on his snuff depository that made the claret fly in all directions, and laid the jealous Moor out on the stage as stiff as a poker.

In rushed Iago, half dressed, followed by Cassio, who apparently had not yet recovered from the memorable “drunk” which had brought down upon his devoted head the displeasure of Othello, who remarked, upon that occasion—“I have loved thee, Michael Cassio; but you will have the kindness to consider yourself booted out of office. Leave!”

Iago and Cassio in vain tried to put a stop to the row between the valiant Moor and his wife. Bully Buffer was considered “some” in a rough-and-tumble fight; and, anxious to preserve his reputation and at the same time punish his adversary, he quickly regained his feet and rushed at Tom with the design of inflicting summary vengeance upon the person of that young gentleman; but among Tom's newly-acquired accomplishments was a slight knowledge of the manly art of self-defence; and, although slightly built, he was fully a match for Bully, so long as he could keep that stout young incipient tragedian from coming into too close quarters with him. So Tom knocked Bully down, and continued to knock him down until he gave up and acknowledged himself vanquished.

During the progress of the fight, a large portion of the audience had rushed upon the stage and formed a ring around the combatants. The sympathy was entirely on the side of Tom, the belief being general among the “outsiders” that he was a woman; and they swore that he was a “girl of pluck,” although it was a mortal shame for a stout young fellow like Bully Buffer to fight a lady, and she so beautiful and delicate!

The fight being over and peace restored, everybody prepared to depart. Tom, full of deviltry and mischief, determined to go home in female costume. Accordingly, carrying his own proper garments tied up in a bundle, he contrived to leave the theatre unobserved, having pre-

viously donned a bonnet and enveloped himself in a shawl. The distance between the theatre and his own residence was not great; and he had nearly reached home, when he was accosted by an individual whom he instantly recognized as his old friend, Mr. Jowls.

Now it appears that Mr. Jowls was a sly old dog, who had a fondness for wandering about evenings and speaking to pretty women who happened to be alone and unprotected. It may be that upon the present occasion he was driven out to seek the consolation afforded by female society, by the cruelty of Peggy, who, owing to the blandishments of Master Tom, would have nothing to say to Mr. Jowls whatever. However that may have been, Jowls was out that evening, playing the gallant whenever he had an opportunity of doing so; and meeting what he supposed to be a remarkably fine-looking young woman, carrying a bundle, he opened the conversation in the following manner:—

“Fine evening, Miss.”

“Well,” said Tom, assuming a female voice, which he could do to admiration, he being a capital mimic—“I know it is; why don’t you tell me something I *don’t* know?”

“Ahem!” coughed Jowls, somewhat disconcerted—“it is getting late, and not safe for ladies to be out. Pray let me carry your bundle for you, and see you safe home.”

“I’ll not trouble you, sir; I can take care of myself very well.”

“Oh, Miss, no trouble at all, but a very great pleasure. It is my delight to serve the ladies, bless their dear hearts and pretty faces! Nay, you must indeed permit me.”

With these words, Jowls took possession of Tom’s bundle, almost by force; and our hero, anticipating some rare fun, concluded to submit. So, with affected bashfulness, he accepted the proffered arm of Mr. Jowls, and the pair trudged on together.

They had almost reached the house of Mr. De Lacy, when Tom, who had his mischievous plans all arranged in his mind, suddenly complained of extreme weariness, and seemed about to sink down upon the pavement in a fainting fit.

These indications of helplessness on the part of his companion were viewed with secret satisfaction by Mr. Jowls, for they seemed to favor his unhallowed plans with reference to the *fair creature* who had in so singular a manner been thrown upon his *protection*. Supporting the fainting form of the unknown and mysterious lady in his arms, he whispered in her ear—

“Dear Miss, don’t faint, pray don’t, at least not until we get into a suitable place, and then you may faint as much as you please. Here is my residence, close at hand—you will be surprised at the splendor of the house, for I am a rich old bachelor—my name is De Lacy—ahem!—I am worth a million of money—I live all alone, with nobody in the house but servants—I delight in having ladies visit me, but I am obliged to keep shady, for fear of my reputation. Come into the house with me—we can sneak in without being noticed—and then, in a private room, refreshments and a good fire will soon restore you.”

“You are very kind, sir; but I am an unprotected female, and the impropriety——”

“Not unprotected, as long as *I* am with you!” exclaimed Jowls, thumping his waistcoat and looking savagely at a neighboring lamp-post, as if he were challenging that useful street fixture to mortal combat—“and as to their being any impropriety in your entering my mansion, know that I am a man of unsullied honor, and that my intentions are as pure as—as—as genuine London brown stout. Come, I know that you will consent to become the recipient of my hospitality. This way, dear lady, this way.”

Tom, whose roguish plans were working to his entire satisfaction, suffered Mr. Jowls to conduct him into the house through a private entrance chiefly devoted to the use of the servants. Unobserved they reached the apartment of Mr. Jowls. Here a comfortable fire was burning, which was very acceptable, for the night, though clear, was quite cold.

Affecting an excessive degree of modesty, our hero firmly refused to remove his bonnet and shawl, according to the earnest solicitations of Mr. Jowls; for he had no desire to be recognised, just then. He seated himself so that the light should not fall directly upon his countenance; while his hospitable host, who claimed to be the proprietor of that lordly mansion, bustled about and began to place refreshments upon the table.

“Ah! old fellow,” thought Tom, as he witnessed these proceedings—“it is very plain that you take devilish good care of yourself, at your master’s expense. Those two bottles of wine are from De Lacy’s choice stock which he carefully reserves for the use of himself and most particular friends. That saddle of venison came over in the last English steamer, and all those other delicacies are most valuable and costly. Egad! if De Lacy suspected that the greater part of his epicurean luxuries were feloniously abstracted and surreptitiously devoted to the

enrichment of the private larder of old Jowls, it is my humble opinion that the said Jowls would not only lose his place, but also that his departure from the house would be materially accelerated by the application of the toe of a fashionable boot. Why, what a confounded old wretch Jowls is, to be sure!—picking up unknown women in the street, bringing them into his master's house, and feeding them with his master's dainties! And then what *cheek*, to represent himself as the proprietor of the mansion! That is what I call adding insult to injury. However, I'll expose the old fellow to-night, and show him up in his true colors. I shall be performing my duty and satisfying my hatred at one and the same time. Now for the banquet!"

Mr. Jowls had by this time completed his preparations for supper; and, with a smile that illuminated his ugly face like a sunbeam shining upon a hog-trough, he invited the "lady" to sit up to the table and help herself. Then he added, pompously—

"My servants have all retired to rest, and I hate to disturb them, for they are human beings, after all; otherwise, I should have ordered something hot. Allow me, Miss, to assist you to a glass of wine and a slice of venison. It came over in the English steamer, and was sent to me by my friend the Duke of Stepandfetchit. I myself am nearly allied to the British nobility—ahem!"

Tom did not laugh, being too busily engaged in devouring the luxuries before him—for his active exertions of the night, in the way of acting, fighting and forming plans of mischief, had sharpened his appetite and blunted his conscience with reference to the criminality of consuming Mr. De Lacy's stolen delicacies.

"I may as well," thought he—"have the eating and drinking of some of these good things, as this old beggar. So here goes!"

Mr. Jowls ate with voracity, for he was an habitual glutton; he added much to the zest of his repast by many tender glances and speeches directed towards his "fair" companion, who, however, did not seem to appreciate these attentions.

Master Tom, having satisfied his appetite—and being, moreover, desirous of bringing the adventure to a termination at once—now arose, and thanking Mr. Jowls for his kindness and hospitality, remarked that it was time for him to depart.

"Nay, let us have a little conversation first," said the enamoured Jowls, with a look that was designed to be tender, but which rather resembled the expression usually assumed by an aged dog when that ani-

mal is standing on his hind legs catching crackers for his own refreshment and for the amusement of an admiring crowd—"come and sit near me, pretty one, for upon my honor and conscience I have quite fallen in love with you. Don't be afraid; I won't hurt you!"

In truth, Mr. Jowls looked quite incapable of hurting *any* one, just then; for during the supper, he had partaken very freely, both of wine and prime old brandy; and the natural consequence was, that he was just about as drunk as any white man ought to be. An amorous smile sat upon his greasy lips; his fat face looked like a cheese, while his eyes—if we may be permitted to employ a low but expressive figure of speech—resembled two decayed oysters floating in a bucket of soap-fat. Taken altogether, the old gentleman was not exactly in a proper or desirable condition to have his portrait taken. In truth, Master Tom, as he contemplated him, thought him the most disgusting object he had ever beheld.

"I must go," said Tom, as he slowly approached the door.

"Not until I have had a kiss from those rosy lips," whined forth the amorous old porpoise, as he arose with some difficulty from his chair, staggered towards Tom, and clasped the form of that disguised young gentleman in his arms.

This was Tom's *cue* for the *denouement* of the farce; he began to shriek and scream "murder" most vociferously, in a shrill female voice. This somewhat sobered Mr. Jowls; and comprehending the ruin that was impending over his devoted head, he tried to stop the cries of the "female in distress" by the simple yet effectual process of strangulation—whereupon Tom kindly presented him with a pair of black eyes and a bunged nose, and yelled more loudly than ever. Mr. Jowls, horrified in view of the consequences that would follow the discovery of an "unknown and evidently dissolute woman" in his room, howled with agony, tore what little hair he had, and energetically danced an insane hornpipe in the centre of the room. Tom, even while bellowing bloody murder, could not help laughing at the poor devil, whose ridiculous folly had produced a result so excessively disagreeable, so far as the poor devil aforesaid was concerned;—for Jowls would in all probability be discharged from a most lucrative situation, and that without a written "character" or recommendation, without which it is an almost utter impossibility for a servant to obtain a place.

Tom's loud outcry soon produced the effect which he desired. The entire household was aroused, and came rushing to the scene of the dis-

turbance. All the servants, both male and female, came pouring pell-mell into the room, some of them, who had just jumped out of their beds, being very picturesquely attired. Night garments were the prevailing fashion for the time being; and the pretty Peggy made her appearance in a coquettish little night-cap, and other articles of undress costume, which made her look very charming and captivating. So thought Tom, who continued to bellow with undiminished vigor—somewhat after the manner of a youthful mastiff whose tail has undergone the ordeal of a cart-wheel.

All of a sudden, several new actors appeared upon the stage and imparted additional interest to the scene. There in the first place, was Mr. De Lacy himself, his eyes flashing and his handsome face glowing with fearful rage—for, although he knew not as yet the exact nature of the disturbance, he felt that the peace and quiet of his household had been destroyed in some disgraceful manner, and he resolved to punish the perpetrator of the outrage with all the severity of which he might be capable.

Closely following De Lacy, and peeping over his shoulders, were Edith Hargrave and her mother. These ladies had been aroused from their slumbers by the terrible din; believing that the house was either on fire, or that some of the inmates were being murdered, they had arisen in much alarm; and having hastily slipped on their clothes, they were standing in the passage outside of their chamber door, deliberating upon what was best to be done under the circumstances, when they were gladdened and encouraged by the appearance of Mr. De Lacy, who had been reading in his library. Followed by the ladies, whom he entreated not to be frightened, he led the way to the scene of the tumult, where he found things in the condition already described—the room of Mr. Jowls crowded with half-naked servants, whose countenances were full of bewilderment and astonishment—Mr. Jowls himself dancing about like one possessed, his face rendered highly pictorial by the ornamental devices of black eyes and an expanded nose—while a person, apparently a female, and a very pretty one at that, wrung her hands and cried like one in the very extremity of distress.

De Lacy was well qualified, both mentally and physically, to meet any emergency with firmness, self-possession and dignity. His first proceeding was to calm the tempest that was raging around him. Having driven the servants from the room and enjoined them to retire immediately to their respective apartments if they wished to avoid being dis-

missed from his service, he commanded Jowls to be silent, threatening to horsewhip him if he did not obey. Then as Masters Tom had thought it high time to desist from his cries, peace and quiet once more reigned throughout that stately mansion.

The room being cleared of all parties, with the exception of De Lacy, the two Hargrave ladies, Mr. Jowls and Master Tom, the last-named young gentleman threw off his bonnet and shawl and revealed himself to the astonished company. Most intense was the wonder and mortification of poor Jowls, when he discovered that the object of his adoration was no other than his mischievous enemy, who had robbed him of his Peggy, and seduced him into a scrape which, he feared, would cost him his situation.

"Tom!" cried De Lacy, angrily, and seeming almost tempted to thrash his young *protege* soundly upon the spot—"Tom, what is the meaning of this ridiculous masquerade?"

Tom hastened to explain; and we will do him the justice to say that he stuck closely to the truth. He told about his having joined the amateur dramatic company—his being "cast" in a female part—his starting for home, dressed in female apparel—his encounter with Jowls, and his determination to expose that licentious old reprobate.

"This I have done, sir," said Tom, in conclusion; "and I hope that you will pardon me for having been the cause of such a rumpuss in the house. Through me, you have found out the true character of this man, in whose honesty and virtue you placed so much confidence."

We will not weary the reader with the details of the conversation that followed. Suffice it to say, Mr. De Lacy forgave Tom, but told him to be more circumspect in his conduct for the future. Tom was then informed that he was at liberty to withdraw to his own apartment; and neither De Lacy nor the ladies could help laughing, as the young gentleman slightly raised the skirts of his dress to prevent it from dragging on the carpet, and then strutted out of the room with all the pompous dignity of a queen.

Edith and her mother followed Tom's example by retiring, as they judged that Mr. De Lacy wished to have a private interview with the delinquent Jowls. In the course of that interview, the young gentleman elicited from his servant the confession that he had long been in the habit of abstracting choice wines and other liquors from the cellar. This offence Mr. De Lacy might have forgiven; but he could not overlook the disgraceful and contemptible conduct of which the man also

acknowledged himself to have been repeatedly guilty—conduct which compromised and endangered the honor and respectability of that establishment and its master, who might have been suspected of conniving at the business for his own gratification. Jowls confessed that he had been in the habit of conveying dissolute women into the house, and feasting them upon the delicacies stolen from his master. This settled the business at once, and De Lacy, as he arose and prepared to quit the room in disgust, said—

“No more—no more, if you value your own personal safety. My temper is now under my control, but another word of yours may madden me, and endanger your life. Quit this house to-morrow morning, and never let me see your face again!”

Jowls fell upon his knees and began to pray for forgiveness—but his indignant master hurried from the room, leaving him the very picture of despair.

But despair soon gave way to a feeling of rage; and the discarded servant muttered to himself—

“I must and shall be revenged!”

Chapter Eighth.

TOM PROVES HIMSELF A HERO, AND BECOMES VIOLENTLY
“STAGE-STRUCK.”

It often happens that men who appear remarkable for nothing but stupidity, and whose conduct and appearance are calculated to excite ridicule and mirth, conceal beneath a ludicrous exterior feelings of the most vindictive nature, and passions which, when once fairly aroused by real or fancied wrongs, are most fierce and ungovernable. Such men are more to be dreaded, a thousand times, than those who have within them the light of reason and intelligence to restrain the mad ebullitions of wrath. The ignorant ruffian is like the wild boar, which, stupid and beastly though it be, is fearful in its fury. An old Spanish proverb says—“To attempt to soothe a ruffian by reason, is to bind a buffalo with a garland of flowers.”

Jowls belonged to the class of men which we have been describing. He was content to be the butt of ridicule, and would often join in the laugh against himself. Slow to anger, and apparently “taking everything easy,” he passed for a good-natured, harmless sort of fool, who would not injure a living creature for the whole world. But a volcano of suppressed passions was buried in his breast—a magazine of powder was within him, and, at certain times and under circumstances of peculiar aggravation, the application of a single spark was sufficient to create a tremendous explosion.

He was now thoroughly aroused, for he considered himself a deeply injured man. He had lost an excellent situation, as he rightly conceived, through the machinations of Master Tom; and against that individual he entertained feelings of the most violent hatred. Mr. De Lacy he also hated, for having refused him forgiveness, and treated him with such severity and scorn.

“I’ll be terribly revenged on both of them,” thought Jowls, as he helped himself liberally to the brandy which remained on the table—“and this very night I’ll teach the pair of them that I’m not such a fool as I look!—Discharged from my situation without a character, I will not be able to get a place. I shall be driven into a career of crime, in spite of myself; and to-night I’ll make a commencement.”

* * * * *

One hour after midnight, Jowls, divested of his shoes and bearing a dimly-burning lamp, issued from his room and crept noiselessly along the passage. That his business boded no good would have been evident to a spectator had any been present—for his face, usually so devoid of expression, now wore a look of diabolical malignity, while his eyes flashed with the combined fires of partial intoxication and determined vengeance. There was something concealed beneath the breast of his coat, for his right hand was thrust there with a nervous clutch; and, taken altogether, he was at that particular time about as villanous-looking a gentleman as ever formed a picture framed by the gallows and sustained in mid-air by the rope of the hangman.

Jowls softly approached the chamber of Master Tom. He stood at the door and listened; all within was quiet—the boy was probably sound asleep little dreaming of the danger that threatened his life.

Tom was careless, and seldom or never locked the door of his room, not deeming such a precaution necessary in a house whose inmates were all supposed to be respectable and honest—although the youngster had often comically expressed a fear that some of the women, tempted by his mental and personal graces, might seize upon and bodily carry him off some dark night—"a consummation," Master Tom would add, rolling up his eyes with a tragic air—"most devoutly to be wished."

Upon the occasion to which we are now referring, Tom's door was slightly ajar; for the keen breath of winter entered not into that luxurious mansion, and all the halls and passages were thoroughly warmed.

Jowls placed his lamp upon the floor, and glided into the chamber like a spirit of evil. The bed stood in a recess in a remote corner. A deep shadow was cast upon it by an angle of the wall, and heavy curtains shrouded it from view. Jowls cautiously approached it, but suddenly paused when he fancied that he heard a noise. He listened, but all was still.

"Merely imagination, that's all," thought the wretch who contemplated the atrocious crime of murder, as he again advanced. He stood by the side of the bed, and softly drew aside the curtains. The darkness prevented him from seeing distinctly the form of his intended victim; so he stretched forth his hand and felt for Tom. This examination appeared to satisfy Mr. Jowls; then he drew from his breast a huge carving-knife. This weapon he raised, and with tremendous force buried it up to the handle in the form that lay in the bed. Six times

did he repeat the blow, wishing to make sure work of it; then, with a grunt that was significant of intense satisfaction and gratified revenge, he left the chamber, took up his lamp, and proceeded towards the apartment of Mr. De Lacy, whom he designed to include in the programme of the night's bloody work.

Scarcely had Jowls quitted the chamber of Master Tom, after having reduced that unfortunate youth to sausage-meat, (as he thought,) when a strange apparition made its appearance from behind the bed. The ghost was clothed in white, down to the knees; its legs were bare, and its face not ghostly, but blooming. It was not a respectable ghost, that was clear, for, instead of conducting itself with ghostly propriety, it danced several steps of a Scotch reel; and then, applying its thumb to its nose, it playfully wagged its fingers in a way to intimate that somebody or other had been most essentially "sucked in."

Having completed this little performance and apparently derived much relief and refreshment therefrom, the eccentric ghost seized a poker, flourished it in a warlike manner, and then, stepping out into the passage, followed the retreating form of Jowls with the caution of a cat in pursuit of a marauding rat.

Jowls, unconscious that he was watched and followed, proceeded to the apartment of Mr. De Lacy, which was situated in another wing of the mansion. Having listened at the door and satisfied himself that all was quiet within, the murderous midnight prowler placed his lamp upon the carpet, as before; then finding, to his extravagant joy, that the door had been left unlocked, he entered the room, although his knees smote together with terror as he did so, for Jowls was at heart an arrant coward, and he well knew that should De Lacy discover him, his instant death would follow as surely as effect follows cause.

Meanwhile, the mysterious ghost had glided up to the chamber door, with the poker elevated as if ready to strike at a moment's notice.

De Lacy had not retired to bed, but had fallen asleep upon a sofa in front of the fire. He was enveloped in his dressing-gown, and slumbered profoundly. In his hand he held the portrait of Edith Hargrave, enclosed in THE LOCKET, which Master Tom had stolen from the young lady's chamber. De Lacy, while fondly contemplating this picture, and thinking of its beautiful original, had fallen asleep; and it is reasonable to presume that the fair Edith was the presiding divinity of his dreams, for his lips wore a smile that announced supreme happiness. His magnificent gold watch and chain, enriched with diamonds, lay upon the

table, as also did a well-filled purse. These valuables were instantly pounced upon by Mr. Jowls, who quickly transferred them to his own pocket, thus combining business with pleasure—the business of robbery with the “pleasure” of anticipated murder. The villain then prepared to accomplish the infernal purpose which had brought him to the chamber. His preparations for the deed were simple, yet terrific. The carving-knife was upraised—the fatal blow was about to be struck—when a blow *was* struck that felled Mr. Jowls to the floor like a slaughtered ox. The ghost had knocked him down with the poker, and the victim lost all consciousness for the time being.

The fall of Jowls awakened De Lacy, who jumped up from the sofa. Imagining, in his bewilderment, that he was beset by robbers, he ran to his desk for the purpose of getting his pistols, when he was arrested by the voice of Master Tom, who was playing the “ghost” in the tragedy. Tom hastily uttered a few words of explanation, just sufficient to enable De Lacy to comprehend the state of affairs. A strong cord was then procured, and with it the prostrate and still insensible villain was bound hand and foot. Tom then thrust his hand into the pocket of Jowls, and restored to his patron the watch and money which the aforesaid Jowls had so unceremoniously appropriated to his own use.

“My dear boy,” said De Lacy, warmly, as he affectionately embraced Master Tom, regardless of that interesting youth’s almost entire nakedness—“you have rendered me a great service. You have saved my life, just as life is becoming most valuable and dear to me.”

With these words, the young gentleman gazed tenderly at the portrait of Edith Hargrave, and pressed it to his heart. He continued :—

“Wrap yourself up in yonder dressing-gown, my dear Tom, and then tell me all about this affair, from the beginning.”

Tom arrayed himself in the magnificently embroidered garment which De Lacy had pointed out, and then seated himself in a luxurious rocking-chair before the glowing fire. Oh! a proud and happy youth was he *then*, admitted as he was into the society of his aristocratic patron on terms of familiar intimacy, with the elegant De Lacy calling him his “dear boy,” and regarding him with looks of affection, and even gratitude. *That* was a triumph for the little chimney-sweep to achieve, was it not?

Tom told his story as follows :—

“You see, sir, when I went to bed, the exciting events of the night—to say nothing of the supper—kept me awake. Well, a little while ago—it must have been about one o’clock—I was comfortably lying in my

downy nest, thinking how grateful I ought to be for such delightful quarters on a cold winter’s night, when I heard a slight noise in the passage outside of my door, which was partly open. At first I thought it was the cat ;—but then I suddenly remembered that cats don’t, as a general thing, carry lamps about the house, for a faint glimmer of light shone into my room, and then the light remained stationary. Not so the bearer of it, however, who softly entered the room, and then I saw that it was Jowls. Naturally supposing that he was bent on mischief, I quietly slipped out of bed and placed the bolster and pillows beneath the quilt, so that they should represent my person in the bed. Old Jowls must have overheard my movements, for he paused as if alarmed ; then finding that all was still, and evidently thinking that he must have been mistaken, he walked up to the bed, and, from my place of concealment behind the curtains, I saw him reach out his hand and feel the effigy, which he took to be me. Thinking that he had me then just where he wanted me, he raised that knife, which we wrenched out of his hand just now, and with it repeatedly stabbed the unoffending pillows, completely spoiling them, no doubt. My worthy friend then left, and I modestly followed him in the distance, having first armed myself with that poker, which has proved itself a most efficient weapon. Mr. Jowls entered this room, and his first movement was to pocket your watch and your money. Then he was on the point of making you acquainted with the blade of his knife, when I took the liberty of flooring him with the poker. You were wakened by the noise ; and you know the rest. I hope I haven’t killed the rascal outright, for he’s wanted up at Sing Sing very badly.”

“He is not killed,” said De Lacy, as he examined the countenance of Jowls—“for see ! he moves, and opens his eyes. Ha, villain ! you have been foiled in your murderous intentions, and will now receive the reward of your wickedness. ’Tis thus that crime often recoils upon itself, and crushes its instigator.”

Jowls made no reply, but frowned horribly, and turned away his head, for he could not encounter the gaze of those whose lives he had tried to destroy.

A couple of policemen having been sent for, the culprit was marched off to the Tombs, there to await his examination and trial—enjoying, meanwhile, the opportunity of reflecting upon the interesting predicament into which he had brought himself by his own bad passions.

* * * * *

We now turn to matters of a more cheerful nature; and as Master Tom is a most important personage in this narrative, we shall follow more particularly the fortunes of that precocious youth, who was now an honored inmate of the De Lacy mansion, and who was allowed to have his own way in almost everything.

Tom's theatrical aspirations had not been extinguished by his row with Bully Buffer. He joined another and more respectable dramatic association, which flourished under the style and title of "*The Glorious Sons of Shakspeare and Independent Pillars of the Temple of Thespis*!" This society being furnished with real females, Tom was not required to personate virtuous beauty in distress, or persecuted milk-maids resisting the tempting but dishonorable overtures of unprincipled noblemen in spangled velvet. Tom adopted what is technically called the "juvenile business," playing the heroic lover who defies and snubs the tyrant Duke in his own proud ancestral halls, knocking down a score or two of retainers, and inciting the disaffected peasantry to rebellion. He also occasionally represented the rough but well-meaning mariner, who is continually requesting some unknown power to "shiver his timbers,"—who makes constant patriotic allusions to the glorious stars and stripes of his country—who recklessly hits the foreign monarch or potentate in the eye with a quid of tobacco, at the same time disrespectfully designating him as a "swab,"—who fences with two pirates at one and the same time, and always rushes into the cottage just in season to rescue the furniture from the gripe of the sheriff, whom he satisfies with a liberal portion of his prize-money. He then kicks the sheriff out of doors and embraces the pretty mistress of the cottage, calling her a "tight little craft," and applying to her other professional compliments. This was the line of business adopted by Master Tom, who soon became a favorite with the frequenters of the extensive hall occupied by "the Glorious Sons of Shakspeare and Independent Pillars of the Temple of Thespis." In fact, our hero became a "pillar" of such magnitude and strength, that had he withdrawn himself, the whole edifice would most assuredly have tumbled in, burying the "Glorious Sons of Shakspeare" beneath the ruins.

Not satisfied with displaying his talents upon the boards of the theatre, Tom indulged his dramatic propensities in private life, and the various inmates of De Lacy's house were particularly favored with specimens of his elocutionary and histrionic abilities. He was especially fond of bewildering and frightening poor Peggy with his sudden bursts

of eloquence. This young lady, after the discovery of the villany of Jowls, had yielded herself unresistingly to the fascinations of the handsome Tom, with whom she became violently in love. To do Tom justice, he acted with perfect honor towards the girl, never dreaming of taking any improper advantage of her extreme partiality for him, although he might easily have tempted her from the path of virtue, had he been so disposed. He merely amused himself with a little harmless flirtation, and made her many handsome presents, which he was now well able to do, for De Lacy allowed him rather more spending-money than he well knew what to do with.

Sometimes, Tom would imagine himself to be Claude Melnotte; and taking Pauline—we mean Peggy—aside, he would, in a tone of melting tenderness, describe to the wondering damsel his residence on the lake of Como—"a palace lifting to eternal summer its marble walls." Then the stage-struck youth would suddenly drop upon one knee, and pointing to the starry sky, exclaim—

"Can'st thou doubt, my Clotilda, that I love thee? Witness, ye ever burning lights that gem the vault of heaven! Ye chaste stars, look down upon us, and sanctify our loves. Would the tyrant tear thee from me? This dagger shall drink his heart's blood! Oh! Ha, ha! Revenge—revenge!"

With these words, Tom would rush frantically out of the room, leaving Peggy impressed with the firm conviction that the object of her love was raving mad.

Then, again, Tom would station himself on the stairs, as an Italian bandit, and waylay travellers. He once frightened Mrs. Hargrave almost out of her wits, by suddenly presenting himself on one of the landings, taking deliberate aim at her head with a large German sausage, and commanding her in a hoarse voice to "stand and deliver." The good lady screamed with terror, and the brigand vanished over the bannisters with marvellous celerity. From that hour Mrs. Hargrave was firm in her belief that the villain Jowls was secreted in the house, watching for a favorable opportunity to kill, burn and destroy. Tom even had the audacity to try to come *Romeo* over Edith Hargrave, whom he addressed as *Juliet*; but the young lady boxed his ears soundly, and almost died with laughter when the young tragedian, forgetting all his dignity, turned a couple of back somersets, and retired from her presence with monkey-like agility.

Tom made a mistake one night, which came near proving fatal to him.

He was ascending the stairs in the darkness—the halls not yet having been lighted up—when he heard the footsteps of a person coming down. This person he supposed to be one of the servants; and seizing the unknown by the arm, he roared out—

“Ha, catiff! I have thee at last! This to thy heart—die!”

But the mysterious individual, instead of dying according to request, grasped Master Tom vigorously by the throat, to the no small damage of that young gentleman’s “Byron tie.” Tom most undoubtedly would have been strangled upon the spot, had he not managed to utter a cry of supplication; and his voice being recognised, he was instantly released by De Lacy, for the “mysterious stranger” was no other than the august personage.

“Why, Tom,” said De Lacy; “is this you, my boy? I supposed you to be some robber, or murderer, who had got into the house. I hope I haven’t hurt you. But, in the devil’s name, what mischief are you up to now, ye young rogue—eh?”

Tom replied that he was merely rehearsing a part which he was going to play at the amateur theatre in a night or two.

De Lacy laughed, and said—

“Well, well, that’s all right. But you should conduct your rehearsals by daylight, so as to avoid mistakes. I was just looking for you, Tom, as I want to see you on particular business. Come with me to my room; I wish you to do me a service.”

“I am entirely at your disposal, sir,” said Tom, warmly.

De Lacy and the boy were closeted together for about an hour; at the end of which time Master Tom bade his patron good-night, saying—

“I now understand what you want of me, perfectly. You may rely upon my executing the business in the most satisfactory manner. Tomorrow night, then, we will commence operations. Ah! what fun I shall have—and fun is as dear to me as life itself. Once more, good-night!”

Chapter Ninth.

MR. SNARLEY, WHOSE CHARMING DOMESTIC ARRANGEMENTS ARE HEREIN FULLY DESCRIBED, IS HAUNTED BY A GHOST, AND OLD MUFF KINDLY PUTS AN END TO HIS MISERY.

BLESS us and save us! We had almost forgotten our good old friend Mr. Snarley, of pleasant memory—the sighing swain whose susceptible heart had been nearly broken by the refusal of both Mrs. Hargrave and her daughter Edith to marry him—the amiable and playful old gentleman who had become Mr. De Lacy’s next-door neighbor, dwelling in the old house which had been vacated by the two Hargrave ladies, whose near proximity he little suspected, for he believed them to be far away, and they took good care that they should never be seen by him. Again we say, bless us and save us! what *could* we have been thinking of, to come so near forgetting all about our clearly beloved christian friend, Mr. Snarley?

Where is the good old man? Why, where *should* he be, but in the bosom of his family—or, rather, in the interior of his domicil, for he has no family—alack and alas that it should be so! unless we apply the sacred name of family to the faithful Muff. But as such an application would hardly be appropriate, we shall not make it.

Let us look in upon Brother Snarley. We find him serenely seated amid his household gods. It is the jocund hour of supper; and our friend, having thrown off the cares of business for the day, is allowing himself to expand, as it were, in the genial atmosphere of Home. His expanding process is materially assisted by the provisions before him; for Mr. Snarley is at supper. The banquet board presents touching evidences of the existence of an elegant economy in his domestic arrangements. In this respect, he emulates the laudable example of many an illustrious man, for great warriors and statesmen have been known to live upon the simplest fare. We have known an author to dine upon a crust, for the very excellent reason that he could get nothing else!

The supper-table of Mr. Snarley groans and staggers beneath the weight of one red herring, broiled—one large onion, raw—a couple of penny rolls, small but nutritious—and a jug of pure cold water. This sumptuous repast cost exactly four cents, in the current coin of the republic.

The sylph-like Muff hovered around her master, and the table, like a dark bird of evil omen. It was impossible to enjoy the society of this respectable old female without becoming disagreeably conscious of an odor partaking of the combined elements of strong snuff, ancient fish and foul linen. Muff, as usual, was attired in her black bonnet and bear-skin gloves; and her jaws were bound up so tightly that she seemed to be rehearsing the lock-jaw so as to be "dead letter perfect" when that malady should attack her in reality. Her pleasing aspect was enhanced by her green goggles, which made her look like a wary old rat trying to peep through a cabbage-leaf. She never visibly partook of refreshments, and viewed the materials which composed her master's banquet with disdain. Like a chameleon she must have lived upon air, although popular superstition in the neighborhood roundly asserted that she slew rats and ate them in the coal-hole under the sidewalk, where she lodged. A German gentleman in the rag-picking profession—a man of unquestionable veracity—stated that one night he was passing Mr. Snarley's house, when his attention was arrested by a light that streamed up through the round grating in the sidewalk. Looking down through the grating into the coal-hole beneath, the German gentleman distinctly saw old Muff roasting a big rat over a small furnace. Another rat was struggling and squealing in an iron trap near her. The old woman, with her gray hair streaming all over her shoulders, looked like a fiend incarnate, as she began to devour voraciously the horrible food which she had prepared.

"Are you sure that it was a rat?" demanded one of the Dutchman's listeners, incredulously.

"Sure!" echoed Mynheer, indignantly—"does you tink dat I could have been in de sassage-making business five year mitout knowing a rat ven I see him?"

This excellent logic silenced the doubters, and the belief became general that Muff privately usurped the functions of the cat and feasted on domestic game. Whenever she appeared in the street, on her way to the corner grocery for supplies, she was hooted at; but her extreme deafness prevented her from hearing these manifestations of popular displeasure. When, however, her person was assailed with mud and other adhesive substances, she would shake her fist at her tormentors, and mumble out in her cracked voice such sentences as the following:—

"Curse you! Devil burn you! Blast and wither your hearts! Scorch your souls, crook your limbs, and turn your blood to fire!

Come here, one of you, and let me eat your flesh, and drink your blood! I will tear out your hair by the roots, and scoop out your eyes! I will make you howl and dance merrily to the music of my crazy laughter! I will dig my claw into your breast, and pull out your throbbing heart! Ah, ha! You—you—that one there—I have marked *him*, and he is doomed; he will awaken some night, shivering with horror, and find me clutching him by the throat!"

Such diabolical words as these, pronounced with fierce emphasis by that savage and repulsive old woman, would cause the crowd of boys and grown-up idlers to draw back in terror, while the unhappy individual whom she had particularly pointed out as the object of her hatred and vengeance, would slink away with an uncomfortable sensation in the region of his throat, as if he already felt the clutch of the old she-devil upon his windpipe.

Muff acquired the reputation of being a cannibal; for a small child in the neighborhood having mysteriously disappeared, the missing innocent was supposed to have been captured and eaten by the terrible inhabitant of Mr. Snarley's coal-hole. This belief soon became so strong and so general, that a posse of policemen actually invaded Muff's subterranean *boudoir*, in search of the bones or the remains of the poor child. Nothing, however, was found; and people came to the conclusion that the old woman, after devouring the flesh, must have buried the bones in some unknown place. From that time, mothers and nurses quieted their squalling brats by threatening to give them to old Muff, who would kill, cook and eat them. Some of those interesting juveniles were such total strangers to soap and water, that the most inveterate cannibal that ever lunched on "cold missionary and mustard" must have possessed the stomach of the very devil himself, if he could have contemplated them with reference to the satisfying of his hunger. If there is any living thing on this earth that we thoroughly abominate, it is a yelling and unwashed citizen of this glorious republic in swaddling clothes.

Mr. Snarley enlivened his frugal repast by conversing with the attentive Muff, who glided noiselessly about the room like some hideous reptile which had acquired the faculty of walking erect. Now, the enjoyment of Muff's conversational powers involved a considerable amount of hard labor, inasmuch as the person addressing her was obliged to utter the sentiments of his mind in a tone of voice that might be called a subdued yell. And yet Muff obstinately mistook the meaning of almost

everything that was said to her, so intense was her real or pretended deafness. We will try to give an illustration of her infirmity :

"Muff," mildly bellowed Mr. Snarley, adjusting his hand to his mouth in imitation of a speaking trumpet—"did you ever see a ghost?"

"Yes, I know I'm as deaf as a post," said Muff, shaking her head in a melancholy manner.

"No, no!" shouted Snarley, in a tone of thunder, and getting very red in the face—"I meant to ask you if you ever saw a spectre?"

"What do you suspect me of?"

"Damn it!" growled Snarley, out of all patience—"there's no such thing as making her understand. Did—you—ever—see—the devil?"

"Well, I always try to be civil."

Snarley let fly a volley of oaths; and then, clapping his mouth to Muff's ear, he roared out—

"I believe this house to be haunted by evil spirits!"

"You lie, sir," said Muff, indignantly—"I haven't tasted a drop of spirits for months. Where should I get the money? You don't pay me any wages."

Snarley was in despair. He tore his hair and stamped his feet. He even made a threatening demonstration, as if he would have punched the head of his ancient retainer; but that lady elevated her bear-skin paws, and looked so dangerously ferocious, that Snarley—who was a very timid gentleman, although he had courage enough to bully helpless women sometimes—thought better of it, and concluded that it "wouldn't pay" to get up a combat with the charming partner of his solitude.

Snarley now bethought him of a stroke of policy which he had often practiced before with entire success, and which, although it involved a ruinous degree of extravagance, was absolutely necessary in order that Muff might be enabled to hear and understand him correctly. Talk of ear-trumpets and other contrivances that cause the deaf to hear!—Snarley produced from his pocket an article that was more efficient than all of them put together. This article was a little round piece of silver, bearing upon one side the device of a star surrounded by the words "United States of America" and a date; on the reverse was a III. Not to keep the reader in a condition of torturing suspense, we will state at once that the mysterious piece of silver which was destined to restore Muff's auricular faculties, was neither more nor less than a three cent piece. This coin, which Snarley handed over with a groan of

anguish, was received by Muff with great satisfaction. Having deposited it in her stocking, she sat down and prepared to listen to her master with respectful attention.

"Muff," said Snarley, in a moderate tone of voice—"do you believe in ghosts?"

Muff nodded mysteriously, and seemed to intimate that she knew much more than she was disposed to tell.

"So do I," said Snarley, with a shudder—"and I believe this house to be *haunted*."

"What makes you think so, master? I know that the devil visits me in the coal-hole every night; but what is it that troubles *you*? Perhaps it is your imagination that makes you think you see ghosts."

"Well, perhaps it is; I hope so, at all events. Muff, I wish you would come and sleep in my chamber."

"What do you mean, sir? I've lived with you, off and on, for twenty years, and you never made such a base proposal to me before."

"Nonsense—you know what I mean. I am afraid of being alone, and want some one near me. You could sleep outside of my chamber door, and then I should feel greater security."

"No, no; I will not leave my nice apartment under the side-walk. In case of fire, you know——"

"Bah! Get out, you old fool! What fire could injure such a dried up old mummy as *you*? When Satan gets you, he may scorch, but he never can consume you! Precious little satisfaction I have got for the money which I just gave you! There, remove the fragments of the supper, and then retire to your hole. But first see that all the doors and windows are securely fastened. You hear me, don't you?"

Muff's deafness had come on again; but she cleared off the remains of the banquet, consisting of the peelings of an onion and the back-bone of a fish. Then she retired, grumbling.

Mr. Snarley was an exceedingly superstitious gentleman. The noise of a mouse nibbling in the room would make him tremble and think that a ghost was present; and a gust of wind sighing down the chimney would induce him to imagine that Satan was coming after him. Upon such occasions he would cover up his head with the bed clothes and shake in every limb, while his memory would recall many an instance of villainy of which he had been guilty, during a long career of iniquity.

How true are the words of Shakespeare—"Oh, tyrant conscience, thou dost make cowards of us all!"

It was upon the night that followed the interview between De Lacy and Master Tom, as alluded to in the concluding portion of the last chapter, when Mr. Snarley retired to his virtuous couch in the chamber which had formerly been occupied by Edith Hargrave. Having locked the door, and barricaded it with chairs to keep out all intruders, he looked under the bed and up the chimney to satisfy himself that no person was concealed in either of those places. Then he crept into bed and extinguished his light, which he would gladly have left burning, had it not been for that principle of economy, and desire to *save*, which was so firmly implanted within his breast.

The darkness seemed to bring with it a thousand terrors to the soul of that guilty man. The night was blustery, and the wind moaned around the house with a melancholy wail, that sounded to Snarley like the accusing cries of the widows and orphans whom he had wronged—for his position as agent of De Lacy had long afforded him the chance to oppress the poor and helpless, while his villany remained unsuspected by his generous and noble-hearted master.

Perhaps on that cold and tempestuous winter's night, there might be wandering houseless through the streets some poor wretch who had been deprived of home and shelter, in consequence of Snarley's cruel injustice; and this thought weighed heavily upon the mind of the unhappy man, as he cowered in his bed and listened shudderingly to the shrill voice of the winter's blast.

He tried to sleep, but in vain; and, when the midnight hour arrived, he was still awake to all the horrors of remorse and fear.

Hark! what noise was that? It seemed like the sound of footsteps, in that very chamber. Then a suppressed breathing was heard, and a *deep-drawn sigh*. Snarley's teeth chattered together, and a cold perspiration broke out from every pore of his skin—for the terrified wretch felt that *there was another being in that room with him!*

Oh! it was inexpressibly horrible for that man to lie there in his bed, in the midst of profound darkness, and to feel—to know—that a Mysterious Presence was with him; a Something vague, indefinite, and of a nature unknown and incomprehensible; yet most appalling in its uncertainty.

Another deep-drawn sigh—then the rustling of garments—perhaps of grave-clothes. Snarley heard the creature, whatever it was, gliding towards the bed—but it seemed to stop in the centre of the room and slowly fan itself with a pair of great demon wings, uttering meanwhile

a low and peculiar sound which, under the circumstances, was most strange and blood-chilling, for it resembled the soothing, droning murmur with which infants are often lulled asleep. This noise has been ascribed to gigantic *vampyres*, which are supposed to fly on dragon wings into chambers at midnight; and, after hovering over the inmates and soothing them to sleep, they are said to suck their blood. This superstitious notion was firmly believed by Snarley, who now conceived that one of these frightful creatures had contrived to enter his room. But a new and mightier terror took possession of his soul, when the mysterious intruder glided up to the side of his bed, and spoke to him in a *whispered voice!*

Snarley tried to cry out, but his tongue refused its office. He could only moan feebly, in the tremendous excess of his terror.

The spirit laid its death-cold hand upon the brow of Snarley, and whispered—

"I am a being from the other world, appointed to haunt you in this. My name is REMORSE, and I am a dweller in the pit of darkness and despair. I shall never leave you, you cannot shake me off. If you fly to the remotest corner of the globe, look behind you, and you will see me gliding after you, like your shadow. Every night you will feel my cold hand upon your brow. When death overtakes you—as it must at last—your soul, like an unclean bird, will wing its downward flight to the pit of torment, there to writhe in agony, and blaspheme, and curse, forever—ever—ever! There shall you float upon a sea of liquid glass, beneath a sky of lurid fire; and the sky above shall scorch you, while the glass beneath you will reflect and magnify all your monstrous sins. A far off, you will see pleasant gardens, adorned with stately palaces, ever-blooming flowers; and sparkling fountains. Glorious forms, arrayed in shining white, will also meet your gaze; and the delicious music will faintly reach your suffering soul, but not with a soothing effect, for these fair sights and sounds will only aggravate your misery. *Death is searching for you even now!*"

Snarley groaned, and the spirit asked, still using that thrilling whisper—

"Would you behold your evil genius? Shall I reveal myself to you, as I really am?"

No answer—for the wretched man could not articulate a single word. The cold hand was removed from his brow, and the spirit retired to the centre of the room. By an irresistible sort of fascination, Snarley's eyes,

almost starting from their sockets, strained through the darkness towards the spot where he supposed the fearful being to be standing. Soon a pale blue light illuminated the room; and there surrounded by a thin and vapoury cloud, stood the spirit. The figure was that of a corpse, clothed in the garments of the grave. Its face was awful to behold, as it betrayed the progress of decomposition. Its eyes were closed, and its hands crossed upon its breast. After standing for a few moments perfectly motionless, it slowly extended its arms and again glided towards the bed. Snarley, whom terror had completely exhausted and worn out, could stand it no longer; giving utterance to a heart-rending groan, he turned over on his back and became insensible to all that was passing around him. He had fallen in a deep and death-like swoon.

The morning was far advanced when he recovered his senses. Muff was thundering at the door, and trying to force her way into the room, for she believed that her master, who was usually an early riser, must have "kicked the bucket" during the night, and gone to another and *not* a better world. Muff sincerely hoped that such might be the case, for she hated Snarley, although she had long remained in his service because she knew that it would be impossible for her to get another place, unless she went to the alms-house. Besides, the good old lady had an eye to her master's personal effects, which she intended to seize upon as soon as he should have "shuffled off this mortal coil."

"Master—Mr. Snarley!" cried Muff, in her cracked voice, as she thumped and kicked on the door with a vigor that was surprising considering her advanced years—"are you dead? 'Cause if you are, just be kind enough to say so, and I'll make my arrangements accordingly. Confound yer cussed picter, what made you fasten the door in this way?"

Snarley felt relieved, after his night of horror, even by the voice of Muff, for the consciousness that a human being was near him seemed to dispel in some degree the awful feelings ingendered by the supernatural visitation of the proceeding night. After all, might not that spectre have been the offspring of a troubled dream? Snarley tried to think so, as he crawled feebly out of bed and began to dress himself; but suddenly his eyes fell upon an inscription written on the wall, in large black letters. This revived all his terror, for he well knew that no dream could have written that word, which appalled the soul like the mysterious inscription on the wall at Balthazar's feast. The word which so frightened Snarley was—"PREPARE!"

Fearing that the horrible spectre might be still lurking somewhere in the room, the trembling wretch hastened to admit Muff, who, on beholding her master's countenance, started back and exclaimed—

"Why, you're as pale as a ghost! You must have seen something dreadful last night. What was it?"

"Hush, hold babbler! Let it suffice for you to know that I am a doomed and miserable man. Look there!"

Muff looked in the direction pointed out by her master, and having with much difficulty spelt out the mysterious word and learned the manner in which it had been placed there, she expressed it as her firm conviction that Mr. Snarley was indeed a doomed man—an assurance which did not tend to alleviate that gentleman's distress, by any means.

"You had better *prepare*, sir," said Muff, as she compassionately shook her ugly old head in a manner to imply that she was bound to speak the truth even if its utterance gave pain to her hearer—"your time has very nearly come, and it is your duty to die—a duty which you owe to society and to yourself. You're a very bad man, sir—excuse me, I'll speak the truth, even if you break my jaw for it—you've been a wicked wretch all your life, and now you are warned that you must go below and get booked for a berth in Satan's frying-pan. Please to die, sir, and benefit the world for once. I'll lay you out nicely, and get a good cheap coffin, so that your funeral shall not cost much. I'll act as chief mourner. How soon, sir, do you think it will be convenient for you to *go off*?"

These words so enraged Mr. Snarley that, in spite of his mental agitation he could not contain himself. So he threw a chair at Muff, whereupon that snuffy old female vanished, uttering the most horrible curses.

Muff had for a long time reflected upon the propriety and humanity of assisting her master out of this world of care by infusing into his drink some drug calculated to produce eternal oblivion. That very day she visited an apothecary's shop in the neighborhood, and invested all her available capital in the purchase of arsenic, telling the clerk, in answer to his inquiries, that she intended to apply the poison to the destruction of *rats*.

The clerk, who knew his customer and was acquainted with the reputed fondness for rats as an article of diet, facetiously remarked that the poison would render the animals unfit for food; whereupon Muff "grinned horribly a ghastly smile" that made the clerk wish he hadn't said anything.

Snarley ate neither breakfast nor dinner, but he partook of supper with a tolerable good appetite. Then, feeling quite weak and unwell, he stretched himself upon a rough bench that occupied a corner of the room wherein he was accustomed to take his meals. Avaricious as he was, he would not have entered his own chamber for a mint of money, for night was fast coming on, bringing with its dusky shadows a thousand imaginary terrors; and a thrill of horror ran like a shock of electricity through his frame, when he thought of the frightful being which was to haunt and follow him until the day of his death. He almost immediately fell into a profound and death-like slumber—ah! *death-like* indeed; for when, a couple of hours afterwards, old Muff glided like a hideous reptile into the room she found him dead, cold and stiff. His body was frightfully swollen, and his face, usually so pale and cadaverous, had assumed a dark purple hue. *The poison had done its work well!*

The murderess, instead of manifesting the slightest degree of compunction for her crime began eagerly to transfer Snarley's money, keys, &c., from his pockets, muttering to herself meanwhile—

"Yes, yes; I have killed a large rat this time. But I must contrive to drag him to his chamber, undress him and place him in his bed. I'll watch by the corpse to-night, and to-morrow people shall be made to believe that he died very suddenly of apoplexy. I must get him under the ground as soon as possible. Now that I have plenty of money, I'll feast bravely to-night, while sitting by the corpse. I'll buy lots of gin to make me merry, and keep up my spirits. Ah, me!—'Tis a poor heart that never rejoices. I love a funeral better than a play; and master's funeral will be entirely of my own getting up. I must rummage all the trunks and bureaux to-morrow, to see what I can find. There, I have emptied his pockets, and will now see him safely into bed."

Muff, who possessed a much greater amount of physical strength than any one, judging from her appearance, would have given her credit for, now half carried and half dragged the corpse of Snarley into the "haunted chamber." Having stripped the body, the old woman placed it in the bed and covered it up. Then she hurried to the Dutch grocery on the corner and obtained a pint of gin, which refreshment she carried up into the chamber of death, and there prepared to make herself perfectly comfortable for the night. Lighting an old black pipe whose pungent flavor might have knocked down a horse, she took an occasional sip of gin, meanwhile slowly rocking herself backwards and forwards in her chair, and mumbling the words of a half-forgotten song which must have

been a very cheerful ditty in its time, for its chorus was "Hurrah for the cross-bones and skull!"

Midnight came, and still the horrible old woman sat near the head of the corpse with the gin bottle in her hand. Nearly overcome by her potations, she began to nod and evince a strong inclination to fall asleep. Several times she narrowly escaped falling from her chair, recovering herself just in season to avert that calamity. Suddenly a strange being, of frightful appearance stood in the room. It was the same spirit which had visited Snarley on the preceding night. It uttered a deep groan, which thoroughly awakned Muff, who, turning her head, beheld the awful apparition. Believing that the ghost of Snarley had returned to upbraid her with his murder, Muff fell from her chair, gasping and choking like a person in the agonies of strangulation; then a low moan escaped her, and her form became motionless. Intense fear had proved fatal, and the wretched old woman was dead. Thus was the gallows cheated of a victim.

The spirit having satisfied itself that Muff was dead, examined the corpse of Snarley—and, as it did so, an expression of astonishment and horror rested upon its white face. Was it not strange that a ghost, arrayed in the habiliments of the grave, should have been surprised and shocked by the contemplation of a dead human body—an object which it must have been quite familiar with?

"Well, my work is done here, at any rate," muttered the mysterious being, as it entered the chimney, and disappeared.

* * * * *

All night long, and until a late hour the next morning, there lay the bloated remains of Snarley; and there, too, on the floor by the bedside, lay the hideous corpse of old Muff, with the gin bottle still grasped tightly in her hand.

Chapter Cxvii.

WHEREIN ALL THE CHARACTERS ARE SATISFACTORILY DISPOSED OF—
THE GHOST IS REVEALED, THE LOVERS ARE MARRIED, THE VILLAINS
ARE PROPERLY PUNISHED, AND THE AUTHOR BRINGS HIS TALE
TO A GENTEEL CONCLUSION.

It was but a few minutes after the disappearance of the ghost from the chamber of the dead Snarley, leaving matters and things in the condition described by us in the last chapter, when Mr. Walter De Lacy, in the next house—the gentleman being seated in his library and looking as if he expected some one—had the honor of receiving a visit from the aforesaid ghost, who seemed to have a strong partiality for the chimney as an avenue of exit and entrance, for upon this occasion he came down the chimney and walked into the library and the presence of the proprietor thereof, without as much as saying "By your leave, sir." De Lacy, instead of showing any signs of terror, received his ghostship with the utmost nonchalance, coolly inviting him to take a glass of wine and then set down and take a breathing spell after the fatigue he must have undergone. The ghost readily complied; and stretching himself at full length upon a sofa, he swore that he was most infernally tired, as well as completely sick and disgusted.

"My job is over," remarked the supernatural being, as with the skirt of his shroud he began to wipe the flour from his face—"I shall not have occasion to haunt our next-door neighbor any more."

"Has he discovered the trick?" demanded De Lacy, somewhat anxiously.

"No, sir, that's not it," replied Master Tom,* *alias* The Ghost, as he took a cigar from the table, lighted it, and began to puff away in a very satisfactory manner—"Snarley is dead, and so is Muff, his beautiful housekeeper. Egad! the rats in the coal-hole next door will now hold a jubilee, for the ogress who used to devour them can hunt them no

* The reader, ere this, must have suspected that the ghost was no other than our roguish friend Tom, dressed and "made up" for the character which he was appointed to personate. This was the plan adopted by De Lacy to punish Snarley for his villany. The communication between the two chimnies enabled Tom to gain access to Snarley's chamber without any difficulty.

longer. And the devil and all his imps will hold another jubilee because old Snarley* has fallen into their clutches at last."

"Is it a fact that Snarley is dead, or are you merely jesting?"

"Fact, upon the unsullied honor of a gentleman! But listen, sir, and I will tell you all about the matter. You know that last night I frightened the old fellow into a fainting fit. I flatter myself that I played my part admirably, never having acquitted myself better on the stage. The blue light, which ignited like a match, worked splendidly; I uttered the words which you taught me, with due emphasis, and faithfully executed the writing upon the wall before I withdrew. But enough of last night's proceedings—I will speak of to-night. On entering Snarley's chamber, I saw him lying motionless in bed; and, seated by the side of the bed, was old Muff, nodding and almost asleep. This is all very singular, thought I—but I'll soon find out what it means; so I groaned deeply, in order to attract Muff's attention. She turned her head, and on seeing me was so frightened she fell from her chair like a person who had been shot. I was going to pick her up, when I discovered that she was stone dead. Then I examined Snarley, and found he, too, was dead; he was cold and stiff, and had evidently died several hours previously. From the appearance of the body I have no hesitation in affirming that the man met his death by poison, probably administered by that old she devil, Muff, who has received *her* reward. That was the state of affairs when I came away."

"I will send the Coroner to investigate the whole matter in the morning," said De Lacy—"and now, Tom, you had better go to bed, and I will do the same; you to dream of fame and fortune as a great actor, and I to dream of——"

"Edith Hargrave, to be sure!" shouted Master Tom, as he ran out of the room, followed by the laughing De Lacy, who, however, could not catch him.

"Yes, sweet Edith, I will dream of thee, star of my life and centre of all my hopes!" said De Lacy to himself, as he was retiring to rest; and taking up THE LOCKET, which he always wore next his heart, he pressed it fondly and reverently to his lips.

At the same instant, Edith, who was slumbering in her apartment in another wing of the building, awoke. She had been dreaming of De Lacy, and a virgin blush suffused her charming face as her eyes rested upon THE LOCKET containing his picture, which rested upon her heaving bosom; and she kissed the portrait in a transport of affection. Who

shall say that a divine *sympathy* did not exist between those two impassioned lovers, mysteriously prompting them to think of each other at precisely the same moment, and impelling them to kiss with ardor the beloved tokens of their mutual affection!

Winter passed away with its storms and its hours of gloom; and sweet Spring came with its blossoms of promise, its clear skies and its golden sunshine. Oh, Spring! virgin season of the year! thy beauty comes and goes like the loveliness of a fair woman, who reaches at last the dreary Winter of her life! But she passes away forever from our sight, while thou, O Spring, will come again with renewed beauty, and with fresh flowers wreathed amid thy waving hair. May our hearts be glad when thou art present with us, O Spring! for we know not how soon we may pass away from the earth, to behold thy radiant loveliness no more!

Ere the joyous Spring had begun to mellow into the glowing Summer, great changes had taken place in and about the mansion of Walter De Lacy. He had caused the old house next door to be demolished; and the evil reputation acquired by its last inhabitants was gradually forgotten. But the most important change was the transformation of Edith Hargrave into Mrs. De Lacy, an event which the reader, we will venture to say, has already anticipated. The happy pair, accompanied by Mrs. Hargrave, immediately started, after the performance of the marriage ceremony, on a tour of pleasure through the United States. The beauty, amiability and unpretending, yet lady-like manners of the fair bride, elicited unqualified admiration wherever she went; while the elegance, gentlemanly bearing and princely liberality of the handsome De Lacy, caused him to be a prodigious favorite. All the ladies called him a "perfect love of a man," while the "bloods" united in declaring that he was a "capital fellow and perfect brick." Whenever Mr. and Mrs. De Lacy walked abroad, people would remark—"There goes a model couple."

De Lacy's popularity is easily accounted for. He possessed in an eminent degree the rare faculty of adapting himself perfectly to whatever kind of society he might be thrown into. Among "bloods" and "fast men," he took the lead in the conversation when sporting topics were introduced;—among dandies, he was an exquisite of the first water;—in the company of ladies he was the very *beau ideal* of an accomplished cavalier;—and, when clergymen were present, he was serious

and respectful. He could play upon the guitar or piano, the last fashionable piece of music, and box with a prize-fighter, with equal facility. In dismissing him and his bride we will merely observe that they were supremely, inexpressibly happy. What more could be desired?

Mrs. Hargrave, in her blooming maturity, experienced unalloyed felicity in the contemplation of her daughter's happiness; and when the good lady was made a grandmother, her satisfaction was complete.

Master Tom remained in New York, and joined one of the regular theatres as an actor. He soon became immensely popular, for he really possessed great talent for the stage. Although placed by De Lacy in a position of independence and comparative wealth, Tom devoted himself with ardor to his professional duties. He is now a dramatic star of the very first magnitude.

The villain Jowls was sent to State Prison for a long term of years. It is to be hoped that the severity of his punishment may tend to his permanent reformation.

Monk, the financier who sloped with Mrs. Hargrave's money, was hung in California for an extensive robbery of gold-dust. Verdict of the reader—"Served the rascal right."

Peggy, the pretty servant-maid, finding that Master Tom slighted her love, in revenge became the wife of a merchant who did business with a hand-cart and peddled "fresh cod and haddock."

Gentlest of readers, if we have annoyed thee, forgive us;—if we have pleased thee, praise us;—and, in either case, close this book with a kindly feeling for the author, who is always willing to devote his best energies to thy entertainment.

THE END.

NOTE.—Tom De Lacy—complete in itself—but a direct continuation of THE LOCKET can be had of the Publisher, P. F. Harris.—price 25 cents. Those at a distance can enclose the price in a letter to the publishers and receive the book by return mail.

See last page of Cover.

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