

GAY LIFE IN NEW-YORK!

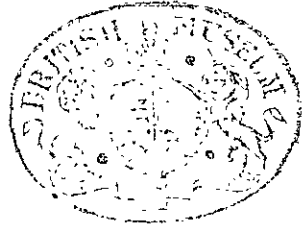
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FAST MEN AND GRASS WIDOWS

BY AN OLD TRAVELER.

NEW-YORK:
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GAY LIFE IN NEW-YORK.

CHAPTER I.

THE START AND ITS CAUSES.

"While we're young, we should be gay."

[Old Song.]

"Come, Callow, give us a song! It is the last time we shall all meet together, perhaps for years, and so let's make a night of it."

"Yes! yes, let's have one of the times we read about. Here, Landlord, bring us another bottle, and, Callow, give us a song, while I mix the punch."

Thus urged, Callow broke out into an old college song, with a rattling chorus, in which all heartily joined.

By the time the song was over the punch was ready, and after the glasses had been filled all round, Callow rose to his feet and gave as a toast:

"The Future! May it fulfill all our hopes and gratify all our desires!"

This was honored in bumpers and no heeltaps, and the fun began to grow fast and furious.

While the party were enjoying themselves, let me introduce them to you, gentle reader, and let me hope that the acquaintance will prove both pleasant and profitable.

Well, then Callow—Harry Callow, the tall handsome, frank-looking fellow, who sits at the head of the table, has been with his companions, for some years past, a student in the quiet University of V—, in Ohio. He is the son of Judge Callow, who is known as one of the most wealthy and influential citizens of the state. Free, careless, and full of life, his college days have passed happily, and though he has not carried away all the honors, he has graduated with credit to himself and to the satisfaction of his friends.

Opposite to him, at the foot of the table, sits his old chum and classmate, Frank Dutton, the son of a rich Kentucky farmer, and those who are seated round the table are all students of the University, with the exception of Charlie Ross, that soft-eyed, light-haired, romantic-looking young fellow who sits on Harry's left, and is just at this moment singing a love song, accompanying himself on the guitar, which hangs suspended from his neck by a broad blue ribbon. He is the son of the Honorable Stanhope Ross, M. C. for the District, and belongs to the class of the preceeding year. Charlie is looked upon by all his companions as an enviable fellow. Handsome, well educated, accomplished, and rich, he has a bright future before him, and might be the happiest fellow in the world.

but for his extreme susceptibility which makes him a continual victim to the charms and blandishments of the fair sex.

He is in love at least once a week, and in a dreadful state of romantic desperation as often as once a month.

He is just at this moment on the verge of despair. His last love, Lucy Walcott, with whom he has been completely fascinated for almost a month, and to whom he has dedicated at least a ream of amatory verses, and whose photograph, is even now laying next to his heart, has, after giving him every reason to believe that she returned his passion, cut him to the soul, dashed all his hopes, destroyed all his dreams of happiness and rendered him a blighted being, by slipping off quietly last week and getting married to Will Brace.

Charlie looks upon this as the climax of his misery and so he has made up his mind to be miserable. In order to accomplish this, he has resolved to go into the gay world, to seek the festive throng and plunge into the very vortex of dissipation and frivolity in New York.

He leaves for the Metropolis to-morrow. Harry Callow and Frank Dutton, having obtained the necessary consent and the necessary funds from their "governors," go with him for the purpose of seeing the world and being the better prepared to settle down on their return, and give all their energies to the study of the Law, a profession which they have both selected as the one most congenial to their tastes and most likely to gratify their ambition.

After receiving their diplomas both Harry and Frank had returned home, "sheepskin" in hand, and during the first flush of gratified pride, naturally felt by their fathers, they had succeeded in obtaining the paternal consent to their proposed visit to the Metropolis; and a week after, they set out with the maternal blessing on their heads and the paternal check in their pockets to meet their mutual friend and companion at O—; from whence it was arranged they were to set out on their travels.

"Well, you see, here we are, old fel! Got back, even before the time; pockets full of rocks and hearts chuck full of spirits, ready for a start!" exclaimed Harry as he pushed open the door of Charlie's room in the hotel and entered, followed by Frank.

They found Charlie, looking the image of woe, sighing over the picture of his fickle enslaver and up to his wrists in ink, writing an ode "On Constancy."

He looked up at the sound of his friend's voice and rose to welcome them.

"I am glad to see you," he said. "But I am afraid you will find me but a sorry companion."

"What!" exclaimed Frank Dutton. "Spooney, yet! Why I thought you would have forgotten all about the inconstant fair one by this time and have been in love over again half a dozen times by this. Nonsense, man, come, cheer up!"

"Yes," Harry joined in, "come, shorten that elongated countenance and kick care to the devil, remember the words of the old song:

'What care I how faire she bee,
Soe she bee not faire to mee.'

leave Lucy to her husband, and the prospects of a family, and ring the bell, will you. My throat is as dry as a grist-mill, and I am as dry as a fish."

Charlie looked unutterable things as he shrugged his shoulders and rang the bell.

When the waiter appeared in answer to the summons, Harry ordered "three cocktails, strong, cold, and plenty of it!"

"Stop," interrupted Charlie, as the waiter was about to leave the room, "Stop, no cocktails for me. I'll take a glass of lemonade!"

"A glass of what?" thundered Harry. "Ha! ha! ha! Lemonade. Well that's a good thing for a man in the dumps! Wouldn't you rather have a con-

centrated zephyr, in a daisy, or an iced dew drop. Nonsense, man. Tom, bring us a bottle of wine, some sugar, ice, bitters and all the *et ceteras*. I'll make you a drink, that shall take the doldrums out of you and make a man of you. Off with you, Tom! Lemonade, indeed."

"You have no sympathy with a bruised heart;" said Charlie, looking at Harry reproachfully, as Tom left the room on his errand.

"Bruised Fiddlesticks! I have no sympathy with maudlin sentiment, and don't believe in any man nursing his grief whether it be real or imaginary. So the sooner you give over sighing, rolling your eyes about like a sick calf, and behave like a fellow of pluck and sense—as I know you are when you please—the better. For its all thrown away on Harry and I, and you'll get no encouragement from us, I can tell you," said Frank, as he proceeded to make the champagne cocktails with the materials which Tom had by this time furnished him.

"There, turn that off," he said, as he gave the *coup de grace* to the last foaming goblet. "Swallow that and forget that you are fool enough to grieve over a woman."

"Yes, drain it, every drop," exclaimed Harry, slapping his sentimental friend on the back. "Stop! I'll give you a toast to drink it with: 'Woman! As sweet and as constant as the froth of our goblets.' One causes the heart ache and the other the head ache; the next pair of bright eyes cures the one, and the next bottle the other."

"There, no nonsense, down with it! and then light your cigar, and let's discuss our plans. When do we start?"

"When you please. All times are alike to me!" answered Charlie. "To-morrow morning by the early train will suit me. I'm all ready."

"What say you, Frank?"

"To-morrow by all means. The sooner we start the sooner we shall arrive, and every day we stay here is a day stolen from pleasure."

"To-morrow be it then. I'll go to the office and procure the tickets; and by the way, I've been thinking," said Harry, knocking the ashes off his cigar, "that it would be as well to get some of the fellows together to give us a good send off. Suppose we ring for our bill, order dinner for a dozen to be served in your room, and then go out and get the boys together to eat it and spend the night as befits us! What do you say?"

"Bravo!" exclaimed Frank. "The very thing! What say you, Charlie? Here finish the bottle before you answer and let the wine speak for you!"

Suiting the action to the word he emptied the remaining contents of the bottle into Charlie's glass, and handed it to him.

Charlie smiled in spite of himself and drank the wine, saying as he put down the empty glass:

"Just as you please, boys,

'I am not merry, but would fain disguise
The thing I am, by seeming otherwise.'

and I promise you to suffer in silence and be, in appearance at least, as jolly as the jolliest."

"Spoken like a brick as you are. So, while Harry and I go to summon the fellows, you order the dinner and shorten your mug a yard or two for the occasion."

Harry and Frank found no difficulty in getting the right kind of a party to dinner, and, as we have already seen, the occasion was a great success.

They ate and drank, laughed, smoked, and sung till midnight; and then with many a friendly wish and hearty hand shake, their guests departed, leaving our

three friends to complete their preparations and snatch a few hours sleep, ere they started on their journey to the Metropolis.

CHAPTER II.

THE ARRIVAL AND ITS CONSEQUENCES.

"I'm a young man from the country,
But you can't come it over me."

[POPULAR SONG.]

WHIRR! Whirr! Wish! Clang!

Past the Highlands and by the banks of the Hudson, from which the mists of night are lifting and dispersing, under the influence of the rising sun, whose golden beams are lighting up the tree tops and decorating with rubies and emeralds every nodding leaf and bending spray.

Whirr! whirr! rush! clang! Past the Katskills and by the classic nook called Sleepy Hollow—scaring from the sedgy pond which lies close by the road, the wood duck and the heron. Past snug farm houses, from whose chimney the smoke, suggestive of hearty breakfasts, is just beginning to curl. Past lovely villas, standing in the midst of old primeval trees, which cast a goodly shade when Hudson's ships first passed them by and wondering natives gazed upon the big canoes, which then disturbed the placid bosom of the mighty river.

Whirr! whirr! rush! clang! Past the grim walls which shut from out the world a thousand men who until now have wrought but evil in it. Pale, wretched men, who in the early morning light peer from behind their prison bars and look with anxious gaze upon the moving, rushing train below, thinking of what delicious joy 'twould be if they were only rushing by as free as those who look from out the windows with such curious eyes upon them.

Rush! clang! Through towns deep nestled in cool shady nooks and past the fields of emerald corn whose nodding tassels greet the train and wave it by as if they felt its triumph over time and space. Past herds of cattle, cropping the short, thick grass, heavy with dew. Past lusty farmers, going to their work, and thrifty housewives ceasing for a while their matin duties to look upon the train, now, coming on—now, past!

Whirr! whirr. Past Spuyten Devil Creek, and through Manhattanville. Rush! clang! Past Burnham's, and the villa of the Mayor. Away—but with diminished speed, past factories and groups of working men, till houses shut out the view of river and Elysian fields, and bell and whistle announce the city near at hand!

Five minutes at the thirty-fourth street station, and, deserted by the puffing, snorting, sweating monster, which has dragged this load of living freight so far, and who is put into his stall to cool after his long heat, away again; but slowly now, for horse flesh does not move so fast as iron wheels, when dragged by iron sinews!

The passengers are all away. The citizen whose absence has been scarcely missed, looks out and recognizing each remembered spot, imparts the information to his country neighbor, who visits the Metropolis for the first time.

Sweet-hearts and wives, who have passed the night in fitful naps, their heads reclined upon the hearts of lovers or of husbands, now re-adjust their rumpled dresses, and put their bonnets, which are out of shape and full of ugly in-

dentations, in the best trim they can, and try to look as if they had not been asleep, but wide awake all the way!

Among all those that greet with joy their journey's end, there are none so heartily glad as our three friends, Harry Callow, Frank Dutton and Charlie Ross, who are looking out at the window and wondering at all they see, wishing that the depot would appear.

They have been called upon by the baggage expressman, who wanted to know where they were going to put up and where he should transport their baggage.

But he couldn't come it over them. Charlie had read the newspapers. He had heard of "baggage smashers" who made away with countrymen's trunks and left the owners shirtless in a strange city. And so he looked very knowing and had winked at his companions when the man asked for their checks and offered to spare them all trouble in regard to their trunks.

"Oh, I don't mind the trouble," said Charlie. "I rather like it. I'm much obliged to you but we'll take care of our own trunks, and ourselves too, eh, boys!"

"Just as you please, gentleman," the expressman replies, "just as you please. It's no business of mine, but baggage delivered in all parts of the city—there's my card! Only twenty-five cents for each package!" and on he goes, while Harry and his friends nudge one another and think how jolly green the people are who have given up their checks to him!

"Carriage, sir!" "Astor House!" "St. Nicholas!" "Fifth Avenue!" "Metropolitan!" "Carriage, sir?" "Carry your baggage, sir?" "Got a nice carriage, sir?" "Carry you up cheap, sir!"

All those sounds, breaking upon the ears of our friends at once, as the cars stopped, announced that they had arrived at their journey's end.

"Come, boys, lets get out quick and look after our baggage!" said Harry, who had taken upon himself the office of guide and general guardian of the party. "Come, be alive, or we shall be too late for breakfast at the hotel!"

But Frank and Charlie were already on their feet and as Harry started for the door of the car, were close upon his heels.

Charlie carried in his hand a small valise, containing such necessary articles of toilet and apparel as were essential on their journey and as he stepped from the car on to the platform by its side, he found himself surrounded by a crowd of boys and half grown men, who seemed to look upon him as their lawful prey.

"Carry your valise, sir." "I'll carry your baggage, sir." "Come this way, yir honor, I've a carriage forint, the gate, fit for the President himself," shouted a stalwart Hibernian, poking his whip-stock right under Harry's nose. And in a minute Charlie found himself in the centre of a lot of cormorants, who pulled him, now this way and now that, and cursed one another and him, as each tried to carry him off in triumph.

In vain he tried to free himself. Go which way he would, he was beset, and he could see no way of escape.

"Arrah! don't be bothering the gentleman. Don't ye see he don't want any carriage?" exclaimed a boy about sixteen years old whose legs were covered with a pair of very ragged pantaloons and whose body was encased in a very dirty check shirt, open at the breast, displaying a skin all unused to soap and water. "Don't be bothrin. Sure," he said looking with a pitiful expression in Charlie's face. "Sure, sir, you'd better be after letting me take care of your valise till ye git out of this muss. I'll keep it safe, sir, and then those yelping hounds 'il lave ye. Give it to me, sir!" And suiting the action to the word, the boy took hold of the valise by the handle.

Charlie still held his property with a firm grasp, but thinking the advice was good, and seeing no other way of extricating himself from the state of seige he

was in, he said to the boy: "Well, you may carry it to the baggage car, where I am going to get my trunk, and——"

Before he could finish, the boy had the valise in his hand, and saying, "Its the Baggage Car?—Yes, sir!" pushed his way through the hackmen, baggage-men, loafers and pickpockets, who crowded round, and disappeared in the direction of the baggage car.

Charlie turned his head for a moment in search of his friends but not seeing them and supposing they had already reached the baggage car, started on after the boy to whom he had given up his valise.

But he had not taken a step before some one behind him, knocked his hat over his eyes, while a shout of derisive laughter fell on his ears.

It took Charlie some time to release his head from durance vile, and when he at last saw daylight, almost suffocated with rage and lack of air, he found the crowd which had lately surrounded him gone and no one near him but a pleasant, gentlemanly looking stranger, who had been assisting him in relieving himself from his disagreeable predicament, and who now handed him his hat, with a polite bow, saying:

"It is too bad, sir! I saw the fellow do it, but he was too quick for me. I hope you are not hurt, sir? These tricks upon travellers are exceedingly annoying. I wonder the authorities do not take some steps to prevent such conduct. It is a disgrace to the city! You are not hurt, I hope?"

"No, sir," replied Charlie, taking his hat, which was knocked out of all shape, and replacing it on his head, after trying to shake it and pull it into something like its former appearance. "I am not hurt, and I thank you very much for your attention."

"Ah, Charlie, here you are! Why where the deuce have you been? We have been waiting for you ever so long at the baggage car. You have the checks you know, and we could not claim our baggage till you came," exclaimed Frank, as he came up, followed by Harry.

"I'll go with you at once! Curse those fellows! I'm much obliged to you sir, good day!" said Charlie, as he bowed to the stranger, and walked away with his friends.

"Ha! ha! ha! Look at that hat!" Laughed Frank as he noticed Charlie's altered appearance. "Why, your new beaver is knocked into a cocked hat and nothing shorter. What's been the matter?"

"I'll tell you some other time," answered Charlie, annoyed that the trusty guide—the cute knowing one of the party, should be the first to be victimized—"I'll tell you after we get to the hotel; we must look after the baggage now. By the way did you see a boy, in his shirt sleeves, with my valise in his hand any where about the baggage car?"

"A boy? no!" answered Frank and Harry together, "We saw no boy!"

"I suppose he is here by this time," said Charlie, as he reached the baggage car, and glanced quickly around the promiscuous crowd standing there, "though by George, I don't see him! Here, Harry, you look after the baggage while I am gone. Here are the checks. I'll go and hunt him up."

Harry took the checks and Charlie started in pursuit of the boy.

He went out into the street and looked up, and down and across, to no purpose; then going back into the Depot, he searched it from one end to the other, but the boy was nowhere to be seen.

At last, in despair, he stopped one of the employees of the company, who was rushing by, rolling a hand-truck before him, and asked him if he had seen any thing of a boy, with a valise in his hand.

"Was?" Asked the porter—a stout looking German, stopping without letting go the handles of the truck. "Was?"

Harry repeated his question.

"A poy?"

"Yes. A boy."

"Vos he a pig poy?"

"Yes!"

"Mit a pundle in his hand?"

"No, no, a valise!"

"Yaw! Mit a plack valise, mit a prass lock?"

"Yes. Yes, where is he?"

"Vos he a nice looking poy! Mit a grey cap und a plack jacket? Yaw, I seen him yisterday?"

"No! no! He was a dirty looking boy, with a slouch cap on and no jacket at all."

"Ah, mien Got! Vel I hash'ent seed him!"

Charlie rushed away, and going up to a crowd of men standing at the upper end of the building repeated his question to the group. As he did so, he observed the polite and gentlemanly stranger who had assisted him so kindly to get his hat from over his eyes, go quietly away.

"What! You lost yer trunk?" asked one of the group.

"No, not a trunk, a valise."

"Well, you don't suppose none of us have got it, do you—say?"

"By no means," answered Charlie, his face flushing. "By no means! As I said, I gave it to a boy, to take care of for a moment, and I can find him no where!"

"What was his name?"

"I did not ask it!"

"Did he have a badge on his hat?"

"No."

"Um! What kind of a looking boy was he?"

Charlie described him as nearly as he could, and added, "He seemed an honest boy enough, and only offered to carry my valise, in order that I might the more easily escape from the crowd of blood-suckers which beset me."

"Well, when you see him agin, let me know, will you?" said the villanous looking individual who had taken upon himself to be the spokesman of the group.

"Why? Do you think he is not honest? That it is not all right?"

"Oh, it's all right enough for that matter. I know that boy. And they don't make 'em any smarter than he is. He's got your valise safe enough."

"I hope so," replied Charlie, "but I wish I could find him!"

"Well, I'll tell you where you can do that!"

"Where?" asked Charlie, brightening up.

"At his mother's, where he lives."

"And where is that?"

"On the corner of Madison Square and City Hall place! His name's Maginnis!" said the man, winking slyly at his companions.

"Oh, thank you," said Charlie, as he made a memorandum of the address.

"I am much obliged to you!"

"You are quite welcome," said the man. "But, as you are from the country, and you aint got your eye teeth cut, let me give you a piece of advice. The next time you come to town, keep your own grapples on your baggage!"

"You may be sure I will!" exclaimed Charlie as he walked back, with a discomfited look, for he began to think it was just barely possible he had made a fool of himself, and that it would perhaps have been better, after all, if he had handed his checks to the baggage expressman in the cars.

He found his friends waiting for him very anxiously, beside their trunks, over which a hackman was standing guard, with a defiant air as though he'd like to see the man bold enough to carry them away from him.

"Did you find the boy, Charlie?" asked Frank, "and your valise?"

"No," replied Charlie, evading the truth, for he wished, if he could, to disguise his greenness from his friends, "No! I suppose the boy missed me in the crowd. But it's all right: I have his address. He lives with his mother, a Mrs. Maginnis, on the corner of Madison Square and City Hall Place!"

"Oh murther!"

This exclamation proceeded from the hackman, who followed it up with a shout of laughter, which fairly shook the building. "Och murthur! Mrs. Maginnis on the corner of City Hall Place and Madison Square! May the devil fly away wid me but that's a quare direction any how!" And again the Jehu burst into a fit of boisterous laughter.

"What in the name of all Creation is that fellow laughing at?" asked Harry, making a step towards the hackman. "I'll make him laugh on the other side of his mouth."

"Hold in, Harry, not so fast! I suppose the fellow cannot help it. Do you see this?" and Frank raised Charlie's duster from the floor and displayed to Charlie's astonished gaze the identical valise of which he had been in search!

"Why, there's the valise after all!" exclaimed Charlie, stooping and picking it up. "And I had began to think that I should never see it again. I knew the boy was honest! The thing is not of such great value, but I hated to think that I had been tricked. I knew I was not such a fool as to be imposed upon that way! They can't fool Charlie Ross quite so easy!"

"Well," said Harry. "I don't know whether they fooled you or not; but in a minute or two after you went in search of the boy, he made his appearance accompanied by a police officer, who was looking for the owner of the valise. Of course we recognised it at once and claimed it."

"Yes," joined in Frank, "it seems that honest boy of yours, who was not smart enough to fool you, is a notorious baggage smasher, as such thieves are called, and the policeman who saw him making off with it, as fast as his legs could carry him, nabbed him and brought him here!"

"Where is he now?" asked Harry.

"Far enough away, yer honor, by this time. For as you wasn't here, and your friends could not swear but that you gave him the valise, and there was no proof that he was a going to steal it, the M. P. let him go."

"Confound the rascal! It's lucky for him I didn't catch him! But come let's be off!"

"Where?" asked Frank. "You are our guide, you know, where do you propose to take us?"

"Well, I've been thinking about that. All the hotel coaches are gone I see!"

"Long ago, your honor," interrupted the hackman, coming forward. "This half hour, but sure I've a nate bit of a coach, and as purty a pair of nags outside, as iver a gentleman rode behind, so, say the word, gentlemen, and I'll whisk you off any where you've a mind, in a jiffy."

"I say, boys, I've been thinking as we came along, that everybody goes to the big hotels. The Astor House, Metropolitan, St. Nicholas, Fifth Avenue, and all the rest of them, but I know a dodge that will suit us better. Listen! If we go to one of them houses, we shall find it full and running over, and, if they are able to take us in at all, we shall be poked up on the sixth story, right under the roof, in little coffins of rooms, which it will be a day's journey to reach or to leave, besides the risk in case of fire!"

"Besides we have come to see the city, and as it can't be seen in a day, we shall probably remain some time, and we don't want to be bound to an hour for our dinner or supper. So, I thought, if we could find some nice, quiet place, where we could get a good room to ourselves, and get our meals when and where fancy or inclination might lead us, we should be more comfortable, at less expense, and be more independent and free every way!"

"A capital idea, Harry!" said Charlie, "and very thoughtful of you."

"A good idea, certainly," said Frank, "but where, shall we find such a place?"

"No trouble at all yer honors, I kin take yee till a dozen!" broke in the hackman.

"Then take us!" said Harry, "what do you say, boys? shall we let him be our Cicerone?"

"I'm agreed," said Frank.

"And I," said Charlie.

"Then, come on! Here, hackman, those are our trunks! But stop! whate the fare? I'm up to traps you know! no swindle," said Harry, looking very shrewd, and laying his hand upon the trunk which the hackman was in the act of lifting from the ground.

"Sure, I'll not over charge ye. 'It'll be all right, gentleman. I dale fairly wid ye!"

"Yes, that's all very well," Harry persisted, "but I prefer to make a bargain. What will you charge?"

"There's three of yes and five trunks, besides the portmante. And the place I'll take ye to is five mile from here or more, but ye seem to be nice gentlemen and I'll take ye for six dollars and say no more about it," and the hackman again laid his hand on the trunk!

"Stop!" exclaimed Harry, let me see," and he began to consult a small book he held in his hands. "Let me see! Hack regulations, um! Ah, here it is! 'Twenty-five cents per mile for each passenger.' Why, according to he law you are only allowed three dollars and seventy-five cents!"

"Hoot, man! Sure you forget the extra baggage! sure theres six pieces of them, and then the distance. Sure its seven miles if it's a fut. And then yer honor would be after keeping a poor boy from making an honest penny. Sure we'd starve to death wid what the law allows us. It's taking you chape I am! Sure, I wouldn't be after coming any of my tricks upon you, sir, for faix I know I couldn't. Your not one of the grane ones, sir! I knew dat when I first laid eyes on ye!"

This delicate little bit of flattery settled the business, and Harry exclaimed: "All right! Go ahead and be in a hurry for it's time we had some breakfast!"

The trunks were soon put on, the three took their seats, the driver mounted the box of a snug hack and whipping up his lank steeds they commenced their journey over the stones.

The place to which they were driven was about half a mile from the depot in a street running down to the river from Broadway, and might have been, reached in ten minutes with ease, notwithstanding the horses could not be called good ones to go. But owing to the fact that the driver took them up Greenwich Street to Fourteenth Street, and back again nearly to the starting place, down the Sixth Avenue, and through Carmine Street, it was at least an hour before they were deposited before the doors of the Skinner House where they alighted.

Harry went in and inquired if they could procure such accommodations as they wished and finding they could, he informed his friend and they alighted.

"It *was* a long journey and you've earned your money!" said Charlie, putting his hand in his pocket to pay the stipulated fare.

"And—and—no! By thunder some infernal scoundrel has picked my pocket!"

CHAPTER III.

A NICE QUIET HOTEL ON THE EUROPEAN PLAN.

"Shall I not take mine ease in mine inn." [SHAKESPEARE.]

"You don't mane that, yer honor? Picked your pocket! Bad cess to the murdering thaves! Sure, had you much in it?"

"Picked your pocket!" exclaimed Frank and Harry, both in a breath? "Who could have done it?"

"I don't know who did it, but my watch is gone and so is my portemonai, and fifteen dollars with it. It's lucky I put the old man's certified check in my trunk, or that would be gone too. But it's no use talking about it now; so, Frank, pay the man, and let's get in, and have some breakfast, for I'm as hungry as a wolf!"

Frank, whose pockets were as yet virgin to the delicate touch of New-York pickpockets, took out his wallet and paid the hackman, who no sooner got his money, than he jumped on his box and drove away, with many thanks.

By this time their trunks had been deposited in the office of the hotel, whither they followed them, and while they are registering their names, we will take a cursory glance at the establishment and those who manage it as well as those who live in it.

The hotel, as we have indicated, was called the "SKINNER HOUSE," and was conducted in the European plan, that is, the rooms were let at so much per day or week, and the meals were supplied from the restaurant below *a la carte*, at certain fixed prices per dish.

Judd Skinner the proprietor is an Englishman, who came to this country some years since, in an emigrant ship; and his enemies say, that by doing so, he escaped Botany Bay for the term of his natural life, if he did not escape the halter.

He had a small amount of money when he arrived, which he invested in the stocking and fitting up of a low Flash Ken* in the central part of the city, which was for years a noted resort for the worst class of his countrymen, and men and women of the lowest order.

Being naturally shrewd and smart, he accumulated sufficient, in time, to enlarge the place into an extensive lodging home, on the cheap plan, and from this he emerged into the Skinner House.

It is not large, in comparison with many houses kept upon the same principle but it is sufficiently capacious to answer the purpose of its proprietor, who by the peculiar way in which he conducts his business, manages to make it pay much better than larger and better located establishments.

The Skinner House, though it has its regular boarders, does not depend upon them for its success. There are in fact but so many assistants, and though they pay their bills, and conform outwardly to all the regulations of the place, they have an interest, as we shall see, in the transient custom of the house, and leave no effort untried to increase it.

Those who live here permanently, are well dressed men. That is, whatever, they wear is of the best, and cut in the extreme of fashion. A D'Orsay might take exceptions to their tastes in the choice of colors, and would perhaps offer some objections on the score of jewelry, which is generally of the loudest description and more showy than neat.

Large rings and larger cluster pins abound. Chains, which might serve as part of the machinery of some gigantic engine, are by no means scarce; and their studs, which would serve as targets for sharp shooters, weigh down the bosoms of their wearers.

*A drinking house which is the resort of thieves and other bad characters.

Most of the gentlemen carry canes in their large, fat stumpy hands, and few of them but wear hats in which you might not see your face reflected.

There seems to be, among the permanent guests of the Skinner House, a marked and almost universal objection to any colored hair except black, for, among them, there are many, the natural color of whose hair is red, and the hue of whose whiskers would be, if allowed to keep their natural appearance—not to put too fine a point upon it—sandy, who religiously disguise these tints and by the aid of a chemical preparation, the compounded mysteries of which are a secret to all but the barber who mixes them, rejoice in locks, black as the raven's wing, and moustaches, which are as dark as the deeds of those who wear them.

The permanent boarders of the Skinner House, do not remain much in their rooms or in the house, unless it be to sleep. They come in late, and as soon as they get up, they either stand upon the steps and smoke, or else take up their position on Broadway in the vicinity of cigar stores, wholesale liquor houses, or on a corner which is the locality of some noted restaurant, such as Felters's, on the corner of Houston Street and Broadway.

Here they stand for hours, watching the ever-changing throng which passes up or down; now and then exchanging a nod with one of their own sort; or side-long glances at the gayly dressed women who swing by.

They toil not, neither do they spin; yet they are arrayed in purple and fine linen, and though their hands are large and coarse, they are soft and tender, and not seamed or callosed by work.

How then do they live? The proprietor of the Skinner House could tell you if he chose, but we will not ask him. We will see for ourselves!

The Skinner House is not altogether a bachelor establishment. The presence of lovely women is not wanting, and one may see bright eyes, red lips, soft cheeks, and slender forms flitting about, if he but looks out, and does not keep his eyes shut.

Some of these ladies are married. They have husbands who support them sumptuously on nothing, or at least by doing nothing. Their liege lords are among the best dressed, most bejeweled, and most idle of the permanent boarders of the Skinner House.

They are not suspicious, though their wives go out often alone and return with company. They are not overloving either, for sometimes husband and wife will meet on Broadway, or in some gilded eating saloon, and take no more notice of each other than though they were the merest strangers, though if one looked very sharp, he might think there was a hidden meaning in the looks they give each other or the turn they give their eyes in passing.

Others of the Lady Boarders at the Skinner House are married, but like Bianca are "most miserably single." They are the "California Widows;" one of whom is equal to a whole army of the widows, of whom old Sammy Weller stood in such mortal fear.

Their husbands are in California, delving in the mines or otherwise seeking fortunes, but they never send their wives any money. And yet, there are few ladies who keep up with the fashions, more closely, who live more elegantly, who spend more money, or have a better time, generally, than those same California widows!

Besides these, there is occasionally a *bona fide* widow, who really had a husband once, but who has departed, leaving his image stamped upon a boy, but leaving nothing else.

And yet, this poor widow, with the incumbrance of her orphan child, has no reason to complain. Her grief is assuaged in weeds of costly woof; and she waxes fat on all the luxuries of the season, which can be had for money. If

she mourns, she mourns in secret, for she is always jolly; and, considering the "creditable circumstances" under which she does it, she would form quite a study for any philosophic Tapley who wished to follow her example.

The clerk of this choice establishment, who has just courteously informed our friends where they can procure their breakfast and how, is what may be safely called a Glorious Creature.

He is a handsome man and, as he is by no means destitute of a want of self-appreciation, he has a realizing sense of the fact.

He is elaborately gotten up. In fact among all the guests, flashy and expensively dressed, as they are, there are none who can compare with Pierce Boxby, the gentlemanly clerk!

His hair is a study for a painter. So rich in its color; so glossy; so soft; so silky; only equaled by his moustache, which is the envy of all the men who look upon it. His teeth are small and white. His nose—alas, of his nose, no person of real taste could speak in exalted terms! For it is *retrosez* to a fault. In fact it is a pug, and vulgar. But for his nose, Pierce Boxby would look like a gentleman; as it is, his nose betrays him. His figure is good; admirable! His hands are not over large, and are white; his foot is shapely and he has *such* a pair of eyes! But that nose! Look at his back, and you might mistake him for a prince, or the most popular light comedian of the day—which is almost the same thing—but as soon as the eye falls upon that nose, you know him to be a blackguard by instinct and a sharper by profession!

Such, in brief, is the nice, snug hotel into which the accommodating hackman has introduced our friends. Let us see how they are getting on.

After registering their names and taking possession of their rooms, which they found quite to their satisfaction, being large, airy, commodious and well furnished, they returned to the office to see about breakfast.

Pierce Boxby was all smiles and attention. He inquired whether their room suited them, whether he could add in any way to its conveniences, and being satisfied on these points, inquired whether it was their first visit to New York, and whether they would like some breakfast.

Receiving an affirmative answer to both these questions, he in the blandest manner, summoned a waiter, and ordered him to show them to the restaurant and see that they were supplied with all they might require.

"Well," said Charlie, as the three friends found themselves together in a box, "I think we have got into pretty snug quarters, eh! Everything is just as we want it, and how much better it is to sit here and breakfast cosily together than to be subjected to all the noise, bustle, and discomfort of a big hotel."

"It's all very nice," said Frank, "and I think it was time something should turn up right, for what with you losing your trunk, and having your pocket picked afterward, I began to think that we had fallen among thieves!"

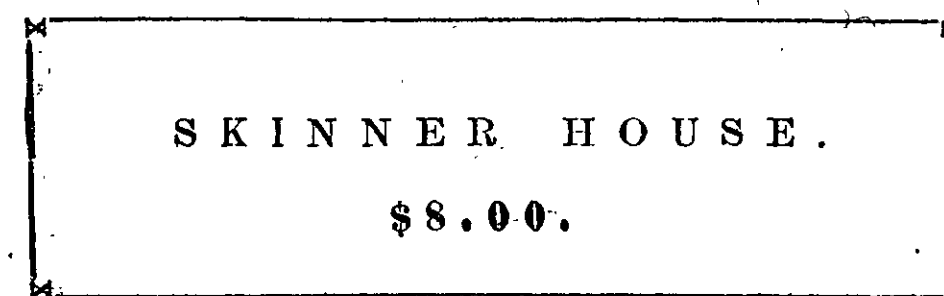
"Who could have picked your pocket?" asked Harry.

"I can't imagine unless it was some of those rascally fellows who beset me so to carry my valise. After my hat was knocked over my eyes, I saw nothing of course, and when I got my head out of my hat there was no one near me but the gentleman who kindly assisted me. I intend to go to the Police Office about it anyhow. It is not the money I care for, because, thank fortune it is not much, but, I am determined to show these infernal New York sharpers that I'm a match for them!"

Here the breakfast made its appearance and they discussed that and their plans together.

In the first place they would go down to the Bank and attend to some money matters, then deliver some letters of introduction, which they had brought with them, and afterwards take a stroll in Broadway. Having arranged these things

to their satisfaction, and finished their breakfast, they called the waiter, who handed them a piece of pasteboard on which was printed:



"What is this?" asked Charley to whom the piece of pasteboard was handed.

"Check, sir! Your check, or shall I put it in three checks, sir. Its all the same, but I thought one gentleman would pay for all."

"Yes that's all right," answered Harry, "but what is this for?"

"Your breakfast, sir," answered the smiling waiter. "Pay at the bar please, sir!"

"Oh! I see," exclaimed Harry, "this is the amount of our bill—to be sure. See, \$8.00, all right! But stop, what have we had?"

"Had, sir?"

"Yes—the items. Haven't you made a mistake. Have we eaten eight dollars worth?"

"All right, I assure you, sir," said the waiter. "Eight dollars. Three steaks one dollar—three dollars; three omelets, three shillings—one twelve; six coffees, one twenty; three toasts, sixty; four cigars, fifty cents—two dollars; quite right, sir. Pay at the bar," and the waiter disappeared.

"I suppose its all right," said Frank, "though I'm blessed if they don't know how to charge."

"Oh, d—n the expense," exclaimed Harry; "but there's nothing like letting these fellows see you are up to a thing or two and not to be swindled."

The Bill—which was an overcharge in every respect—was paid; and the three friends walked back to the office.

As they entered a gentlemanly-looking man was looking over the register and, talking in a low voice to Pierce Boxby, who, as he became aware of their presence gave the gentleman a wink and said 'Nix a' weedin.'

The gentleman turned round and Harry recognized the polite stranger who had so kindly assisted him at the depot.

CHAPTER IV.

THE LADY IN BLACK.

"A weeping woman with two bright eyes
Is the wickedest devil among them all."

[INGOLSBY.]

"I AM glad to see you again, sir," said the stranger, advancing and extending his hand to Charlie. "Are you stopping here?"

Charlie took the proffered hand, as he replied. "Yes, myself and friends have chosen this house as our quarters for the present."

"You could not have done a better thing, I assure you! I hope you find yourselves comfortable. If you do not, I am sure it will be no fault of our

friend Boxby, here, who is proverbial for his devotion to the guests of the Skinner House. I am an old lodger here and can speak from experience!"

"Do you live here then, sir?" asked Harry.

"Oh, yes!" replied the stranger. "I have lived here ever since the house was opened, with the exception of such times as I have been called out of the city; eh, Boxby?"

"Mr. Winstone has been a guest of the house for a long time," replied the good-looking keeper, thus appealed to.

"Allow me to thank you once more, for your kindness to me this morning," said Charlie. "You found me in a somewhat unpleasant predicament."

"Did you find the valise you were in search of? To tell you the truth, I think it almost a miracle if you did," observed Mr. Winstone, taking a knife from his pocket and paring his delicate filbert-shaped nails.

"Oh, yes, thanks to a vigilant police officer," replied Harry. "I succeeded in getting my valise from that young scamp—but—I met with another loss!"

"Indeed!"

"Yes, some industrious, light-fingered scoundrel picked my pocket," and Charlie proceeded to detail to the polite gentlemen all the incidents attending his loss.

Mr. Winstone was all attention, during Harry's recital, and after expressing some common-place regrets; asked in a careless manner:

"Do you think you would be able to recognise any of the money?"

"I do not think I could," Harry answered, "I am not used to the money in this section of the country. I intend to take steps to recover it, if possible, however!"

"I wish you may succeed!" said Winstone, "but it will I fear be a difficult matter, Mr. —"

Seeing that Winstone hesitated to call him by name, Harry said:

"My name is Ross, sir, permit me to introduce my friends, Mr. Dutton—Frank Dutton from Kentucky, and Mr. Harry Callow, like myself a Buckeye, from Ohio."

"I am most happy to meet you, gentlemen," said Winstone, shaking them heartily by the hand. "I hope you will find your stay in New York a pleasant one and shall be very happy to do all in my power to render it so. There is much to be seen, and as I know the town pretty well, consider me at your service at any time to trot out the Lions! Can I give you any information at the present time which will be of service to you?"

"I know of nothing," replied Harry, "unless you will inform me where I shall find the Bank of America?"

"I am going in the neighbourhood myself," said Winstone, "and will show you. When do you wish to go?"

"Why, the sooner the better; as the quicker I get through with the little business I have there, the sooner I shall be at liberty to enjoy myself!"

"I will go with you immediately."

"Then if you will wait here with my friends while I go to my room a moment we will proceed," said Harry, as he obtained the key of his room from the office and went up stairs.

As soon as he returned, the four started together, and soon reached Broadway.

Rush, helter, skelter, dust, noise, omnibuses, carriages, and carts; white men black men, and red men; silks, rags, broadcloth and frieze; poverty, luxury, wretchedness and crime! Broadway!

In no other place are so many different shades and varieties of men and manners to be seen. In no other city are such strong contrasts visible.

You may be sure our friends kept their eyes open, and though they said little they evidently thought a great deal.

When they arrived opposite Trinity Church at the head of Wall Street, Mr. Winstone left them, after giving them full directions by which they could find the Bank of America, and with many cautions, left them and continued his walk down Broadway.

Harry found the Bank without difficulty, presented a letter of introduction he had brought, to the cashier, with whom he deposited the check which was for a considerable amount, and drawing enough money for present use, Harry left the Bank with his friends.

"So this is Wall Street," said Frank, as they stood on the top of the massive steps in front of the Bank. "Wall Street the great monetary heart of the Union, whose every throb is felt from one end of the country to the other!"

"Yes, and where the Bulls and Bears carry on their eternal warfare." They turned and saw Winstone standing by their side.

"I find I have nothing to do to-day," he continued after some little surprise had been expressed at his reappearance, "and thinking you might be disposed for a walk, I have come to offer my services as guide."

"We are much obliged to you," said Harry. "Where shall we go?"

"Let accident decide. We will turn up Broadway and if we go nowhere else I dare say we shall find enough there to interest us till dinner time."

The human tide which flows through the great thoroughfare, was not at flood yet, for it was still early in the day, but one who keeps his eyes open can always find something to interest him in Broadway even when it is quietest.

They stopped before the Museum to gaze on its gay transparencies delineating Anacondas a mile in length, devouring whole oxen, and gorging themselves with gigantic negroes, and wondered at the obese proportions of the fat baby, and looked with wonder upon the counterfeit presentment of The What-Is-It?

The Brass Band was blowing its brains out on the Balcony and the flags of all Nations were waving from the various staffs in the summer breeze.

"Let us go in," said Charlie Ross. "What do you say?"

"It will kill an hour," said Winstone, "and although the Museum is rather a slow thing for a city man to do, I dare say you will find something to amuse you."

"Come on then," said Harry, as taking Frank's arm they commenced the dangerous passage of the streets.

There was a line of omnibuses rushing down, a line rushing up, a host of carriages mixed up with them, and a wilderness of drays, carts, waggons and vehicles of all descriptions, endeavouring to make their way along.

It requires no little judgment and caution, and considerable coolness and strategic science for a New-Yorker, to cross Broadway in safety, and nothing but years of experience and a thousand hair breadth escapes can ever render the accomplishment of the feat a certainty, but for a stranger it is almost an impossibility, and our rural friends made the discovery on their very first onset.

First Charlie, who in his excitement had relinquished Winstone's arm, found his progress barred by an immense express wagon, which he could neither climb over or get round, and was forced to go back, to the place from whence he started, where he made up his mind to wait until the jam should be over. Winstone from the opposite side, which he reached without accident or hindrance, beckoned to him to make a bold rush and get through.

Harry and Frank had succeeded in reaching the middle of the street, but not a yard further could they go, so not relishing the idea of standing still, and being run over, they ran now up the street, and now down, finally succeeding in effecting a landing about two blocks below the Museum.

In the meanwhile Charlie waited for the endless procession to go by, till growing impatient he was just about starting again, on a neck or nothing run for it, when he became conscious of some one near him, and looking round he saw a young and beautiful woman, standing by his side.

She was dressed in black, and her whole appearance was such as would naturally inspire an interest in susceptible bosom like that of Charlie Ross.

As he looked at her she raised a pair of soft liquid blue eyes to his, in a very modest manner, but dropped them suddenly, as if abashed at the signal admiration expressed in Charlie's looks.

She evidently wished to cross the street, and as evidently was afraid to venture. Charlie's first impulse was to offer his protecting arm, but the rush of vehicles was even greater than before, and he hesitated. While he did so a policeman suddenly made his appearance from among the moving chaos, and holding out his hand into which the lady put hers, which was so small and delicate, and taper that it seemed more like a baby's hand than a woman's, he succeeded, by dint of checking first one driver and then another, ordering one to drive one way and another to stop, in opening a passage through which he led the young lady in black, in safety, while Charlie followed in the rear, his admiration for her increased an hundred fold by a sight of her foot and ankle, increased in the tiniest of gaiters, moving in the midst of a cloud of immaculate drapery; as she gracefully lifted her dress high enough to protect it from the dirt of the street, and display the swell of a leg, Venus might have felt proud of.

While Charlie stopped to look after his friends, whom he had missed, he saw her go up the Museum steps and enter. As she passed the door she turned, and her eyes again met his.

He was so much struck that he would have forgotten all about his companions and followed her at once, but just then Harry, Frank and their new acquaintance came up, and after rallying him slightly upon his first passage of Broadway, they all turned their steps towards the Museum together.

"Did you ever see anything more beautiful," exclaimed Charlie to Frank. "By Jove, she is divine."

"What or who in the name of all that is mysterious are you talking about?"

"What! Did you not see her?"

"Her? Who?"

"Why the lady who crossed the street in advance of me, under convoy of a great brute of a policeman; she has just gone into the Museum. Come, let's make haste, for I would rather look at her eyes once more, than see all the glories of New-York together."

"What, already! I say, Harry, do you hear! Charlie is smitten with some angel in petticoats, whom he just crossed the street with!" exclaimed Frank, as they entered the vestibule of the home of the "What-Is-It?"

"I expected as much. If twenty-four hours should pass without seeing him in love, I should think there was something wrong!"

"Wait till you see her!" exclaimed Charlie, who by this time had purchased the tickets, and led the way, followed by his friends, past the grim looking Cerberus who guarded the portal.

We cannot follow them in their peripatetics through the Museum, or tell how Harry and Frank were amused with this and disgusted with that. Everything received its due share of attention from both of them; let us rather follow Charlie for whom the five thousand curiosities had no attraction, and who passed them all contemptuously by, as he looked about in vain for the angel in black who had entranced him with a glance.

From room to room, around the den of the Boa Constrictors, through the aquaria, among the relics of the past and through the wonders of the present, searched Charlie in vain.

At last, on the topmost story, nearest heaven, where, in his thoughts, she most properly belonged, gazing upon toothless cats in close and friendly proximity to blind rats, and looking upon that queer conglomeration of antagonistic

animal life, known as the "Happy Family," he caught sight of the object of his search.

Did she feel that he would find her there! Did she, with that mysterious prescience, with which women are blessed, foresee that the glance of her eye had completed the fascination of his soul? Did she know that the victim was in her toils, and that nothing remained for her to do, but weave the meshes of her arts more closely about him to secure her prey? If she did, why, to any casual observer, did she look so modest and unsophisticated in her beauty? or, if she did not, what did that quick, designing, self-satisfied look, which passed over her face, as with a side long glance she saw his approach, indicate?

We shall see!

Charlie no sooner saw the lovely lady in black than all the boldness which had befriended him in search of his innamorata, and which had led him to resolve to address her on sight, deserted him, and instead of approaching her, or even looking towards her, he persistently looked in every other direction and pretended to be deeply interested in a plucked ostrich, which appealed to the sympathies of all the visitors as he strutted about his dingy pen, and exposed his nakedness to their gaze.

Whether the young lady did it designedly or not, the sequel will show, but it so happened that after gratifying her curiosity at the cage of the milenium in miniature, she slowly walked toward the spot where Charlie was standing, so that when that individual turned his head she was within four feet of him, and staring with much apparent interest out of the window which looked upon the busy scene below.

Charlie's first impulse was to speak to her. Then he changed his mind. He was fearful of being repulsed and more fearful of offering what might be construed into an insult to one so young, lovely, and innocent.

He was about turning away and relinquishing his late purpose, hoping that by some lucky accident during his stay, chance might make him acquainted with her in some more proper and conventional manner, when she dropped from her hand, hanging listlessly by her side, a guaze-like handkerchief.

She seemed to be unconscious of her loss, so that our young friend could do no less than take a step forward, stoop, pick up the fragile fabric and present it to her.

She did not notice the action; she stood gazing straight before her, motionless as a statue, save the soft undulations of her lovely bosom, the voluptuous swell of which was just visible above the fold of her dress, and a slight quivering of her pouting lip which betrayed some emotion which it required all her strength to control.

Taking another step forward, Charlie stood by her side almost touching her, and laying his hand gently upon her arm, feeling as he did so an electric thrill through all his frame, he presented the handkerchief, with a bow.

"Oh! Thank you, sir!" she said.

How musically the words fell upon his ear! So soft, so sweet was her voice; so full of touching sentiment her deep liquid blue eyes, as she turned them towards him.

He could have fallen down and worshiped her, and was about choking out of his husky throat some common-place remark, with a view of opening a conversation, when, to his astonishment, she burst into tears, and, sitting on the broad ledge of the window, buried her pretty face in her handkerchief and sobbed as if her poor little heart would break.

This was more than Charlie could stand, and in a moment he was sitting by her side.

"Pardon me," he said, "but you seem unhappy. I do not wish to appear impertinent but I—"

"Hush!" she said, her face still buried in her handkerchief. "Hush!"

Leave me, sir, I beg! My misfortunes cannot interest a stranger, and should you be observed you would add to my troubles! Leave me, sir, I beg! I am a very foolish woman; but pray sir, leave me!"

But by this time Charlie's sympathy was fully aroused. He felt as though he would wage battle with a host of giants, if he could banish one tear from her fair cheek, or one sorrow from her suffering heart, as he took her little hand in his enthusiasm, and said:

"Leave you! Oh do not ask it! Do not think me unmanly, or that I seek to take advantage of your sorrow or present unprotected state, but from the moment I saw you, not an hour ago, I felt interested in you. I am a gentleman! I mean no insult, I would not say a word to make you blush, but believe me, when I say that the sight of you has stirred up feelings I had thought were dead forever! I cannot leave you! Is there nothing I can do? no service I can render you which will chase away the sorrow which enshrouds you? Speak!"

She had ceased sobbing. Her hand still lay in his, and as he ceased speaking, she turned those eyes, now wet with her tears, upon him and murmured: "It is very wrong and very silly of me, this foolish display, but my heart was full and I could not help it. You will excuse me, and leave me, for were I seen speaking to you, the consequences might be terrible to me and unpleasant to you? My husband——"

"Your husband!" exclaimed Charlie. "Oh say not that you are married! Your husband!"

"He is very jealous of me," she continued, unheeding Charlie's interruption, "and is ever watching me. Oh, I am so wretched!"

Again the fair creature burst into tears, and again besought Charlie to leave her.

"Go! Go!" she said. "If, as you say, you are a gentleman, leave me!" "I cannot, of course, force my society upon you, fair lady," said Charlie, "but, in all sincerity, I offer you my friendship. May I not see you again? Do not let me think that when I leave you now, I shall see you no more!"

"Where! How? For what good? Alas! you cannot befriend me!" she sobbed, "my sorrows are of the heart!"

"The sympathy of a true friend can often times assuage the bitterest grief!" said Charlie, his sentiment now having taken the reins entirely. "Pray do not deny me the opportunity. My address is the Skinner House, my name is Charles Ross. Should you ever need a friend, do not, I implore you, hesitate to call on my services!"

"Yes! yes!" she said, "but go, or I must. I will do you the justice to believe you speak sincerely, but I am better now, and will go! As you are a gentleman do not follow me!"

"Let us part as friends at least," said Charlie, holding out his hand to her, as she rose and dropping her veil over her face upon which the traces of her tears were still visible, took a step forward!

"There is no reason, sir, why we should be enemies," she answered placing her delicate little hand in his.

Charlie, pressed it slightly, raised it gallantly to his lips, and thought he felt a soft, responsive pressure, but it was very slight and ere he could speak again, she was gone.

He had promised not to follow her. He would keep his word. But he felt as if he could wander after her to the end of the world. Who was the brute who called her wife? He must be a wretch indeed to be cruel to one so young, so lovely, so innocent and good! He would like to smother him!

All this passed through Charlie's mind as he stood riveted to the spot, and looked in the direction she had gone. As he turned away his eye fell upon something white upon the floor.

It was an envelope!

He stooped and picked it up!

It was post marked "New-York," and was directed, "Mrs. Blanche Merideth, Skinner House, New-York City."

"The Skinner House," Charlie started. "Then she lives under the same roof with me," thought Charlie. "Fortune favors me so far at any rate."

The handwriting was a lady's, and she must have dropped it. The envelope contained a note signed "Mary," which Charlie had too much delicacy and honor to read, but he made up his mind to return it to its fair owner.

"It certainly was not there before I spoke to her," thought Charlie. "No! she must have dropped it. There can be no harm then in returning it to her. But not here, I might compromise her. No! I shall meet her at the hotel I dare say, I'll give it to her there, that will be the better plan. Poor thing, how wretched she seemed. Damn that husband of hers!"

Thus ruminated Charlie, as he went in pursuit of his friends.

As he turned suddenly round the foot of the stairs of the lower room, he caught a glimpse of her, again. And who was that speaking to her? Was it the polite stranger, Mr. Winstone? If it was, Charlie, did not see him, and Frank and Harry catching sight of him, he could not follow her.

CHAPTER V.

THE FIVE POINTS BY DAY. DEATH FROM STARVATION.

"On poverty, hunger, and dirt!"

Hood.

"WHERE on earth have you been," exclaimed Harry. "We have been looking for you everywhere. Mr. Winstone, fearful that you would get into some scrape or other, has gone to look for you!"

"He should have gone up stairs, then," answered Charlie. "I have been looking at the 'Happy Family!'"

"The Happy Humbug!" exclaimed Frank, laughing. "You know you have been sighing after that woman, you were speaking about just now. I suppose, you have told her you love her, won her affections, and are engaged to be married by this time! Poor Lucy Walcott! Its lucky Will Brace took her away from you! How about your constancy now, eh, old boy? I told you you'd forget her in a week."

"Come, Frank, that's not fair. I have not forgotten her—but——"

"You are in love with somebody else," said Harry; "but here comes our friend Winstone, so, let's get away from here. There is nothing more to be seen that we care about looking at, besides, I'm getting hungry!"

Winstone came up at this time and they left the Museum, proceeding up Broadway, Charlie ever on the lookout for the sable garments of Blanche Merideth.

In response to Harry's proposition, they should go somewhere for oysters, Mr. Winstone conducted them to a place in the neighborhood of the City Hall, where they were served to their satisfaction and after "a modest quencher," to wash them down, Winstone asked:

"Where shall it be now? The day is young yet."

"Where are the Five Points?" asked Harry.

"Within pistol shot," replied Winstone. "But the night is the time to see that sweet locality in its glory!"

"I should like to see it by day, as well," Harry suggested, "if you would not consider it too great a tax on your good nature?"

"By no means. The Five Points be it! Follow me!"

They continued up Broadway, passing marble structures, dedicated to trade, which rivalled in costly magnificence the palaces of kings, and which were filled from their lowest recesses in the bowels of the earth, with the costliest and richest fabrics; by dazzling bazaars where diamonds glittered and rubies shone, and

"The wealth of Ormus or of Ind—"

was temptingly displayed to view. Windows teeming with articles of costliest price, and evidences of wealth and luxuries ever surrounded them, wherever they turned their eyes.

The shop windows of Broadway are, indeed, at all times, objects of attraction. No Fair, in the world, be it in public Square or Crystal Palace, can equal the magnificence of the display which from one end of the year to the other, shines from behind the plate glass windows of the Broadway "*Magazines*."

What temptations they offer! Look at that poor hard-working girl, going home from the dingy workshop, where she has been toiling since early morning to earn a scanty pittance, which scarce suffices to pay for her miserable little garret room, and furnish her with sufficient food, and clothes enough to hide her shame!

Her way home does not lay through Broadway. It is a mile out of her road, and she is tired. But evening after evening, when she leaves her place of labor, she drags herself along its crowded pavement, to feast her eyes upon the riches of the windows.

Does she covet them?

You know little of woman's nature if you suppose she does not!

And there is a way, by which she could possess them!

She is young—handsome—dressed in gayer robes, she would be called beautiful!

She knows it!

She has been told so. That handsome dashing fellow, with the black whiskers, who has first smiled as he saw her pass his lounging place on the corner; who has gone from smiles to nods, from nods to words; he has told her she was beautiful! He has told her too, that if she will sacrifice her body to his lusts; if she will damn herself here, and her soul hereafter, if she will make herself his leman—a thing of shame—and bring down the grey hairs of her old mother with sorrow to the grave, that all she desires shall be hers!

And with these promises ringing in her ears, she walks home through Broadway.

She brushes past the daughters of shame. She knows, for she has been told, that they live in luxurious palaces. They tread upon soft carpets, they do not toil, yet they have all that money can supply—all that she has not—all that she desires!

Look at that starving wretch leaning against the lamp-post, opposite the window, from which jewels are gleaming, in the glare of the lights, so placed as to reflect their brightest colors in his eyes! Look at him! Any one of those gems, would be a mine of wealth to him.

At home his wife is dying for want of care he cannot give, of comforts he cannot procure.

At home his children cry for bread which he cannot bestow!

He has not tasted food himself for four and twenty hours!

How he gazes upon that window!

How his hands clutch convulsively, and how his frame heaves!

What is to prevent him from saving his wife—from giving his starving little ones bread?

He has always been honest. He has worked hard, when he could get work to do. He would work now, but he cannot get it. He has sought for it early and late, sought for it with tired limbs and aching heart; but none would employ him!

And now—there is but a fragile pane of glass between him and all he needs. A good blow! a clutch and away!

Why does he not do it?

Because he is a hero!

It is easy for the rich—for those who have all which wealth can procure, or kindness provide—for those who have never been tempted, to be good and strong and virtuous. But oh, how hard it is for the tempted!

Think of this, you saints in purple and fine linen, as you doze in your softly cushioned pews, and delicately mumble: "LEAD US NOT INTO TEMPTATION."

Think of it! You have need to put up such a prayer, for were you tempted like that poor, slipshod, shivering girl—or this starving wretch—how many of you would stand the test one-half so well?

We do not know whether these thoughts struck our young friends as they walked along—but they have often struck us, and you, too, reader, we have no doubt!

Turning aside from the rush and the throng, Winstone led them down a side street, and, as if by the wand of a magician, the whole scene was changed.

Poverty in place of Wealth!

Dirt instead of Diamonds!

Rags in lieu of *Robes de soie*!

They passed houses, rickety with age and rot, which leaned forward and backward, and against each other, as if they had been made drunk by contact with their tenants, who were sitting outside, in front of the dingy rum-holes, which invariably opened their doors of death upon the ground-floors.

Women, bleary-eyed and sodden, with their heads bound up in colored handkerchiefs, were sitting on the steps of cellars, or lounging in the bar-rooms, trying to get rid of the effects of the last night's debauch.

Men of all colors, from the ebony Negro, to the tawny Chinaman, with bloated faces, staggered along, swearing, singing, or passing obscene jests with the women.

Squalid, pale-faced children, naked, or almost so—the few rags which hung about them, rotten with dirt and all alive with vermin—everywhere nothing but squalor, misery, rum, drunkenness and crime!

"Great heavens, what a place!" exclaimed Harry. "How is it that such can exist in a great and wealthy city like New York? Why don't they tear these houses down—break up the nest—and remove the people who exist in it, to the alms-house or the jail?"

Winstone laughed. "I have heard the same questions asked before," he said. "But you can't get rid of places like these. These wretches must swarm somewhere. If you drive them from here, they will only settle somewhere else. Philanthropists have been working for years to remove this eyesore from the heart of the city: though they have done something, it has not been enough to change in any degree the character of the place. However, its days are numbered now. Marble palaces will soon take the place of these dingy bricks, and freestone temples dedicated to Mercury, will usurp the site of those wooden shanties!"

"What will bring about such a revolution as this?" asked Charlie.

"Trade! Commerce! Which demand more room," answered Winstone. "The work of improvement has begun already, and it will not be long before there is not a vestige of the Five Points left."

They were standing before a house, more dilapidated, more tumble-down in its appearance, and wearing, if possible, a more distressed look than the others. It seemed to be filled with human beings up to the very roof. A few rags which had lately gone through a semi-occasional washing, were flapping from some of the windows, where they had been hung out to dry. From other windows women were screaming to their acquaintances upon the side-walk below, or across the street.

The rum-hole on the first floor was filled with men and women in every stage of drunkenness, and the whole place seemed to teem with wretchedness and vice!

As Harry stood contemplating this scene, he thought he heard a groan, and then a short, quick cry.

"Hark!" he cried to Charlie Ross, who was standing by his side. "Hush! Did you hear that?"

"Hear what?" asked Charlie. "I heard nothing in particular."

"There it is again! A moan! Hark! It is behind us!"

"I heard it then," said Charlie. "It seemed to come from some one in distress."

They both turned round, as they did so, they heard another loud moan, followed by the same sharp, quick cry!

"It comes from down this cellar," said Harry. Let us go down, quick!

"Where are you going?" asked Winstone, with some surprise. Harry started down the rotten, tottering steps which led to the cellar below?

"I hear the cry of some one in distress. I am going to see what it is!"

"Mind what you are about," said Winstone. "It is as much as your life is worth, to interfere with anything going on here!"

"I am not going to interfere with anybody," said Harry; "but danger or no danger, I am going to find out the cause of that groan. You may wait there if you please. If anything happens I'll call you," and Harry proceeded down the steps.

The door was shut, and he could see a sickly yellow light shining through the crevices from within!

He knocked. There was no reply. The sobs and groans continued, but no voice bade him enter.

He pushed the door open gently, and stood upon the threshold of the miserable room.

A tallow candle, stuck in a broken bottle, shed a dim light around the place, which, as there was no window, would have been quite dark without its rays, and he saw in the far corner a poor pallet of straw, on which, covered by a few miserable and dirty rags, the form of a woman ghastly with disease, lay evidently dying.

From her proceeded the means which he had heard.

A form was crouched upon the floor beside her—there was no chair or other furniture in the room—the form of a man. His face was buried in his hands, and his knees were drawn up to his chin.

The walls were dripping with dampness, and the place smelled like a charnel-house. There was no fire; all was dark and cold.

A gleam of comfort would have been out of place in such a den.

His approach was unobserved, but when he knocked upon the door again, the man started up, and cast upon him a look so full of agony—of wild and dark despair, that Harry started back involuntarily.

"What is the matter?" asked Harry, recovering his self-possession, though he plainly saw that want and misery were finishing their work upon the form of one the man had loved and perhaps even then loved dearly.

"What is the matter. Can I do anything for you?" Harry asked again.

"Nothing!" the man answered, in a heavy hoarse voice, "Nothing. It is

too late. She is dying—dying of want, hunger, cold, nakedness. It is too late! It is too late!" And the poor fellow took the woman's hand and hugged it to his heart.

"Surely, I can do something," said Harry, advancing towards the pallet! "There may be some hope, yet!"

The man merely shook his head and sighed.

Suddenly the woman started up convulsively into a sitting position, on the straw, and the man turned to her and clasped her round the waist.

She threw up her arms madly, her glaring eyes rolling in their sunken sockets, as she endeavored to articulate something. Then a tremor shook her skeleton frame, and with a gasp she fell into the man's arms a corpse!

He dropped the hand which he had held. He placed his ear close over her heart, listened for a moment, and started to his feet.

"Begone!" he cried. "She is dead! Do you hear? Mary is dead! My Mary, that I took away from her peaceful, quiet home in the country, and brought here to starve, to die like a beast, in a hole like this! She sickened," he went on, his eyes gleaming with despair and agony. "I could not leave her to look for work. She needed all my care. I tried to borrow money. No one would lend it to me. One by one I sold every article of furniture or dress we had, and then our landlord turned us into the streets!"

"I begged: people turned from me and told me to go to work. They drove me to theft, and here I have been hid, for fear they should find me, tear me from my Mary, and put me in prison. They have killed her! Yes! Yes! but for them—she would have been alive and well and beautiful still!" and the man burst out into a wild gush of woe!

"Do not give way to these feelings," said Harry. "Let me——"

"Begone!" cried the man, again turning his wild eyes upon him. "Begone! It is too late to offer help! I will not have you here to glut your eyes upon my misery. Leave me! Leave me with my dead, for I am desperate!"

With swelling heart, Harry left the place.

"It is no use to offer comfort there!" he said, when he rejoined his companions, and proceeded to tell them of the dreadful sight he had seen.

"There is a Policeman coming," said Winstone, coldly. "You had better tell him. He will attend to it and the authorities will see that the woman is buried."

Harry called to the Policeman and told him the circumstances of the case.

"All right, sir," answered the man. "Sure I know of the case; sure, such things are not rare hereabouts. I'll attend it!"

"Great Heaven!" said Harry, turning away with his friends; "can such things be in a city like this?"

Aye! many such scenes as this are of almost daily occurrence, and when they are related, the rich and the comfortable roll up their eyes and quiet their consciences by saying: "Pshaw! It's all sensation trash! It cannot be true!"

CHAPTER VI.

THE DEAD FALL

"Damn her, lewd minx, O damn her!"

[SHAKESPEARE.]

ON their return to the Skinner House, the gentlemanly Mr. Winstone became their guest at dinner. He was a person of various accomplishments, as we shall see in the course of this truthful history, and among them, was the thorough knowledge of the art of dining.

There is a great difference between merely eating and dining! Men eat to satisfy their appetite: they gorge because they are hungry. A chunk of greasy pork with a dab of indigestible cabbage, is a dinner to such; but though they are no longer hungry, after having eaten it, they have not dined by any means. They know nothing of the delicate and refined pleasures of the table.

Winstone understood, perfectly, the difference between dining and eating. If he had any poetry in his nature, it manifested itself in the magnificent harmony with which he mingled the component parts of a dinner. He assumed at the request of Harry and his friends, the responsibility of caterer upon the present occasion, and did full justice to his reputation, and elevated himself considerably in the opinion of his newly made acquaintances.

After dinner, another walk was proposed, but Charlie excused himself on the ground of fatigue, so that, after smoking their cigars and enjoying a friendly chat, Mr. Winstone, meanwhile, making himself more and more agreeable, Harry and Frank again sallied forth under the guardianship of their new friend, and Charlie betook himself to his room, to ponder upon the best plan of obtaining an interview with the Lady in Black who had so won upon his sympathies in the morning.

"She is living in this very house!" he said to himself; "and if I keep a sharp lookout, I may meet her! I wonder where her room is? I'll go and inquire at the office," and he started to do so.

"Stop!" he thought, as he reached the hall, "That will not do. I shall surely compromise her by any inquiries there! Ah, she may be in the ladies' parlor! I'll see!" so, summoning a waiter who was going down stairs, he secured the services of that functionary to show him the way.

There was no one there, but the room had a cheerful, comfortable look; and he seated himself in one of the large arm-chairs, with his back to the door, and fell into a reverie concerning his new found flame.

Charlie sat for a long time undisturbed. The day waned apace, and the shadows of evening began to fall; still, he sat there, and it was not till some time after the servant had lit up the chandelier, that he was aroused by the rustling of a woman's dress behind him.

He was sitting with his back to the door, as we have said, and the high back of the large arm-chair in which he reclined, hid him from view, so that the person who entered did not see him.

She could not have seen him, because, after looking round the room for a moment she took her seat at the piano, which stood at the farther end of the apartment and commenced singing a soft, plaintive melody.

At the first sound of her voice, Charlie's heart fairly leaped with excitement. It was so silvery, so musical, so sympathetic, and breathed such a melancholy spirit, that it could belong but to one, and that one, was the dear Creature in Black!

He sat immovable until the song was finished, and then rising, he advanced quickly towards the fair singer.

"A thousand thanks!" he exclaimed: "I cannot express the delight I have experienced in listening to your beautiful song!"

The lady rose. Charlie was right, it was the Lady in Black and looking more charming, if possible, than ever, in the embarrassment which she manifested of thus finding an unexpected listener in the room.

"Really, sir," she said. "Excuse me! I had no idea there was any one here. I would not have intruded upon you. Permit me to retire."

"No!" exclaimed Charlie. "No! I will not permit it. 'Tis I who am the intruder; but to be honest with you, it was in the hope that I should see you, that I have sought this place in which you have more right than I. Did you lose anything this morning, Mrs. Merideth?" he said, summoning up his courage once more.

"Lose anything, sir?" she asked, repeating his words, in a tone which betokened much surprise. "Not that I am aware of. But will you permit me to enquire how you learned my name?"

"Ha! I am right then!" said Charlie, drawing from his breast the note he had picked up in the Museum. "I presume this belongs to you? Hence my question and my knowledge of your name. Permit me to return it!"

"Oh, thank you, I am really much obliged to you! It is very kind—although its loss would have occasioned me no inconvenience! It is a mere message from a lady friend!"

"I did not read it," answered Charlie, "so, of course, could have no knowledge of its importance to you. Though, I must say, I was glad you had lost it, as it gave me an excuse for seeing you again, and revealed a fact which I was delighted to learn!"

"And that was——?"

"That you were an inmate of this house! I trust I shall have the pleasure of meeting you often during my stay and if——"

"Excuse me," she said, interrupting him, "but that may not be. Even now I am running a great risk. Oh, sir, you do not know how——" then checking herself suddenly she said, "but I must leave you, sir! Good evening!" and she made a movement towards the door.

"No! no!" exclaimed Charlie, taking a step forward, and seizing her little hand, "No, no, it is cruel of you! I am alone, a stranger in the city; my friends have gone out for the evening, and I have remained at home, expressly that I might be near you—perhaps see you. Do not leave me! Surely there is no impropriety in your conversing with me in the public parlor of a hotel in which we both reside! Your husband——"

"Yes, yes! I know!" she said in a frightened manner. "He has gone out and will not return till late, perhaps not at all to-night; but, should any one inform him that I were seen here with you, or with any other gentleman, the consequences would be very unpleasant. Oh, I am so unhappy!" and she dropped on to the sofa, which stood behind her, and wept as bitterly as she had in the morning.

In an instant Charlie was by her side.

"Again in tears!" he said. "What does this mean? What is the cause of your grief? Oh, madame! Mrs. Merideth—Blanche! Pardon me! I am a stranger to you, I never saw you until to-day, and, have no right to pry into your secrets, but believe me, I am sincere, when I say I feel a deep sympathy for you! Nay more," he went on, "I love you!"

"Oh, sir, sir!" she sobbed. "For Heaven's sake——!"

"'Tis true," exclaimed Charlie. "I love you! Loved you the moment I saw you, and though you are another's, and there is a gulf between me and my wild hopes, still let me be your friend! Let me console you, if I can! Tell me your grief and if I cannot dispel it, let me at least share it."

His arm was round her waist, his hand clasped hers, her lovely ringlets waved against his cheek, as he thus obeyed the impulse which his new passion, aroused by this fair and mysterious creature, had created. She did not shrink from him; nay, Charlie even imagined that the little hand closed tenderly on his, as she gave herself up to this paroxysm of grief, and fairly sobbed upon his breast.

They sat thus for some minutes, every drop of Charlie's blood tingling with excitement, and the wildest thoughts rushing through his brain. At last, she ceased weeping, and gently withdrawing herself from him, she murmured:

"Oh, Mr. Ross! If I could but find a friend in whom I really might confide! But no, no, it is impossible! I must drag out this weary life without hope, without sympathy, without love!"

"Oh, say not so!" said Charlie, again taking her little hand captive in his,

and once more, encircling her lovely waist with his arm, and gazing into those soft melting eyes, with a look full of sentiment and passion. "Say not so! Believe me, you may confide in me. I sympathize with you. I love you!"

"Love me? No, no! You do not, must not——"

"But I do, and will!" said Charlie, "I must love you!"

"But my husband——" she said, looking at him with an enquiring glance.

"Do you love him?" asked Charlie, suddenly bending near to her and looking into her eyes, as if he would read her very soul.

She turned away her head!

"You do not! I see it all! I see the cause of your wretchedness! You do not love him; you hate him!"

"Hush!" she said. "No more; it is not safe, either for me or you. I know not why it is that I have said so much, or allowed you to speak such words to me. Never before, have I had such feelings. The moment you spoke to-day, the instant I saw you, I felt as though I had met a friend. There must be some mysterious sympathy between us, or I could not have listened to you as I have. But I must go now!" she said, half rising. "I have an engagement."

"An engagement?" asked Charlie; "I thought your husband had gone——"

"Yes, yes," she said, "that is it! He will not return till late; and so, as I dare not go out while he is watching me, I am obliged to act deceitfully in his absence. I am going to-night to see a relation of mine, an aunt."

"What?" exclaimed Charlie. "Go out alone at night, in the crowded streets! Let me accompany you."

"It would not be safe," she said, "for, though I should be very glad of your escort, should we leave the house together, it would be told to my husband, and then——"

"I have it!" exclaimed Charlie. "If, as you say, you would accept my escort, but for the fear of being seen, I will go out first—none here will know that we have ever met—and will meet you at the corner of the street, then we can go together unobserved!"

"Be it so!" she said. "I know not why it is that I consent, but something prompts me to do so. I believe you are sincerely disposed to be my friend, and I will trust you!"

"That is right!" said Charlie, his frame all aglow with delight. "Go and get ready! You will find me at my post!"

She left the room, and Charlie, almost beside himself with joy, hastened to his apartment, from whence, after making some changes in his dress, he proceeded to the place agreed upon, and waited for the appearance of Mrs. Merideth—or Blanche as he loved to think of her.

She did not keep him waiting. Charlie had not been standing on the corner long, before he felt a gentle touch upon his arm and turning round he saw Blanche!

She was thickly veiled, and wore a white robe, in the place of the black dress she had previously worn, so that he hardly knew her until she spoke!

"Come, Mr. Ross," she said, taking his arm at once; "Let us be gone. It is very crowded here, and spite of my care I may be recognised!"

"You must lead the way," said Charlie, "for, you know, I am a stranger!"

"It is not far," she said, as they turned up Broadway.

They walked as far as Canal Street, down which they turned, until they came to Greene Street, which they followed to Grand, and then turning to the left, went on to Sullivan Street, and after passing a few doors beyond the corner, she stopped in front of a modest, quiet-looking, two story house.

"This is the place," she said. "Come!" and going up the steps she rang the bell.

A colored woman opened the door, about halfway, and looking out, enquired:

"Who's dar?"

"It's only me, Sally!" said Mrs. Merideth, raising her veil. "Is my aunt—is Mrs. Parker at home?"

"Oh, golly bless you, Miss Blanche, is it you? Come in! Walk in, Sir! Certain sure—Misses gone out, but dat makes no difference—I spose she be back soon!"

"Yes, I will wait for her," said Blanche, going in, followed by Charlie.

"Shall we go in the parlor?" she asked, after Sally had closed the door.

"No! I guess you'll have to go up stairs. Missis got de keys of de parlors put away. You'd better go up stairs into her room. It—it is all right! Go long up stairs!" and she led the way to the second story front room, into which she introduced Blanche and her companion.

"Sally," said Blanche, in a low tone and unheard by Charlie, as the sable attendant was about leaving the apartment. "My friend would probably like some refreshment. You understand! Bring a bottle of champagne!"

"All right, Miss!" she said with a grin, as she went away shutting the door after her.

The room in which Charlie now found himself, was small but furnished with a refined taste.

The floor was covered with a soft, velvet carpet, of delicate pattern, which was neither too warm or too cold in color, and on the walls hung a few pictures exquisitely painted, but which, though there was nothing in them to startle any but an over fastidious mind from its propriety, were mostly mythological subjects, displaying the female form in all its attractive loveliness. The few chairs were massive and luxurious, in their shape, and seemed to woo repose. A large mirror, elegantly framed, was placed above the exquisitely carved mantel-piece, upon which stood a clock of antique design and wrought as if it might have come from the hands of Benevenuto Cellini, himself. A few rare objects of *vertu* were scattered about, here and there, and a large, wide lounge, or divan, covered with delicate figured satin, and which might have served as a resting place for Venus herself, completed the furniture of the *boudoir*, which was lighted by a single jet, in a small chandelier of graceful proportions, which hung from the ceiling; the flame being shaded by a glass globe, so tinted, that it cast a dim, dreamy, voluptuous light upon every object.

"I presume my aunt will return soon," said Blanche, "and I shall not detain you long!"

"The longer the better!" answered Charlie, looking round the apartment and then letting his gaze fall on Blanche, who was divesting herself of her bonnet and shawl.

As she threw off the latter garment, she seemed like another creature.

As Charlie had seen her that morning, at the Museum, and just now, at the hotel, she seemed beautiful, but as she stood before him now, she was more ravishing than ever.

She wore a robe of spotless white, of the finest fabric, with a bodice, cut quite low in the neck, displaying the full swell of her snowy bosom, which rose and fell under its gossamer covering with a gentle, undulating motion, which was almost maddening to behold. Her arms, which were models of symmetry, were bare, and her beautiful light brown hair fell in long ringlets, over a neck, whiter and more smooth than alabaster.

Her eyes were liquid, deep and languishing, in their expression, and her half open, juicy, pouting lips—like twin rosebuds, damp with honey-dew—disclosed her little, pearly teeth.

As she stood there, in the dim light, she looked like the Goddess of Love, and though we have seen her, a prey to grief, none could look upon her as she appeared then, without feeling that her heart could cherish other than sad thoughts, that that lovely bosom, while it could throb with sorrow, could also

throb with passion; and that those eyes, so gentle in the expression of her woe, could burn with all the fierceness of a mad desire!

"Let her stay forever!" exclaimed Charlie, going to her side. "Let her stay forever! To be alone with you like this; to see you thus; to gaze upon your charms, which every moment seems to grow in beauty and entrance my soul, deeper and deeper; oh, to be thus, ever thus, so happy and so full of bliss, Eternity were short!"

A knock at the door interrupted Charlie, in his passionate speech, and Sally entered, bearing a bottle of champagne, and two goblets of elaborately cut glass, upon a silver salver.

"I thought you might be thirsty after your walk, Miss," said the negress, with a sly look at Blanche; "so I brought you dis. Shall I open it now?"

"Thank you, Sally," Blanche observed. "It was very thoughtful of you. Will you take a glass of wine, Mr. Ross?"

How could Charlie refuse a glass of wine at such hands? Jove would have never changed his cup-bearer had he been served by such a Hebe!

The old negress filled the two glasses.

"That will do," said Blanche, "I'll wait upon Mr. Ross," and Sally again left the room.

"Are you a fairy," asked Charlie, as he quaffed the rich wine, which sparkled in his glass, and, still standing before his fair enslaver, "that at will you can conjure up a Paradise? Your aunt is a lady of taste!"

"With the means of gratifying it," replied Blanche, replacing her goblet on the table, after barely touching it to her lips. "She is a widow and resides here alone. I rarely see her, for she is not a favorite of Mr. Merideth's, and he strongly objects to my coming here. My God, should he come here now!" and she trembled and the light left her eyes at the very thought. "But you do not do justice to your wine," she said, again filling his goblet and presenting it to him, "Permit me!"

"Ah!" said Charlie, taking the glass and pledging her with his eyes; "there is intoxication enough in you, without this. My very soul is drunk with gazing on you. Come, sit!" he said, taking her by the hand and gently drawing her to his side on the divan, on which he was seated. "You promised—or, at least, you intended to do so—to give me your confidence. Come, tell me the sorrow which oppresses you, and if it lays in my power to lessen your sufferings, if it be only by a single pang, I will die to do it. I have opened my heart to you, be equally frank. What is the cause of this grief, which twice to-day, has caused those eyes to dim with tears? Speak!"

"Mr. Ross—"

"Nay," said Charlie; "do not be so formal. Call me Charlie!"

"Well, then," she said, placing her little soft hand in his, in the most innocent way in the world. "Charlie, my story is a very common-place one. Two years ago I met Mr. Merideth at the house of a mutual friend. I was young, and, he thought, attractive; at any rate, it was not long before he told me so, for he professed to fall in love with me, and I, by degrees, came to look upon him if not with love, with something which was akin to affection. Within six months, after urgent solicitation on his part and that of my family, we were married. I was happy at first, for he was kind and affectionate, but shortly after our return from the south, whither we went upon our wedding-tour, his conduct towards me underwent a radical change. He became morose, fretful, and, worst of all, jealous, so that I was obliged eventually, to give up the society of my most intimate friends. To be seen speaking to a gentleman was to bring down upon my devoted head curses and often blows!"

"Blows!" exclaimed Charlie. "Blows! The villain! the worse than coward!"

"Conduct like this," she continued, "soon alienated the small amount of

affection I once had for him, and now I am alone in the world—no one who loves me, no one whom I can love!"

Charlie was about to interrupt her, with another passionate declaration, but she continued:

"With the faculty of loving—heaven knows how well—the warm impassioned impulses of my heart are turned upon themselves; full of confiding frankness, I am forced to lead a life of deceit; to keep my feelings—my joys and sorrows, locked up within my own breast. With a nature, which continually demands sympathy, I have none to sympathize with me, and I—I—oh, I wish I were dead!"

"Nay, nay!" said Charlie, drawing her yielding form towards him, and speaking low, but rapidly and passionately: "Nay, nay! I love you! I sympathize with you! My heart, like yours, is full of love. To you I dedicate it. You shall no longer want a kindred soul, with which yours can commune! Oh, Blanche, so lately met, so wildly worshipped, speak! Do you—can you love me?"

She turned towards him. The folds of her dress—the slight fastening of which had given way under the excitement she had lately exhibited, had fallen down, leaving her lovely bosom all exposed; her breath came quick and short; her lips were half parted, her hair fell in golden streams over her magnificent shoulders, and her eyes, gleaming with passion, wild, deep, and all-consuming, met his, as she exclaimed: "Love you! Dare I? May I? Oh yes, yes! I may, I do!"

Her hot breath was on his cheek, the light of her eyes fired his, and he clasped her in his arms; he pressed her to his heart, their lips met deliriously, in one long—long kiss of passionate love.

"Oh, my God!" she murmured, "Charlie! Yes, yes, now I know that we are one in soul!"

She had fallen back upon the downy pillows of that voluptuous couch, her arms still clasped around his neck with loving force. He, wild with joy—mad with passion, his very soul intoxicated with delight, bent down once more to press his lips to hers, when the door suddenly opened, and with a loud curse a tall, powerful-looking man entered the room.

Charlie sprang to his feet!

Blanche half rose, gave one look toward the door, screamed:

"Great Heaven, my husband!" and fell back, fainting.

CHAPTER VII.

A HELL.

"Springs to catch woodcock."

[SHAKESPEARE.]

LET us now return to Frank and Harry, who under the accomplished guidance of the polite Mr. Winstone, had gone out after dinner to amuse themselves as best they might. After sauntering about, now here now there, looking at the shop windows, and stopping in at the principal hotels, they visited Wallacks.

After the performance was over, supper was suggested, and Harry proposed that they should return to the Skinner House to get it. But Winstone knew a much better place, where they could obtain a supper fit for a prince, and see "life at the same time."

"It is about the time," he said; "and you will be made heartily welcome on my introduction, so come along."

They turned into one of the streets which cross Broadway, and after walking a short distance, Winstone ascended the steps of a brown stone house, followed by Frank and Harry, who wondered where they were going.

The front door was open, but the inner door was closed, and through the cut-glass panels, they could see that the hall was dimly lighted.

Winstone rang the bell, and in answer to the summons, a negro, neatly dressed, in a suit of black, with white waistcoat, and necktie, made his appearance.

"Good evening, Mr. Winstone," he said, smiling and bowing politely, "Are these gentlemen friends of yours?"

"Yes," replied Winstone. "All right, Perkins?"

"Walk in, sir. Walk in, gentlemen. Shall I take your hats and canes?" asked the polite darkey as they entered the hall, the door of which was immediately closed behind them, and securely locked, chained and bolted.

"Never mind our hats, we will take them with us," said Winstone, as he led the way into the front room. It was small, but neatly furnished, the walls being decorated with a few sporting pictures of the better class.

The only occupants of the room, were a tall, handsome man, dressed fashionably, but with taste, who was reclining in a large arm chair, and two other men, who were lounging about, looking over the papers, of which there were several, and lazily puffing their cigars.

"How are you, Winstone?" said the tall man rising on their entrance. "How do you do? Glad to see you?"

"Permit me," said Winstone, to introduce two young friends of mine from the West, Mr. Dutton, and Mr. Callow. This is their first visit to the city, and having spent the evening at Wallacks, I have brought them round to see you. Mr. Mouser, gentlemen; the proprietor of the house!"

"Happy to receive you, I am sure; be seated pray, and make yourselves at home. Supper will be served in a short time, in the meanwhile, suppose you join me in a little brandy and water," and Mr. Mouser went to a well stocked sideboard which stood on the side of the room.

The brandy was excellent; and as they put their glasses down, Perkins made his appearance and announced that supper was ready.

"Ah!" said Mr. Mouser; "I am glad to hear it! You are just in the nick of time! Walk this way, gentlemen," and he led the way up the broad staircase.

The room in which they now found themselves, was large and brilliantly lighted. A mirror, reaching from the floor to the ceiling, occupied each end of the spacious apartment, reflecting the animated scene within; while the furniture and decorations were of the most expensive and elegant character.

In the back part of the saloon, a long table, spread with every delicacy, was laid out, the table furniture being of the most costly and beautiful description. Large water ewers of solid silver, magnificently wrought; silver salt-cellars; castors, goblets, flagons, and vases, all of the most elaborate pattern, were distributed profusely around, while glass of the purest material, and cut with wonderful skill and art, reflected, from a million points, the most magnificent prismatic tints.

The table fairly groaned with luxuries. Everything which the most fastidious palate could crave, or which the most lavish expenditure could procure, seemed to have been gathered there, while a large rosewood *bufet*, which stood against the wall, presented a bountiful array of the most *recherche* wines and liquors.

As Mouser made his appearance in the apartment, accompanied by his friends, a number of persons, who had been sitting around a long table in the front room, apparently engaged in some game of cards, rose, and by invitation, took their seats at the supper table, Mouser placing himself at the head, with Harry, Frank and Winstone, in his immediate neighborhood.

Half a dozen colored waiters, whose movements were regulated by Perkins, served the company, and as the Champagne corks began to pop, the conversation became general. It turned principally upon sporting matters. The last trot on the Fashion Course, was canvassed, and the coming races discussed, while the Ring came in for its share of attention. The condition of "the Boy," his training and the latest news in relation to his movements were spoken of in a manner which showed that the majority of all present were well posted. Mouser said little, but was polite and courteous to all, occasionally challenging some acquaintance to take wine with him, and dispensing the hospitalities of his table liberally, but not ostentatiously.

During this conversation, Harry and Frank, had an opportunity of surveying the appearance of the people about them, and forming some slight estimate in regard to their character and pursuits.

They were of all ages, from the grey-haired octogenarian, to the youth just out of his teens. Most of them were well, some of them, elegantly dressed; and though all appeared more or less gay, and excited; there was a shade upon the faces of nearly every one, and in the countenances of the youngest, even, there were wrinkles, which were not the work of Time.

The supper was *sans ceremonie*. As fast as those who partook of it felt themselves satisfied, they rose from the table, and going to the *bufet*, selected a cigar from one of the several cigar racks which were placed there, lit them and strolled into the other room. Several new comers also dropped in, and with a word or nod of salutation to Mouser, took their places at the table.

Before Harry and Frank rose, the table in the other room was again surrounded, and the rattling of money and a muttered word or two which occasionally fell upon their ears, gave token that the game which had been broken off by the service of supper, had been renewed.

"Gentlemen," said Mouser, after our friends had eaten and drunk to their satisfaction, "is there anything else you would like to be helped to? If not we will have a cigar together in the next room!"

Accordingly all rose, and lighting his cigar, Mouser, followed by Winstone, Harry and Frank, strolled into the front apartment, and stood at the table looking on at the game.

It was conducted very silently, scarcely a word being spoken. On one side of the long table, which we have spoken of, sat a tall, hard featured man, who, though not even middle aged, was quite bald. He had small, piercing, black eyes, which, like lightning, flashed round the table every minute, and held in his hands a pack of cards, which he shuffled with great quickness and dexterity.

Sitting on his right, was another person, a younger man, very elegantly dressed, who had several large piles of round pieces of ivory before him. These were called "checks;" and they were of two colors, red and white; the white ones representing one dollar, and the red ones, five dollars each. At this man's side, stood a mahogany cash box, which contained large rolls of bank bills, to which almost constant additions were made, by the players, who on handing in their money, received in return of it representative value in checks.

Opposite the man who deals the cards, sits another person, whose duty it is to keep the run of the game, which he does by means of a box made for the purpose, and containing a suit of miniature cards, with a row of ivory counters placed over each.

As the cards are played, he slips a counter towards him, so that, by a glance at his box, any of the players can tell, exactly how many kings, deuces, tens, etc., have been, or remain to be played.

The table is covered with green cloth, upon which is fastened a suit of cards, commencing with the king and running through to the ace; the cards are placed in two rows and the game is called *FARO*, and is played as follows:

After the cards have been well shuffled, they are placed face up by the dealer,

in a small silver box, made to fit them exactly. There are two bottoms to the box, the upper one being placed upon a spring, so that, as the upper cards are removed, the false bottom is raised, and keeps the top card on a level with a small slit in the side, just wide enough for it to be pushed through by the hand of the dealer.

After the cards are placed in the box, the game commences. The players place upon any of the cards they may select, one or more checks, and after all the bets have been made, the top card is drawn off by the dealer, and placed beside the box, disclosing the card below it, which is the winning card for those who have bet upon it. For instance: should the second card be a nine spot, the person who had placed his chips upon the corresponding card, upon the table, would win all he had bet, and the dealer would place by the side of the player's pile of checks a corresponding quantity from those before him.

The cards which are taken out of the box are placed in two piles. Those on one pile winning for the Bank, and those on the other, winning for the players who may bet upon them.

Had the "nine spot" been placed on the Bank's pile, then, the Bank would have won all bets upon the nine, and the dealer would have taken the checks off the card, and placed them, with the others, before him. There are various combinations connected with the game, however, which we have not space to describe, and, at a glance, it would seem as if the chances were equal. But there is a difference of forty per cent. in favor of the Bank, at all times, even when the game is fairly played—which is rarely the case—by reason of what are called the "splits." For instance: A player bets upon the nine-spot, and two nines are taken from the box in succession, one being placed upon the Bank's, and the other upon the player's pile of cards. This would make the bet a "stand-off", as the cards neither win nor lose; but, according to the rule of the game, the Bank claims half, under such circumstances, of the money bet upon the nine, and the frequent occurrence of these "splits," is the cause of the percentage in favor of the Bank.

"Is this your first visit to the Tiger?" asked Winstone, after Harry and Frank had stood silent witnesses of the game for some time.

"Yes," said Harry. "I have often heard of the beast before, though I have never had a sight of him. It seems to be very simple!"

"Yes," said Winstone, "it does not take long to learn it. Do you feel disposed to take a lesson?"

"I don't mind if I do," said Harry, drawing some money from his pocket, and selecting a ten-dollar bill; which, by direction of Winstone, he handed to the cashier. Winstone gave in a bill at the same time, and Frank—nothing loathe to try his fortune, did the same.

"Be seated, gentlemen; be seated," said Mr. Mouser. "Perkins, seats for these gentlemen."

Perkins brought some chairs, and, as soon as he had seen them seated at the table, Mouser excused himself politely, and walked away; and as he did so he exchanged, unseen by any one else, a meaning look with Winstone, who immediately commenced to play.

Harry and Winstone played with varying success; Harry would sometimes have one or two hundred dollars worth of chips before him, and within a few minutes, be obliged to purchase some from the cashier. But Frank, upon whom Fortune seemed to smile more constantly, won nearly every bet he made, while Winstone, though his luck fluctuated, managed to play on without investing any more than the amount he originally took from his pocket.

At last, Harry found himself reduced to his last ten dollar bill, having already lost several others, and prudently refused—although urged by Frank to do so—to play any more.

Frank went on, but his fortune began to change, and the large pile of chips

by his side diminished rapidly, until the last one was gone. Harry then rose, and asked him to go, but Frank had become excited, and insisted upon keeping on; which he did; still continuing to lose rapidly.

Under the excitement of the game, his whole appearance seemed to change. He looked pale; his face assumed an anxious expression, and he became petulant and restive under Harry's frequent expostulations. He was losing very fast, and, at the end of about an hour, had parted with a considerable sum. How long he would have played under the fascination, which seemed to have bound him as by a spell, we cannot say, had not a circumstance occurred which put an unexpected step to the game.

A man was sitting at the upper end of the table, who had attracted Harry's attention, when he first came into the room, by his peculiar appearance and manner. He was about forty years of age, though he looked at least ten years older. His face was flushed, his eyes were large, and seemed to be lit with an unnatural expression. He was nervous in the extreme, as his hands trembled violently as he laid his checks upon the cards.

His whole soul seemed to be absorbed in the game. He never spoke except to give utterance to some short, but profane ejaculation, as the turn of the cards showed him that he had lost.

He played with the utmost recklessness, losing all the time, until finally he seemed to be reduced to his last dollar; for, after searching all his pockets, he took out a lot of small change, which he carefully counted, and laying it down upon the king, sat watching the cards, with his eyes almost starting out of his head, and a face perfectly livid with anxiety. When the cards had been nearly dealt out, the king was turned, but it fell upon the pile which indicated that the Bank had won, and, with a loud curse he rose from the table, and throwing his chair behind him some distance, he exclaimed, with wild look and gesture, "That was the last dollar I had in the world, and you've got it, as you've got all the rest!"

All looked up from the table upon which their attention had been fixed. Some rose, and all eyes were turned upon the excited speaker.

"Will you give me a chance to win it back?" He asked, looking fiercely at the man who had charge of the cash-box.

"The game is open still. Sit down, if you wish to play," said the man calmly.

"But, I tell you, that was my last dollar! Lend me a hundred in chips, wont you?"

"Excuse me," said the man, "but that is not the way we do business. If you have any more money, you may play on as long as the game is open; if not, you will oblige me by not disturbing it!"

"You won't lend me a hundred?"

"No!"

"Well, then, fifty?"

"Can't do it!"

"Twenty—ten—five?"

"It is no use, Tilden," the cashier answered. "You know it is against the rule of the house: I'll give you five dollars if you are dead broke; but we don't lend money here, to play against the Bank!"

"Damn your gifts!" exclaimed the man, now getting very much excited. "I've been here night after night, until I have lost every dollar I had. I'm ruined—body and soul! I am haunted continually by this infernal green cloth and those hellish cards. You know it, and you have——"

"See here, Tilden, this won't do!" said the dealer. "We can't have any row here! We've got nothing to do with what you've lost or won; it's none of our business. You've bucked against the game, and if your luck's been bad,

that is no fault of ours. If you want to play on, play; if not, don't kick up a row!"

"I tell you I've been robbed!" the man almost shrieked. "Robbed, and I'm damned if I don't get even!" saying which he made a dash with his right hand at the throat of the cashier, and with his other he tried to seize one of the large piles of bills in the box.

By a sudden spring backward, however, the cashier evaded his grasp, and the dealer rising, with everybody else at the table, jumped forward, pushed away the hand of Tilden, and snatching the cash box, closed it with a sudden movement, which fastened its spring lock, and pushed it into a drawer, under the table, the key of which he turned rapidly.

By this time, Mr. Mouser himself entered, and rushing to the table, inquired in a loud voice:

"What is the matter here?"

Tilden no sooner saw him, than, breaking away from the dealer and banker, who were holding him, he made straight for the tall figure of the proprietor, and drawing a long Bowie knife from his bosom, he exclaimed in a threatening voice:

"So you have come, have you? Disgorge! Give up the money you have robbed me of by your hellish devices! I am desperate! I have lost at your table every dollar I had in the world, and I mean to have some of it back. I have a wife and children at home, who will have nothing to eat to-morrow; my wife is broken-hearted, and sits weeping over the wretch you have made me! They have refused to lend me money enough to give me a living chance to win back all that I have lost, and now I appeal to you! Will you disgorge or not?"

"I have no money of yours," Mouser answered, calmly, "that you have not lost legitimately. I keep a game at which you are not forced to play, and I am not responsible for the consequences of your ill luck. So put up that knife, or—"

Ere he could finish, Tilden, knife in hand, made a spring for him; but Mouser jumped quickly on one side, and Tilden losing his balance, fell heavily to the floor. In an instant he was seized, the knife taken from him, and in obedience to the orders of Mouser, he was about being carried out of the room, when the alarm was given that the police were in the house, and were then coming up stairs.

In an instant every vestige of the late game disappeared. Cards, boxes, chips, cloth from the table, everything in fact, went out of sight as if by magic, while all those who were present, showed more or less alarm. Tilden was still struggling with those who were endeavoring to quiet him, and continued to utter loud cries and imprecations, when Winstone, touching Harry on the shoulder, bade him and Frank to follow him.

He led the way to the back room, and opening one of the large windows, which ran down to the floor, stepped out, followed by Harry and Frank, and they found themselves standing upon a balcony, from the end of which a flight of narrow iron steps, led into the yard in the rear of the house.

After descending these steps, Winstone commenced groping about in the dark. Harry and Frank obeying his directions to stand still until he bade them to move.

"Where the devil is the spring?" he muttered in a low voice, "it must have been moved. No!" he exclaimed in another moment, "here it is! Now, hither, quick!"

In a moment Harry and Frank stood by his side, and as Winstone pressed against what appeared to be a knot in the board of the fence, a small door opened, and disclosed a narrow alleyway running directly back.

Pushing the two young men through this door, he followed after them, and closed it behind him. "Follow me!" he said, taking the lead and walking rapidly, and in a moment they came to another door at the further end of the alley. Pushing back a spring bolt which fastened it, he opened it, and the next moment all three were standing in the street next to the one in which the house was situated they had just left.

"All right!" he said, after looking round to see if they had been observed, "all right! I hope you were not very much alarmed, gentlemen."

"It was not a pleasant situation to be in," said Harry.

"There was no danger," observed Winstone, "of anything more serious than an hour or two in the station house, but that is not pleasant, and we are well out of it. But Mr. Dutton, you seemed to get quite interested in the game, did the beast bleed you much?"

"Well," said Frank, shaking his head, "I think I've had quite enough of him. He is a nice gentle animal to look at, but I think I shall keep out of his way in future!"

"Oh, he is not always as bloodthirsty, you know, as he was to-night," Winstone observed carelessly. "He is bled to depletion, sometimes, himself, I assure you. You will be able to get your revenge out of him, one of these days, I dare say!"

"No," said Frank, "I am quite satisfied as it is. It would never do for me to visit such places as these. It would not be long, before I should find myself in the same predicament as the madman, Tilden, we have just left. If I should yield to the fascinations of that table, I should be in my grave or the lunatic asylum in a month."

"If you can resist the fascination, after once experiencing it, as you have," Winstone observed, "you have more strength of mind than most young men."

"I hope he has, then," said Harry; "for I believe, with my friend, that the spirit of gambling once aroused in him, he would go to the devil in a month!"

"We shall see," said Winstone, as they reached the Skinner House. "The bar is not closed yet, though; suppose we have a night-cap together, eh?"

"With all my heart," Frank replied, and going into the bar, they called for what they wished.

They had hardly been served, ere Charlie Ross entered the room. He was pale and excited, and coming directly up to them, he said, in an agitated manner:

"Excuse me, Mr. Winstone, but I fear I must deprive my friends of your society? I wish to see them immediately!"

"What is the matter?" asked Harry and Frank together. "You look excited! Has anything happened?"

"I cannot tell you now," said Charlie, "what has happened! Come to my room! I have something to say to both of you."

So, bidding Mr. Winstone good night, the three friends left the bar, and proceeded up stairs.

CHAPTER VIII.

"I loved, I love you, for this love have lost
State, station, heaven, mankind's, my own esteem." [BIRON.]

We left Charlie Ross in rather an embarrassing situation. He stood facing the man, who had just entered the room, and, for a moment or two, neither spoke a word.

The intruder was tall and athletic. He was dressed in black and held in his

hand a pistol. His face wore a wicked and determined expression, and altogether, he was about as dangerous looking an antagonist, as one would wish to meet.

Charlie gave one glance at poor Blanche, who lay senseless, with all her bosom's charms exposed, upon the couch, and another at the man, then, stepping a little to the left, so as to be directly in front of Blanche, he exclaimed, "Who are you, sir? and by what right do you enter this apartment, unannounced and in such a threatening manner?"

"That woman, sir, just informed you who I am; and that question answered, my presence here is easily understood! Now, sir, in my turn, what are you doing here in company with my wife? But I need not ask with what object you came here. I know too well. But do not imagine that I am going to coldly submit to such a grievous wrong. You have dishonored me and you shall not leave this room alive!"

"You surely would not raise your hand against an unarmed man?" said Frank. "Besides, listen to me first! I have done you no wrong! Your wife is as pure—"

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Merideth. "Don't insult me, sir, by supposing me to be a fool. Look at her, laying there naked to your gaze, and then talk about her purity! But I have no time to waste in words! If you have anything to say—a prayer to make—make it quick, for, by the God above us, you have not another minute to live!"

"You do not surprise me," said Charlie, "by such menaces. A man who would treat with cruelty, and render unhappy, a weak, lovely, innocent and confiding creature, like she is; who would win her love, only to throw it back upon her and render her life one great scene of heart-breaking misery, must be a coward, for none but a coward, could abuse a trusting woman, or threaten the life of an unarmed man!"

"Big words, sir, won't do you any good! Coward or no coward, you have violated my honor; you have seduced from me the affections of my wife; you have destroyed my peace of mind forever, and I am to put up with it quietly, and forbear to avenge myself, because forsooth, you are not able to kill me as well as dishonor me! But I did not come here to talk!" and he raised the pistol.

Charlie's situation was a critical one, and he resolved if he had to die, to die game at any rate. He would not stand and be shot like a dog without a struggle, so the moment Merideth raised the pistol, with the quickness and ferocity of a tiger, he bounded toward him, caught his arm with his left hand, and with the right, grasped him tightly by the throat!

His antagonist had every advantage over him in point of physical power, but desperation gave Charlie almost superhuman strength, and the struggle was fearful. Charlie held to Merideth's throat, with the grip of a giant, Merideth in vain struggling to release himself, and lower his arm, in order to bring his pistol to bear upon Charlie's breast. But Charlie held the tighter and the effect of the pressure upon his adversary's throat began to be visible, in the swelling of the veins of his forehead, the wild expression of his eyes, and a gurgling choking noise to which he gave utterance.

Blanche still continued insensible, and Charlie was growing every moment more and more exhausted from his efforts. Unless Merideth should succumb in a second or two, he felt that his energies would give way.

He would have called for help, but the thought of exposing Blanche, prevented him, for he felt he would rather die than bring scandal upon the head of that poor, weak creature, who had but just confessed her new born love for him.

But this desperate struggle could not last forever, and summoning all his

strength in a desperate effort to free himself from Charlie's vice-like grip, Merideth caught him by the chest, with his left hand, and bending back a moment, threw himself forward with such force, that Charlie's hold gave way and he fell backwards to the floor!

With the quickness of thought, Merideth then retreated a step, and once more levelled his pistol at his fallen foe.

Charlie thought that his hour had come, and gave himself up for lost, but at that moment Blanche uttered a piercing shriek, and, rising suddenly, threw herself between her lover and her husband, exclaiming: "No, no! Kill me! Kill me! I, I alone am to blame! I, alone am guilty!"

"Vile woman," Merideth answered, his eyes gleaming like burning coals, with excitement and passion. "Will you hang upon him before my face?"

"Yes," she exclaimed, "I will protect him with my life, I love him! Do you hear? I love him! Now fire if you will, but if he dies, I die with him!"

And her beautiful eyes, just now so mild and full of love, shone like two stars. Her dress was still unfastened and in her passion and excitement, she seized it as she spoke, with her hands, and drawing it from her shoulders, exposed still further, that lovely bosom, white as the purest mountain snow. Her position, too, was such, as to show the graceful outline of her whole figure to the best advantage, and altogether it was a scene which once witnessed would never be effaced from the memory.

Merideth stood gazing for a moment, upon her, fairly panting with rage, and then, making a spring forward, he caught her by the arm, raised her with a powerful motion and whirled her round and round, to the furthest limit of the room.

At the same moment Charlie sprang to his feet, and once more rushed upon Merideth; but he was too quick for him, and springing aside he fired!"

But his hand was unsteady, and Charlie escaped unhurt.

Merideth, with a curse, raised his arm again, and was about to fire the second time, when a tall woman, dressed in black, made her appearance at the door, accompanied by the negress, Sally.

"What is this?" exclaimed the woman, "what means this disturbance in my house? Mr. Merideth, you know your presence here is far from welcome, I am surprised you should intrude yourself."

"Indeed, Mrs. Parker!" said Merideth, sarcastically. "It must be a matter of surprise indeed, that a husband should desire to keep watch of a guilty wife. I came into this room a moment or two ago, and found mine in the arms of her paramour! Come not between a man and his wrath!"

"What?" she exclaimed, "can this be so? Blanche, is this true?"

Blanche, overcome by her emotions, however, made no reply, but, as if for the first time conscious of her exposed state, drew the folds of her dress around her and stood motionless.

"True!" exclaimed Merideth. "True? to be sure it is true. I have long suspected her infidelity and have been watching her closely for some time past. I saw her steal out of the hotel to-night, disguised, and I saw this man meet her on the corner. I followed them to this house, and although the fact of their coming here, partly allayed my suspicions, and I was about going away, something prompted me to turn back. By means of my key, which fortunately fitted your night-latch, I entered the house unnoticed, and coming directly to this room, discovered her, as I have said, half naked in the arms of her lover and uttering words of passionate love, as his hot kisses fell upon her lips!"

"Who is this man?" Mrs. Parker asked, pointing to Charlie, who stood gazing at Blanche, feeling as if he would have given the world were he only armed, so as to be able to defend her and himself against the fury of her husband.

"I do not know. He is a stranger to me. He is, however, stopping at the

Skinner House, with two other friends of his from the West. He has dishonored me, seduced my wife, and destroyed my peace of mind forever. Oh, Blanche, Blanche!" he exclaimed, as if grief had taken the place of passion, "why have you done this?"

But Blanche spoke not, she stood weeping against the wall.

"I tell you, sir, that your wife is as pure as she was before I met her, for the first time, this morning, and though I have perhaps given you cause for jealousy I assure you——"

"Say no more, sir, say no more. I do not expect you to confess before my face. I am satisfied, however, and by the eternal heavens," he exclaimed, rising again, with a savage air and grasping his pistol, "I will avenge my wrong!"

"I will have no murder here," Mrs. Parker said firmly. "This matter must be settled out of my house. You must remember, Mr. Merideth, that while Blanche is your wife, she is my niece; and that I am wronged in this matter as well as you. As for killing this young man, that would not restore your honor or your wife's purity. Leave the matter to me, I'll find a way of teaching this Lothario a lesson! Will you oblige me with your name, sir?" she asked, turning to Charlie.

"My name," he said, "is Ross. I do not belong in the city. I arrived to-day from a distance. I never saw Mrs. Merideth until this morning, and though appearances may be against me, I pledge you my honor as a gentleman, that I am not guilty of the act with which I am charged. That I entertain a warm, nay, a passionate regard for that lady, I will not deny. I have told her so, and would not deny it if fifty husbands stood before me. If Mr. Merideth considers himself wronged, however, I am willing to give him any satisfaction that a gentleman can ask or render."

"You shall hear from me, sir, do not doubt," said Merideth.

"And now you had better go, sir," said Mrs. Parker.

"Yes, go," said the husband of Blanche. "Go while you may, I will not answer for myself a moment longer!"

Charlie took a step towards the door, saying, "Farewell Mrs. Merideth, and pardon me for all the grief and shame which I have caused you!"

"Nay, nay!" she said, "do not go! Do not leave me to his mercy! Take me with you. Oh, do not desert me in my shame!" and she took a step towards him.

"Back, woman!" cried Merideth. "Back, on your life! Begone, sir, while you may!" he said, turning like a furious lion upon Charlie, who did not move.

"You had better go. Go, for Heaven's sake!" Mrs. Parker said, pushing him towards the door. "If you regard your life, or her reputation, or that of mine, go. You can do no good by staying! Go!" and, by degrees she pushed him to the door.

"Farewell!" he cried. "Farewell!"

Blanche made no reply, but stood, her face buried in her hands, weeping in the middle of the room.

The negress hurried him out of the house, and Charlie found himself in the street, without knowing which way to turn to reach his hotel. A policeman, whom with singular and rare good luck he chanced to stumble upon, put him on the right track, and he walked rapidly away, his heart filled with the most conflicting emotions.

Had he only been armed, he thought, he would have borne her away from that dreadful man, her husband. Yes, he would have attempted it, at any rate. Poor thing! How he did curse his fate, which gave him no right to protect her against the cruelty of that coarse brute. Were she only his, he thought, this earth would be a Paradise. Then he began to ponder upon the result of this strange adventure. What would Merideth probably do? Challenge him

Perhaps! Well, let him. He would not find him a backward foe. But then, the words of the woman, Mrs. Parker, came to his remembrance, "Leave him to me, I'll find a way of teaching this gay Lothario a lesson." What could she mean?

There was only one thing which Charlie dreaded, that was exposure. Not so much upon his own account, as on account of Blanche, and then, he dreaded too, lest any report of the affair should reach the ears of his father and his friends at home.

The more he considered it, the more perplexing the whole business became, and when he at last reached the Skinner House, he was nearly beside himself with sympathy and passion for her, hate of her husband, and fear of the ridicule and blame which would follow his exposure.

One thing he was determined upon, he would leave the Skinner House. He would no longer remain under the same roof with her or her husband, should either of them return to it.

On making enquiries at the office he found that his friends had not yet come in. So taking his key he went to his room, leaving word that he should be sent for as soon as Harry and Frank returned.

He had not been sitting in his room long, still pondering upon the scenes he had just passed through, when he heard footsteps upon the stairs. He listened, and in a moment he heard Blanche's voice. He could not distinguish her words, but he heard her husband say distinctly, "Hush!" and they passed on to the story above.

They had returned, and together, then!

But, a few moments after, he heard the step of a man descending the stairs, and some one coming up, who spoke to him, calling him "Mr. Merideth!"

Charlie at once left his room, and going to the window at the head of the stairs, which opened upon the street, looked out, and saw him leave the house and go towards Broadway.

It was evident then, that Merideth had left his wife for the night, at any rate, perhaps forever. Gods! if he could only communicate with her! He would give worlds to see her for one moment! But it was impossible.

Just then a servant came to the door, and informed him of the arrival of his friends, and that they were then in the bar-room.

Hastily seizing his hat, he went down, and, as we have seen, met them in company with Winstone, and desired them to come up stairs.

"What the deuce is the matter, Charlie?" said Harry, when the three were together in the room. "You have got into some scrape or other!"

"With that woman he met this morning," added Frank, "I should not wonder!"

"There is no scrape about it," said Charlie, uneasily, "but we must leave this house; at any rate, I must! I cannot remain here. I shall leave in the morning. If you chose to go with me, I shall be very happy, but if not, I shall go alone."

"But for what reason?" asked Harry, "we are very comfortable here, and cannot better ourselves. Of course, if you insist upon going, we will go with you, but I should like to know the reason of this sudden determination!"

"I cannot explain, now," said Charlie; "it is I hope, enough for me to say, that it is necessary—absolutely—that I should seek some other place."

The question was argued for some time, but finding Charlie determined, his friends at last yielded, and it was finally agreed that they should leave in the morning, and after recounting to him their adventures, Frank and Harry withdrew to their own room, leaving Charlie alone in his.

He sat for some time thinking of Blanche, and the exciting scenes through which he had passed, and was deeply buried in a reverie concerning her, when he heard a gentle tap at his door.

"Come in," he said, but as no one appeared, he rose and opened it.

What was his astonishment when he beheld Blanche!

CHAPTER IX.

PHLEBOTOMY.

"Thus do I ever make my fool my purse."

[SHAKESPEARE.]

"WHAT!" Charley exclaimed, on recognising the lovely face of Blanche. "Oh, thanks! Enter quick!"

But she spoke not a word. Placing her taper fingers upon her ripe, pouting lips, and looking at him with an imploring expression, she handed him a small and neatly folded note, and turning quickly, bounded away.

But Charlie did not intend that she should so easily evade him. The moment she fled, he pursued, and overtaking her at the foot of the stairs, he caught her round the waist with one arm, and taking her little hand in his, gently held her back.

The gas light which burned in the hall, shed its rays directly over her head, and in her spotless *robe de nuit*, with its neat lace collar, falling off from her neck, and just exposing the gentle swell of her bosom, upon the entrancing charms of which Charlie had so lately gazed in ecstasy, she looked more bewitching, more captivating than ever.

"Let me go!" she urged in a low voice. "Oh, Mr. Ross—Charlie—dear Charlie, if you have any regard for yourself or me, do not detain me here. Read the note I have given you, and do as I request."

"But," said Charlie, in a whisper, "I cannot part with you; return with me to my room. I cannot let you go. Shall I, when Paradise is once more open to me neglect to enter there, and turn my back on all its joys? No, no! I will not let you go, till we have quaffed to the dregs every drop of happiness which fate, through you, extends to me. Come! throw off your foolish fear! You have confessed your love for me, and I would die for you. Let us in, and while we may, bask in the smiles of love?" and pressing her closer and closer to his breast, he tried to draw her to his bosom.

"For God's sake, Charlie, let me go," she said. "You know not what you risk. He may return at any moment. Discovery would be ruin for both of us."

But Charlie's ears were deaf to all her prayers, and though she struggled earnestly, she could not lose his hold upon her.

At last, finding, spite of all her efforts, he was bearing her nearer to the open door of his room, she said, half aloud:

"Let me go, I say, once more! If you do not, by heaven, I will alarm the house. You are mad."

"I am," said Charlie; hoarse with passion; "I am mad—intoxicated with love!"

Once more she cried: "Let me go!"

But Charlie heeded not, and was still forcing her along, when he heard a foot upon the stairs below, and a voice speaking to some one.

"It is Boxby!" exclaimed Blanche, as, with a desperate effort, she broke free from Charlie's grasp, and flew up the stairs. "Away! quick!" In a moment, she disappeared, and Charlie reached his room just in time, as he thought, to escape observation.

Locking the door and throwing himself on the bed, he fell to weeping like a girl, nor was it till long after the day had broke, that sleep visited his eyes and steeled his excited brain in forgetfulness.

When he awoke the sun was streaming in at the window. The first thing which came to his mind was the remembrance of the events of the preceding night, and then, suddenly, he recollected the note which Blanche had given him.

He tore it open and read as follows:

"CHARLIE:—You must leave this house. If you remain here a collision with Merideth will be unavoidable, and that would be ruinous to both of us, as exposure would be sure to follow. Should the events of last night be made public, think of my shame and disgrace! I should die! Remember this, and as you love me, be discreet. My honor is in your hands! When time and opportunity are favorable, have no fear but that I will see you again. Till then farewell."

"BLANCHE."
New York, No. --- Sullivan Street.

"Have no fears, Blanche," said Charlie to himself, after reading the note, "I would not betray you for the world."

Just then, Harry and Frank knocked at the door. He let them in, and after the discussion of the previous night had been renewed, Charlie adhering with more pertinacity than ever to his determination, they went down stairs to breakfast. After which they sought the smiling Pierce Boxby, and requested him to give them their bill, informing him that they were about to leave.

He could scarcely believe his ears, and began to expostulate in a mild way with them on the absurdity of the proceeding, enquiring whether everything had not been done to their satisfaction, and hoped they would change their minds.

Charlie, who was the spokesman of the party, however, soon convinced him of the impossibility of their doing that, and he turned reluctantly away, and making out their bill, presented it.

On examination it proved to be for Harry and Frank only—Charlie's bill not being included.

"I will make out a separate bill for Mr. Ross," he said, "as he occupied a separate room." So Harry paid the amount of the bill rendered, and went up stairs with Frank, to lock their trunks, etc., leaving Charlie in the office.

"Will you step inside a moment, if you please?" said Boxby, after he had finished making out the bill.

Charlie passed to the other side of the counter, and going to the desk, took the bill which Boxby presented to him, and examined it.

It ran thus:

Mr. CHAS. ROSS,	To the SKINNER HOUSE, Dr.
To Room, 1 Day,	\$ 2 50
Extras,	50 00
	<hr/> \$52 50
Rec'd Payment,	

"What is this?" exclaimed Charlie. "Extras! I have had no extras!" "I beg your pardon, Mr. Ross," said Boxby, coolly, "but you have. I have charged it in that way to save your feelings. You endangered, by your conduct, last night with a married lady, the reputation of this house. I overheard your conversation, and witnessed your violence towards her. Should I inform Mr. Merideth of what has taken place, or acquaint him with the fact that she came to your room at such an hour of the night, what do you suppose would be the consequences to you, and her? You had better pay it, Mr. Ross, I assure you, you will find it to your interest to do so."

Charlie stood perfectly aghast! This man, then, had witnessed the scene in the hall, the night before, and had taken advantage of the circumstance to swindle him.

"This is infamous!" he exclaimed at last. "It is downright swindling!"

Even admitting that your accusation is true, by what right do you demand money from me? I will not pay it!"

"Just as you please, Mr. Ross. That is my bill against you, and you will not be allowed to remove your baggage until it is paid. Here, John," he said to one of the porters, in the front of the room, "go up stairs and lock No. 28. and bring the key to the office!"

"But you surely do not mean——"

"I mean," said Boxby, as the man left the room on his errand, "that those who dance must pay the fiddler. If you think you are overcharged, you have your remedy. You can commence proceedings to recover your baggage—or——"

"But that would lead to exposure and compromise the character of an innocent woman."

"Exactly," said Boxby, "and unless I am mistaken, you are too much of a man of honor to do anything of the kind. Shall I receipt the bill?"

Charlie was almost beside himself with rage. He expostulated, threatened, avowed that it was no better than theft, but the imperturbable Boxby, remained unmoved, and when he had finished, enquired again, if he should receipt the bill.

"Yes," said Charlie. "Receipt it. But remember, if ever I hear a word of this circumstance, if ever I have reason to suspect, that you have betrayed my secret——"

"You need be under no apprehension, sir, on that score. We have too much regard for the reputation of the house."

Charlie paid the amount of the bill, and putting it in his pocket, after Boxby had receipted it, walked in front of the counter. By this time the porter returned with the key of his room, and he, immediately, went up stairs, put such articles as he had removed, back into his trunk, and coming down again, desired the porter to fetch it, which he did.

Harry and Frank having also returned, a hack was brought, and they left the house, Pierce Boxby accompanying them to the door, and bidding them good-bye, in the most cordial manner, insisting in particular, in shaking hands with Charlie Ross; a ceremony, Charlie was obliged to submit to, though he felt he could have killed the smiling villain upon the spot.

They were driven to one of the large Broadway Hotels, where they took possession of their rooms, and several days passed without the occurrence of anything of interest, worth recording.

They went about the city, under the guidance of friends to whom they had brought letters of introduction, and what with riding, sight-seeing and promenading, their time was agreeably and profitably occupied.

Charlie's mind, was still very much exercised in regard to Blanche. His thoughts continually dwelt upon her, and he wondered more and more, what, if any, the result of his romantic adventure would be.

He was not kept long in doubt. One day after dinner, as he was going to smoke a cigar in the billiard room, the clerk handed him a letter, addressed to him, in a neat feminine hand.

He hastily broke the seal.

The note read as follows:

"Mr. CHARLES ROSS, ----- Hotel:--
Dear Sir:—You will have the kindness to call upon me this evening at seven o'clock, at my residence as above. You will see the importance of doing so, when I inform you that I have a proposition to make, touching the unhappy affair which took place some days since. If you have any regard for the feelings of Blanche, you will throw no impediment in the way of a speedy adjustment of the difficulty.

"Yours truly,

"MRS. PARKER."

"So, so, thought Charlie, as he placed the note in his pocket. "The crisis has come at last. Well, let it come! I'll meet it like a man. So that I can preserve the reputation of Blanche, and keep the knowledge of this affair from the ears of my friends, I care not what happens, I will go."

Punctual to the hour, Charlie found himself ringing at the bell of Mrs. Parker's house. He was admitted by the negress, Sally, and shown into the front parlor, where he was shortly joined by Mrs. Parker.

"Good evening, Mr. Ross," she said, taking a chair opposite to him; "I am glad to find you so punctual, as it argues a disposition to do what is right in this unfortunate affair."

"You stated in your note," said Charlie "that you had a proposition to make to me. May I know what it is?"

"Certainly," she replied, "I am a woman of few words. By your foolish, not to say criminal conduct, with my niece, you have not only rendered her unhappy for life, and destroyed the peace of mind of her husband, but you have, should the circumstances be made public, brought ruin and disgrace upon yourself and her. She is at this time almost mad with fear and anxiety, lest her husband should be guilty of some rash deed, which would bring about an exposure, and has implored me to settle the matter if possible, in the easiest way. I have had several interviews with Merideth."

"What does he require?" asked Charlie.

"You shall hear," she continued. "At first, nothing would satisfy him but a personal rencontre with you; he swore he would kill you, and has sought for you on more than one occasion. He has, however, at last, yielded to my persuasion, and has determined to seek redress through the law."

"The law!" exclaimed Charlie. "The law! but that would expose all."

"That is why I have sent for you," she said. "Should he commence a suit against you, the papers, thinking it, what they call a "rich," case, would have hold of it at once, and all the parties concerned would become famous all over the country."

"He is mad!"

"Listen!" she went on. "Should the case come to trial, he would, under the circumstances get heavy damages against you, and poor Blanche would die of shame and mortification, while I judge you would shrink from the publicity which——"

"Great heaven! this must not be!" Charlie exclaimed, rising and pacing the room.

"Do not get excited," she said coolly. "Sit down and hear me out. I say he would get heavy damages, for I hear you are rich and have wealthy friends. Now, I think that I can compromise matters, and save this dreadful exposure."

"How?" asked Charlie.

"By giving to Merideth a sum of money, sufficient to satisfy him."

"What amount do you propose?"

"A thousand dollars in cash, and your notes for four thousand dollars more, payable in three, six, nine and twelve months, making in all five thousand dollars."

"But," said Charlie, taken completely aback by the magnitude of the demand. "I cannot command so large a sum of money; and besides, were I to pay what you ask, it would lead, so far as I am concerned, to the very exposure I so much wish to avoid."

"I cannot promise to settle it upon any other terms. And I think, under the circumstances, you may consider yourself fortunate to escape so easily. You have ruined the prospects of Blanche; you have entailed a life of misery upon her, and you have changed her husband into a fiend."

"What was he before, the villain? He has no right to such an angel as Blanche. He cannot appreciate her. He does not know her worth!"

"That is all very well, but the law does not recognise the right of a stranger to redress a wife's grievances by seducing her. His conduct does not palliate your guilt, nor will a jury take it into consideration, in my opinion. You came with her into my house, compromised, not only her good name, but mine; for Merideth has, on more than one occasion, hinted that I had a guilty knowledge of the object of her visit here, and, violating every rule of hospitality, in my absence from home, you took advantage of the weakness of my niece, and another man's wife. He entered in time to witness his own disgrace, and but for me, you would not have escaped with your life."

Charlie was perplexed in the extreme. This was a new phase of the matter altogether. He had thought that Merideth might call him to account, but he had never dreamed, of being asked to compromise the affair with money. "Could this be a plan?" he thought, "can it be that this is part and parcel of a scheme, in which all these persons, from Blanche to Pierce Boxby, are engaged to rob me?" But he dismissed the suspicion, almost as soon as it sprang up in his mind.

Blanche, so pure, so innocent, so good, and so unsophisticated! it was treason against any good impulse of his heart, against human nature to harbor such a thought a moment!

"Well, sir," said Mrs. Parker, as Charlie still continued to pace the floor with hasty strides. "Will you give me an answer?"

"How long will you give me, to consider upon this proposition. I have not as much money as you mention at my command, and I need a day or two to see what arrangements I can make, if I agree to concede to your terms."

"Will two days be sufficient?"

"I will endeavour to give you an answer by that time."

"Very well, then, I shall expect you at the same hour as this, any day after to-morrow. If you do not come, I cannot answer for the consequences."

"I will be here without fail."

"Remember, sir," Mrs. Parker said, as Charlie stood, hat in hand, prepared to go. "I do not promise, that Merideth will accept the compromise I have mentioned, but I will do my best, to persuade him to do so."

"I understand," said Charlie. "Good night!"

"Good night, sir!" and he left the house.

As soon as the street door closed, a man emerged from a corner of the back room, and exclaimed: "Well done! You've hit him betwixt wind and water. He'll come down, never fear. You ought to be a judge, you lay down the law as if you had sat on the bench all your life."

"Do you think so?"

"Think so," answered Merideth, for it was he. "Think so! You're a Dicky Riker, in petticoats. He'll settle fast enough; but we must raise him a thousand when he comes. He bleeds easier than I thought he would. Is Blanche up stairs?"

"Yes. You had better go up and comfort her, poor thing!"

They both burst into a laugh at this sally, and left the room.

"Poor Blanche!" Charlie would have thought, could he have heard it.

"With such a husband, and such an aunt. Your lot is hard indeed."

CHAPTER X.

CALYPSO'S ISLE.

"Her steps take hold on death." [PROVERBS.]

CHARLIE went away in no easy frame of mind, and as he walked slowly back to the hotel, he tried to lay down some definite plan of action for his government. He could not raise the large sum of a thousand dollars without calling upon his friends, which would cause inquiry, if it did not arouse suspicion, and even though he should obtain the sum without compromising himself, there were the four notes of a thousand dollars each. How was he to pay them? He could see no outlet to his difficulties; and by the time he returned to the hotel, he was nearly distracted.

He found Harry Callow and Frank Dutton, in conversation with Winstone, who had met them in the bar room, and they were waiting for his return to ask him to accompany them on a visit to one of those houses of profligacy and vice, with which all large cities abound.

"Come," said Harry; "Mr. Winstone has kindly consented to be our guide. We have all been savagely proper since we have been here, and we might as well avail ourselves of his kind guardianship."

"All right," said Charlie, glad of any excitement which would distract his thoughts from the one subject which had preyed upon his mind so long. "All right. I am ready for anything. But let us have some brandy first, for I am nearly dead with the blues," and he moved towards the bar, followed by his companions. After their libations, they left the hotel, and turned into Broadway.

They did not have far to go. A walk of five minutes brought them before a large house in Mercer street, between Prince and Spring, and going up the steps, Winstone rang the bell.

It was answered by some one inside, who, after rattling a chain, let down the slats of an iron blind, fitted into the panels of the door, and, peering out, inquired, "Who is there?"

Winstone placed his face in such a position that his features could be recognized by the reflection of the light, which burned inside, and as he said, "It is me, Maggie! Open the door!"

Without making any reply, the person inside closed the blind, and, after more rattling of chains and unlocking bolts, the door was opened, and they entered the house.

"How are you, Maggie?" said Winstone, chucking a tall, fat woman under the chin. "Is Jane in?"

"Miss Jane is in her room. Walk in the back parlor," replied the woman, "and I'll send her, if you want to see her. There is no one there, go in."

Winstone led the way into a back room, which was brilliantly lighted, and which fairly glittered with mirrors and gold. The ceiling was painted in fresco, with representations of Cupid and Venus, in all sorts of positions, surrounded by birds, flowers, and other ornamentation.

The panels of the wall were filled with enormous mirrors, reaching from the floor to the ceiling, so that which ever way the visitors turned, they saw themselves reflected a thousand times.

The floor was covered with carpet, into which the foot sank ankle deep; and the furniture, such as sofas, chairs, and tables, was of the newest fashion, and most elegant workmanship. Most of it was heavily gilt and covered with cushions, which yielded luxuriously to the slightest pressure.

"Be seated, gentlemen," said Winstone, taking a seat himself, in a large re-

ception chair, in the center of the room. "Queen Calypso will be here soon, with her attendant nymphs!"

As he spoke a tall fine-looking woman, just approaching the shady side of woman's life, entered the room.

Winstone arose, and putting his arm round her waist, said. "How is the Queen to-night?"

"Good evening, gentleman! Friends of yours, Winstone, I suppose. Glad to see you. The Queen is deuced queer to-night, I haven't been well all day," she said, taking a chair near the door. "What's up?"

"Oh, nothing; we just dropped in to kill time. Where are the girls?"

"They'll be here in a minute."

"Well, give us a bottle of wine before they come," said Winstone, "to drink your health in, I'm really thirsty."

She went out a minute, and a big negress entered shortly, bearing a silver salver upon which was a bottle of champagne, and some glasses. She cut the strings of the cork, and filling the glasses, handed them round.

"A health to the Queen," said Winstone emptying his glass at a draught.

"Drink hearty," the Queen replied, putting her glass down after merely sipping a drop from its sparkling brim. "And now, excuse me, I must go and look after the girls," she said, as she left the room, after Winstone had handed her a bill in payment for the wine.

"She is a thorough business woman," said Winstone, when she had gone. "There is no nonsense about her."

"So I should judge," said Harry. "She does not look as though a trifle would flurry her much."

"The devil himself wouldn't blanch her cheek, even if she did not rouge, which, of course, she does. But she's a good soul for all that; that is good for a woman in her position; for if her life does not annihilate anything approaching to goodness, she must have been an angel originally."

He was interrupted by the entrance of half-a-dozen girls, varying in age from sixteen to twenty, all beautiful, and all dressed in the most pronounced style.

There was nothing reserved in the manners of these young ladies, for, as they came in, they glanced around the room, and saluted the gentlemen present, with: "How are you, my love?" "How do you do, Curly?" "Hello, blue eyes," and other expressions of familiarity. Winstone was too old a traveler, to go through the silly form of introduction, but the ladies stood upon no ceremony, and did not require it. One threw herself on Winstone's lap, and kissed him off hand, appealing to one of her companions, to know if he didn't look like "Tom," Tom being her fancy man, upon whom she lavished nearly all her money, and the sum total of her sincere affection.

Another planted herself down by the side of Frank, covering up the whole lower part of his body, with her capacious skirt; and the rest distributed themselves about in the most free-and-easy attitudes.

As we have said, all of these frail creatures were beautiful, one or two of them particularly so: but in the faces even of the youngest, vice had already left his unmistakable traces, and they had a cunning, wicked and insincere expression. In fact, they looked like just what they were, which to a man of the world is the best definition we can give of their appearance.

They all wore remarkable low dresses, and made the most, so far as lavish display went, of their purchasable charms, and all spoke in a reckless and abandoned way, shocking to any mind in which respect for woman is a natural instinct.

If Harry and his friends were ill at ease, neither Winstone or the ladies were; and a couple of bottles of wine ordered by him, insured their hearty welcome.

Under the influence of the exhilarating fluid, the girls threw off all restraint, and knowing—for who should be better judges of human nature than they? that they had visitors of the "right sort," to entertain, they set about making themselves as agreeable as possible.

A slim, light haired, spectacled German was soon summoned by one of the girls, who was called Kate, and who was the most beautiful, as she appeared the most reckless of the lot, who, being placed at the piano, commenced playing, as if he were an automaton, wound up, and set in motion, for the occasion, a variety of Polkas, Mazurkas, etc, under the inspiring influence of which, all were soon whirling about the room, in an exceedingly lively, if not in a particularly graceful manner.

At the end of the dance, or rather, when they were all out of breath, for the dance was endless, more wine was ordered, and all gave way to the wildest mirth. Even Charlie forgot Blanche, and the unhappy termination of his adventure with her, and lavished much attention, upon an innocent creature in blue silk, who declared within five minutes of seeing him for the first time, that he was: "a dear blue-eyed duck, and the only man she ever loved!"

All went merry as a marriage bell, but it was now nearly midnight, and Kate proposed supper.

All thought it a capital idea—but where to get it, was the question. Some suggested one place, and some another, the Skinner House among the rest, which among its other accommodations, counted "Private supper rooms for Ladies." But as no one place, could be unanimously agreed upon, Winstone volunteered to get Miss Janes' consent to have it in the house.

He obtained it without much difficulty, the only stipulation which she made being, that she should be present to preserve order, which being agreed to, most of the other visitors having left the house, or disposed of themselves for the night, they adjoined to the dining room of the establishment, which was situated in the basement, and whither all the ladies connected with the house, who were not otherwise engaged, were invited to be present.

More wine followed their entrance into the supper room, and by the time the meal was ready, all were in a condition to enjoy it to the utmost.

The supper was elegantly served; the costliest plate, and the most beautiful glass, gave an appearance of dazzling splendor to the festive board, and the dishes were of the most *recherche* character.

With jests and laughter, the various viands passed away, while the sparkling wine continued to flow freely, and all were in the best possible spirits, till a woman, who had not been visible before during the night, entered the room.

She was tall, and magnificently shaped. Her eyes were large and black as night, and her hair, like the raven's wing, lay in rich, clustering masses, over her white, round shoulders, while her face gave token of more intellectuality than any in the room.

As she entered the room, there was silence for a moment, and then the hostess, Miss Jane, said: "We are glad to see you. Come in! Miss Edith, gentlemen."

She bowed very slightly, and her lip curled, as she replied, "I have not left my room this evening, before." Then with a queen-like step, she passed down the room, and seated herself at the further end of the table.

"Will you not have a glass of wine, Miss Edith?" said Harry, filling a glass from a fresh bottle which he had just ordered.

She nodded consent, and Harry passed her the wine, and filling his own, drank her health in a polite manner. She scarcely recognized the compliment, but putting the glass to her beautiful mouth, drained it at a draught and refilled it from the bottle near her.

"The princess is in one of her fits to-night," Kate observed to Frank, in an

undertone, "if she pays her respects to that bottle very often, we shall have a scene before long."

"Some people are very dignified, to-night," said another young lady, with a scornful expression, which betokened there was no very cordial feeling, existing between the two. "Well, we are all born, but none of us are dead."

Edith looked at her, and her eyes flashed, but she did not say a word. Again the fun became fast and furious. The song and the jest went round, but Edith, though she continued to drink much, said little, and sat moody and silent, resisting all the efforts made to draw her out.

At last Miss Jane asked: "What the devil is the matter with you to-night, Edith?"

"I have been thinking, that is all."

"Thinking?"

"Yes, of what a fool I am."

"You are in one of your ways to-night?"

"You had better let me alone then. While the fiend in me is at rest, you ought to know better than to arouse it," said Edith, fiercely, and looking at the woman in a defiant manner.

"If you want to keep quiet," the girl observed, who had first sneered at her dignity, "You had better stop soaking up as much of that wine, as you have for the last half hour!"

"And you," Edith answered, "had better keep your suggestions to yourself—I am dangerous to-night!"

"Let her alone, Augusta," said the hostess, "you know she's a devil."

"And who made me one?" asked Edith, now thoroughly excited by wine and anger. "Who made me one?"

"Well, well, never mind. We were all right before you came, what do you want to be rowing for?"

"Then, why do you taunt me? Is it not enough to be what I am, without being obliged to seem what I am not? Why can't you let me alone? I do not interfere with you or any here."

"Then why don't you enjoy yourself like the rest do, and not be a damper on the party?"

"Because I do not feel like it: and because I am what you called me just now, a devil. I always am, if I stop to think, as I have to-night. But you have no right to find fault. You ought not to object to your own work. Who made me a devil? You, I say! I was not a devil when I first came into your hands. I was pure and innocent. You have changed my purity to loathsome vice, my innocence to guilt."

"Oh, dry up," said Miss Jane, shortly, "and don't make a fool of yourself. What's done can't be helped, and what is the use of talking about it?"

"Because I can't help thinking about it, and I must speak, or go mad. If I were only once more out of your clutches!"

"There is no trouble about that," interrupted Miss Jane. "I'm tired of these scenes, and you can pack your duds, pay your board, and clear to-morrow—to-night, if you like. But while you do stay, keep quiet, and don't pitch into me! I never did you any harm, and you know it."

"I know you lie, and so do you!" Edith exclaimed, rising and going towards the hostess. "You first tainted my soul with guilt, and after I had once escaped from the vile life you introduced me to, you could not rest easy, till you had brought me back to it. I hate you; I despise myself. I could kill you, were it not for the little pity that is left in me, for I would not send you to hell before your time!"

"Sit down and be quiet, or leave the room," said the hostess, rising, in her turn, and forcing the girl back. "Sit down, you drunken —"

Edith on hearing the name which we cannot mention here, applied to herself,

grew livid with passion, and with the bound of a tigress, she fastened her fingers on the throat of the hostess, who dashing out her right fist, struck her full on the breast, which, did however, have the effect of making her relax her hold.

Finding that matters were growing serious, the party rose, and Harry seized Edith, while Winstone caught hold of Miss Jane, and endeavored to separate the infuriated women.

Their united exertions were unavailing for some time; at last, overcome by the excess of her wrath and exertion, Edith fell back into Harry's arms fainting.

The landlady, still furious with passion, would have struck her as she lay senseless, but the timely interference of Winstone prevented her, and after a moment she said:

"Take her away, will you? Take her to her room! take her away! I shall do her a mischief if you don't take her out of my sight!"

One of the girls—the young lady in blue—who seemed to have some sympathy for her wretched sister in vice, volunteered to show the way, and preceeded by her, Harry bore the still senseless form of Edith up stairs to her room, and placed her on a sofa.

The other girl then commenced applying restoratives, and after a few minutes Edith opened her eyes, and looked wildly about her.

"Oh God!" she said, "where am I?" Ha! I know, but for heaven's sake take me hence!"

"Come, come, cheer up," said the other girl soothingly, and adjusting Edith's dress which was very much disordered. "You are all right now."

"I am very much obliged to you," Edith said after a few moments, raising herself and placing her hand to her throbbing forehead. "I will not detain you from your friends any longer."

But Harry's interest and curiosity were both excited, and he determined, now that the effect of the wine she had drank seemed dissipated, to learn, if he could, something of her story; for he felt sure it would be no ordinary one.

The room was furnished in exquisite taste; a piano, upon which stood a music book, open at one of Bellini's most beautiful compositions; some choice pictures and articles of *vertu* scattered about, and a number of *etarges* filled with well selected volumes; the intellectual appearance of Edith herself, and the words she had uttered down stairs, all showed her to be a woman of some culture, and that she was sincere in her expressions of disgust at the life she led. So, instead of leaving the room, he replied: "My friends will excuse me, and if I do not trespass too much, I would prefer to remain here a short time. I should like to speak with you, and besides, you may again need my assistance."

"You are very kind, sir," Edith replied, "but you will find me a sorry companion. However, if you chose to inflict my dullness upon yourself I shall not prevent you."

"Can I do anything more for you? If I can, say so; if not I will go down stairs," said the girl in blue, who hoped to be able to complete her fascination of the susceptible Charlie Ross.

"No, Laura. You are very good, but I am better now, and feel ashamed to think I have acted as I have. I had no business, in the frame of mind I was in, to go down stairs at all."

"Well, never mind, Miss Jane will forget all about it in the morning. Good night!" and the cerulean Laura went out of the room, closing the door after her, and leaving Harry alone with the magnificent but desponding Edith.

As she reclined on the sofa, leaning her finely formed head upon her small, white hand, her long silken lashes, shading her gem-like eyes, while her bosom, the full volume of which, could be traced under the gauze-like chemise, which

scarcely covered its voluptuous beauty, rose and fell under the effects of the late excitement, she was a picture.

Her form, as we have said, was queen-like; its symmetry was perfect; and it might have served as a model for Michael Angelo, so beautiful were its proportions, judging from her leg, which was exposed nearly to the knee, outside of the spotless skirt, which accident had raised, and upon the under side of which it rested. Her foot was tiny, and while a child might have spanned her delicate ankle, her leg expanded in a gradual swell, the lines of which were perfect, and it was withal so plump and firm that it looked as though it might have been carved by some master-hand from marble.

"Pardon me," said Harry, "and do not think me impertinent, if I ask you a question or two, touching yourself. I will not disguise from you, that while I cannot claim to be such a stoic, as to be unmoved by your marvelous beauty, I have been more interested in your words and manner. You have excited my curiosity in regard to yourself, and as you seemed to-night, to want an outlet for your feelings, and as you seemed to be the prey of remorse—and in want of sympathy and encouragement; I should like to hear your story, the causes which led to your adoption of this life, which seems to be uncongenial to you, and which I assure you, I will listen to, as one who can sympathize with, and might perhaps assist you."

"There is very little in my story, sir, to interest any one, particularly a stranger; and as for your sympathy or assistance, I fear both would be thrown away upon me. My history is a common one. You may hear a thousand such in this city. It is a story of passion, weakness, temptation, guilt and ruin!

"Besides, I have partially banished the thoughts which just now agitated my mind, and my past is not so pleasant that I should wish to recall it."

"I do not insist upon it, of course," said Harry, "nor would I pain you by asking you to recall events, which perhaps you would fain forget, but it is said, 'An open confession is good for the soul,' and it may relieve you to share the burden which evidently oppresses you. 'Give sorrow words—'"

"I know," she said, finishing the quotation from the immortal dramatist: "The grief that does not speak, whispers the o'erfraught heart and bids it break." And as I could not sleep, and believing you sincere in your expressions of interest and sympathy, you shall hear the sad story of my life."

CHAPTER XI.

THE STORY OF EDITH.

"One more unfortunate."

[Hood.

"I WAS born, to begin at the beginning," Edith commenced, "in a small town in New England, but my parents removed to the city, when I was quite young. Though not by any means independent, they were in comfortable circumstances; that is, my father earned enough as a cartman, to one or two large business houses, to surround my mother, my sister and myself, with every comfort, and to give me a better education than girls in my position usually receive.

"Being naturally fond of my books, and quick and apt in mastering their contents, by the time I was fifteen years of age, I had made such progress, that, I was removed from school, and placed in a large mantua-making establishment, to learn the trade, and my father removed from the city, to a small farm, which he had purchased with his savings, on Long Island, leaving me in charge of a family, with whom we had been acquainted for some years.

"I was at this time as pure, and innocent in thought and act as an angel, and I had no wish or ambition, beyond making myself a perfect mistress of the trade I was learning, and adding to my accomplishments, by the pursuit of such studies as were congenial to me, and to which I devoted all my leisure hours.

"My earnings were considerable, for I displayed a great deal of taste, and soon gained much skill in the dress-making art; so that I commanded better wages than the other girls, in the establishment, besides which, I received numerous presents, from the ladies to whose houses, I was frequently sent to fit dresses and to receive orders.

"Among the customers of the establishment, the landlady of this house, was one of the best. She did not occupy it then, but a smaller and more unostentatious one, in the lower part of the city. I had no knowledge of its character, nor the slightest suspicions that she, and the two young ladies who lived with her—her nieces that she called them—were anything but models of virtue and correct behaviour.

"I was in the habit of going there frequently, on various errands from the establishment where I worked, and was always treated with marked kindness and respect. I do not remember that I ever heard a word that shocked my then pure mind, or that I was the witness of any act on the part of either Mrs. W—— or the young ladies, that was antagonistic to my ideas of strict propriety. They were light-hearted, frivolous, full of fun, fond of dress and show, generous to me, and paid well for all the work which they ordered, and I was always glad when my business called me there.

"The aunt, Mrs. W——, who represented herself as a widow, took a particular fancy to me, and seemed never tired of caressing me, praising my beauty, and speaking in the highest terms of my skill, so that I formed quite an attachment for her, and took pains to please her in everything.

"A young man by the name of Henry Cassell, a cousin of Mrs. W—— was in the habit of visiting the house frequently. At first I only saw him occasionally, but after a time, I rarely went there without finding him, or seeing him before I went away.

"He was very handsome; dressed in excellent taste, and was polite and respectful, at first, in his conduct towards me, but, at last, whenever we were alone together, and by some means, it always happened that this occurred whenever I went there, he began to exhibit a warm regard toward me, which manifested itself, in a certain freedom, which characterised all his words and actions. He praised my beauty, particularly my eyes, and would sometimes take my hand, and pressing it, declare the sight of me was enough to set him crazy. Still he did nothing radically improper; he made love to me, in a sort of half joking, half earnest way, and was never otherwise than kind.

"I gradually began to like him, and look forward with pleasure to my meetings with him, and he by degrees began to be more and more ardent in his protestations of love for me. The girls and sometimes Mrs. W—— used to joke me about him, and ask me if it was 'all settled yet?'

"Ah, sly boots," said Mrs. W—— to me one day, "I see how it is. You can't throw dust in my eyes. Well, I am glad of it. It will be a good thing for you. He is rich and in a good business and I think you'll make him a first rate wife. I'm sure he couldn't have a handsomer one!"

"I blushed, and after assuring her I had no thought of such a thing, changed the subject, but from that hour, I lived in a dream of the future. I thought that to be Henry's wife, would be to reach the very pinnacle of happiness, and so I went on loving him more and more.

"One day, when we were, as usual, left alone together, after sitting by my side chatting for some time, he took my hand in his and commenced toying

with it, while he declared, that I grew more beautiful every day, and that he loved me more and more, every time he saw me. By degrees, he managed to slip his other arm round my waist, and pressing me gently to him, kissed me."

"My god!" exclaimed Edith, her eyes dilating and her bosom heaving convulsively, while a bright glow suffused her cheeks: "I shall never forget that moment! Then, for the first time, the burning passion, which like a slumbering demon, had lain dormant in me, became aroused. My viens seemed to flow with liquid fire; my heart beat as though it would leap from my bosom; there was a strange ringing sound in my ears; my mouth became hot and dry; my eye suffused and dim; while a mad feverish desire of I knew not what, took possession of me. I was powerless to withdraw myself from his embrace, and as he again and again glued his lips to mine, and drew me closer to him, I thought I should go mad.

"Then, in a moment, a vague fear took possession of me, and mustering my fast receding strength, I made a desperate effort, and with a bound sprang to my feet, and got away. Again he tried to seize me, but I evaded his grasp and rushing up stairs, went to the room of Mrs. W——, where throwing myself upon the bed, I burst into tears. Tears not of grief, but of passion.

"Then came a sense of shame, of outraged modesty, of regret at what had taken place, and when I left the house, which I did as soon as I became tranquil, I was a different being. I began to regard Henry Cassell in a new light. The mild, innocent feeling I had experienced for him heretofore, grew into a mad, wild passion. Sleeping or waking his kisses seemed to linger on my lips; his touch seemed to thrill me, and I never thought of him without a sensation of half-fearful, half-intoxicating and delirious transport.

"But I was no fool: and I resolved to conquer this feeling, if I could. I began to realize the danger of my ardent, burning, passionate nature, and know that I dare not trust myself again with impunity, where there might be a likelihood of its being aroused.

"For some time I went to the house of Mrs. W—— as seldom as possible, and never saw Henry alone, but one day, she came to the establishment and requested that I might be sent, in order that I might assist the young ladies in trying on the dresses which were to be sent home that evening, and which they were to wear at a ball they were going to.

"'You must come,' said Mrs. W—— to me. 'The girls will never be able to dress without you. They have great confidence in your taste, and will feel very badly if you do not give them the benefit of it to-night.'

"I yielded to her persuasions and consented to go, fearing to meet Mr. Cassell, but still wishing that he might be there, for I was mad. I must have been.

"At the appointed time, in the evening, I repaired to the house, and assisted the girls to dress. Before they left a violent thunder shower came up, which increased shortly after they had gone, and Mrs. W—— would not listen to the idea of my going home, but insisted upon my staying all night, a proposition to which I assented after much persuasion.

"The girls would not be home, she supposed, much before morning, and I could occupy Matilda's room, who would sleep with Julia, or in one of the spare bed rooms.

"Shortly after we were left alone, Henry Cassell, who had not been there before, came in, and seemed delighted, though surprised, to see me.

"'You have been quite a stranger, lately,' he said, 'we do not see you anything like as often as formerly.'

"I made some evasive reply, and turned the conversation as soon as I could.

"After a short time Mrs. W—— left the room, but returned in a few moments,

with a couple of bottles of wine, which she placed upon the table, and requested Mr. Cassell to open.

"He did so, and handed me a goblet, brimful of the sparkling liquor, which he insisted upon my drinking at a draught, saying:

"'I wish to see if your eyes can be made brighter than they are.'

"It was the first champagne I had ever drank, and its effects were almost instantaneous. I became talkative, brilliant, and full of spirit, and the fear of myself, which, for so long had haunted me, died away, after I had taken another glass.

"Mrs. W—— soon pleaded fatigue, and retired, leaving me and Cassell alone. Had I been myself, I should have gone with her, indeed, I did offer to do so, but neither she nor Cassell would hear of such a thing, and my inclination, and my boldness, caused by the wine I had drank, overcoming my faint scruples, I remained.

"We sat and talked on different subjects, for a short time, but at last, drawing his chair close to mine, he took my hand and commenced toying with it as before.

"His touch thrilled me like a magnetic shock, and I withdrew my hand from him, and moved my chair farther away.

"He shrugged his shoulders, but seemed to take no particular notice of my movement, though he gradually came nearer to me, and once more took my hand, and pressing it warmly, said:

"'Why are you so coy, to-night? Have you forgotten the last time we were alone together here?'

"'No,' I replied, 'nor never shall. Talk to me if you will, but do not touch me, Mr. Cassell!' and I tried to withdraw my hand again.

"But he would not allow it, and getting closer to me, and again encircling my waist, he commenced a perfect rhapsody of ardent declarations, and though I struggled to get from him, he only pressed me the closer, till at last, just as I found words to speak, he silenced me, by pressing his lips to mine in a long, burning kiss!

"Again that mad delirium stole over me. Again came the fire in my veins, the throbbing in my heart; but again, I conquered myself, and springing from his arms, left the room, and succeeded in reaching the apartment, which had been assigned to me for the night.

"It was the front room on the second story, and connected with the back room occupied by Mrs. W——, by means of a narrow passage, the door of which I saw after I had entered, was fastened on the outside.

"Finding myself alone and, as I thought, safe from farther danger that night, I sat down and succeeded in calming myself, to a certain extent, and went to bed resolved to see Henry Cassell no more.

"The room was very neatly, in fact, to me, elegantly furnished. The bed was large and luxurious, in its appearance, and invited to repose, so that after I had stretched myself upon it, was not long, owing to the wine I had drank, in falling asleep, which I did with the thought of Henry in my heart, and his name on my lips.

"In my sleep, my mind continued to dwell upon him, for he was the subject of my dreams, and my passion for him seemed to burn in my slumber.

"How long I slept I know not, but I awoke in the midst of a sensation of ecstasy, to find myself clasped in the arms of some person who had entered the room while I was unconscious.

"I started, and would have screamed, but that a hand was placed gently over my mouth, and a voice, which I at once recognised as Cassell's, said soothingly, 'Nay Edith, don't be frightened, it is me.'

"The room was dimly lighted, by the gas which I had left burning, and as I opened my eyes, and looked wildly about me, I saw it was indeed Cassell who

held me. He was undressed, his arms encircled me in a close embrace, and ere I could again remonstrate with him, he drew my lips to his, and smothered me with kisses, every one of which fired me with mad, tempestuous fury.

"I had no power to speak. A glow of transport seemed to paralyze every limb, he drew me closer to him, and whispered loving words in my ears, and kissed my lips and wildly heaving bosom over and over. I forgot everything; my passion, the fierce desire which scorched my veins, the wild tumult which raged through every part of my frame, all combined to drive reason from her throne, and I lost consciousness in a bewildering sense of bliss.

"How long this delirium lasted, I know not, but when, at last, the fire in my veins died out, and I awoke to the reality of my situation, I still lay in Henry's arms, while he lavished upon me the fondest endearments.

"At first a desperate, reckless anger, took possession of me and I pushed him from me and springing out of the bed, would have dashed myself from the window, but ere I could accomplish the act, he was by my side and with his strong arm held me back, while he soothed me by his kind words and professions of sorrow and repentance.

"An uncontrollable, feeling of grief succeeded, and I wept as though my heart would break. I felt as though I were lost forever, and as by some supernatural presence, my whole future seemed to break upon me. I was lost, lost! Lost to virtue, to honor, to everything I held dear, to every one I loved! How could I again look my father, mother or sister in the face? How again visit the home where I was loved so well, and where they were so proud of me? I was plunged in despair, and prayed that I might die!

"By degrees, however, I grew calmer, and, as my seducer poured words of love and oaths of constancy into my ear, and promised to marry me when he should be able to arrange the matter with his family, I grew more calm, and though I did not yet forgive him, for the wrong I felt that he had done me, my love for him conquered the thoughts of it, and I allowed him to kiss away my tears.

"We sat till nearly daylight, he comforting me by every promise of future care and protection, and as I believed him and looked forward to the fulfilment of his offer to make me his wife, the sad feelings which had so weighed me down, lifted from my heart, and I consented to leave the house where I was living, and make my home with Mrs. W— within a week, he promising to assure her that we were already married.

"About daylight Matilda and Julia returned, shortly after which Cassell left the house, and I was left a prey to my foreboding thoughts.

"Mrs. W— came early to wake me, and hoped I had passed a pleasant night, so that I felt very much relieved by the thought that she had no suspicion of what had taken place.

"We had an early breakfast, and I hastened to my work with feelings equally excited by hope and despair.

"Within the time agreed upon, I left the house which I had heretofore made my home, in spite of the remonstrances of the family, and took up my abode with Mrs. W—, who received me with open arms as the wife of Mr. Cassell. Henry, quieting all my scruples, by renewed assurances of a speedy fulfilment of his sworn promise to make me his wife, as soon as a turn in his business affairs made him his own master, by freeing him from certain obligations to his family.

"I need not tell you, sir," Edith continued, as Harry sat listening to every word which fell from her lips, with wrapped attention, "that these promises were never intended to be fulfilled, and that I had been sold; bartered, body and soul, for money, by the vile procuress, who, under the guise of friendship, had shut my eyes to her true character, and that of the house of which I had become an inmate."

"But it was impossible," Harry observed, "that his blind delusion should continue long!"

"Listen," she went on, "it did not continue long. I soon learned the foul cheat of which I had been the victim. It happened in this wise:

"I was too ill, one morning, to leave the house, as usual, to perform my duties at the mantua-making establishment, and so remained at home, keeping my room most of the day. Mr. Cassell left about ten o'clock to attend to his business, and about an hour after he had gone, I heard the door bell ring, and immediately after, I saw, for my room door was ajar, a lady, closely veiled, come up stairs, and go into the room next to mine, where she was shortly after joined by a gentleman. In the mean while, one or two other couples came to the house, some in carriages, and were shown to various rooms about the place. This seemed to me a strange sort of proceeding, and a conversation I overheard, carried on in rather a loud tone in the next room, convinced me of the object of the visitors in coming to the house, and the true character of the house itself.

"Filled with indignation, my first impulse prompted me to leave at once; but whither should I go? So, I resolved to wait until Mr. Cassell returned, and then insist upon instant removal.

"He did not come home till late, and as soon as he appeared, I informed him of my discovery, and asked him to take me from the house at once.

"He hesitated, expostulated, and prevaricated, until, at last, I taxed him with having known this from the beginning, and upbraided him with treachery and deceit. He became excited, and confessed the truth. Mrs. W— was no relation to him, and Matilda and Julia were simply boarders, supported by two young men, whom I had frequently seen in the house, but of whose position in it, I had never had a suspicion!

"I will not attempt to describe my feelings," she continued a sad voice, "at the fearful truth which then burst upon me. Suffice it to say that my love for Cassell finally got the better of my indignation, and I remained in the house of Mrs. W— his recognized mistress, and at his urgent persuasion gave up my place in the establishment where I had been engaged.

"This led to enquiries on the part of my parents, they learned my whereabouts, and the shock killed my father. Henry soothed my bitter grief, by lavishing every care and expense upon me, and within a few months I became resigned.

"I still continued to urge upon Cassell the necessity of keeping his promise, but he delayed its fulfilment from time to time, until at last, it became a subject of frequent quarrels between us, and these repeated scenes of recrimination finally led to coldness on his part, then neglect, and, as you have doubtless anticipated, desertion.

"I pass over a short period of my life after this—it is what you may easily imagine—and come to the time, when Mrs. W—, having acquired sufficient means, by her unscrupulous business, opened this house.

"I came here with her and became its chief attraction. I had lovers and admirers by the score, and was as reckless as mercenary, and as wicked and dissipated as the devil would have me.

"At last, a gentleman, for whose father my father had worked, and who knew me when I was pure and innocent, visited the house and recognized me.

"No words can paint the surprise he exhibited, when I first came into the room, with a wild laugh, and planted myself before his eyes, in all the consciousness of the attractive power of my beauty. I recognized him instantly, and left the room crest-fallen and abashed, and sought the privacy of my own apartment, where he shortly joined me.

"He expressed much grief at finding me in such a place, and I finally told him my story, when he showed a warm sympathy for me, and strongly persuaded me to leave the house and offered to assist me, both with his wealth

and his influence, if I would give up my way of life, and seek by repentance and reformation, to restore myself to the respect of the world.

"I smiled at the idea, thanked him for his kindness and sympathy, but expressed my disbelief in the possibility of so vile a thing as I was, ever again holding up her head among the virtuous and the good.

"He left me but called again and again, until he began to take a deeper interest in me, than that of mere friendship, and commenced to give expression to these feelings, by both words and actions; while I, appreciating his goodness, his sincerity and his worth, already entertained for him a warm and ardent attachment; a sentiment which checked me in my mad and desperate folly.

"I refused to go into the public parlors, as I had heretofore done. Lovers and admirers pleaded at my feet in vain. I would not listen to them, and began to abhor myself for what I had been.

"Thaxter Davis, noticed this, and one night he came to my room, and after, expressing his pleasure at my altered course, he made me a proposition which nearly had the effect of setting me delirious with joy and astonishment.

"He proposed to marry me!

"Yes, he declared his affection for me, an affection so strong, that he would have shrunk from asking me to be his companion in sin, and offered, if I thought I could be faithful and true to him, to make me his wife!

"At first, I refused. I loved this man, not with the wild phrenzied passion I had felt for Cassell, but with a quiet intensity and a purity of feeling, I had never known before, and I refused and persisted in my refusal for weeks, until at last, I yielded and we were married.

"Oh, how happy I was. He took a quiet, little house, in Brooklyn, where we lived surrounded by every comfort. We seldom went out, saw but little society, and needed none, for we were all the world to each other. I loved him—nay almost worshipped him, and so help me heaven, I was true to him, not only in act, but in thought; while he, with a delicacy for which I felt as though I never could be sufficiently grateful; never once hinted in the remotest degree at my former life, but respected and trusted me, with all the confidence he could have shown towards the purest and most innocent woman that ever lived.

"I had every wish that my heart could crave and thus three years passed happily away. At the end of that time, a woman came to live as a boarder in the house next door to ours, between whom and myself a great intimacy soon sprung up. She was young, handsome, and overflowing with spirits. We used to go out together sometimes, and I frequently went down to the ferry with her to meet her husband, who seemed a good-natured, easy sort of a man, fond of his wife, and easily led by the nose.

"One day, after we had been friends some time, she proposed that we should take a walk together, and we went out without having any definite object in view.

"After walking sometime, and feeling tired, we went into a confectionary establishment, for the purpose of having some refreshments, where my companion was met, just as we entered the room, by two gentlemen, to whom she introduced me, one being her brother, she said, and the other her cousin. They joined us at our table, and ordered a generous lunch, and a couple of bottles of wine, of which, contrary to my usual rule, I was urged after many refusals, to partake.

"As you have seen, I have but indifferent brains for drinking, and it had its usual effect on me. I became free, lively and full of animation. After the bottles had been emptied, this woman's brother proposed a ride in a carriage, to which she consented at once, but, to which I objected on the score of being obliged to return home immediately. My objections were over-ruled however, and I agreed to go. Surely, the woman urged, there could be no harm in an in-

nocent ride, with her and her brother and cousin, and what with the wine, the confidence I had in her, and their persuasions, I yielded, and we were soon flying over the Jamaica Road, as fast as two fleet horses could carry us.

"We had not gone far, when the person whom she called brother, produced a bottle of wine and some glasses, from under the seat of the carriage, and opening the bottle, insisted upon our drinking. I did not need much urging, and that bottle and another was disposed of, ere we reached our journey's end.

"Here dinner was ordered, and more wine made its appearance, which completed the destruction of every safe-guard I had thrown around myself, and made me reckless of consequences.

"I gave way to the wildest mirth, and in my besotted condition, could not see that the conduct of the woman, with the man she had represented as her brother, gave the lie to her words.

"When we left the hotel where we had dined, we drove to New-York, and to a house such as this. I forgot all, my oaths, my vows, my reformation and my love, in the mad passion which the wine, the occasion, and the ardent carresses of my companion excited, and the next morning I awoke in his arms, a foul, polluted thing!

"I could not return to my husband. I wrote to him telling him all the truth. He sent me my clothes and my jewels without a word in reply, and within two days went to California, a broken-hearted man, where I learn he has since died.

"When I tell you that the woman who was the means of inducing me to do this wicked thing; who was the bait to the trap set for me; who caused my downfall and led me to shame, and the only man I ever loved, to death; when, I say, I tell you that this woman was the tool of that fiend down stairs, whom I would have killed but now," Edith exclaimed, rising and drawing her majestic figure to its full height, "and that she was urged to work my ruin, in order to drag me back to this vile den, where she might once more make money off my prostitution, and that I know it; you will not wonder at the feeling I displayed, or the hate of her which rankles in my vengeful heart!"

"Your story is indeed a horrible one," said Harry, his heart full of pity for the frail being before him.

"Horrible!" she repeated, walking up and down the floor, "horrible! Yes, but now go! Do not stay here any longer! I wish to be alone with my griefs; alone with my wrongs!"

"But," said Harry, rising in obedience to her imperious gesture. "May I not offer you some sympathy? Can I not assist, befriend you?"

"No, no! Go!"

"Some other time, perhaps——"

"Perhaps! but go now. Go, and remember, to keep my story to yourself!"

"I will," said Harry, as he left the room, and joined his friends down stairs.

CHAPTER XII.

THE BREAK O' DAY HOUSE.

"We won't go home till morning."

OLD SONG.

THE fascinations of the sweet creature in blue, did not prove sufficient to keep Charlie from leaving with his friends, as very much to her disappointment, he quickly yielded to Harry's invitation to go, on his reappearance after listening to the story of the unfortunate Edith.

"Let me see," said Winstone, as they stood once more in the street, looking at his watch by the glare of the gas light, which stood near the door of the house they had just left. "It is just three o'clock. We might as well make a night of it. We shall be just in time to see the Break o' Day Houses in their glory."

"What are the Break o' Day Houses?" asked Harry, as they walked along.

"Houses which keep open all night. Where a certain class of people go, after the other places of resort are closed. There are sometimes rich scenes to be witnessed in these places, and as we might as well finish the night handsomely, what say you to a visit?"

The proposition was unanimously acceded to, and turning into Broadway, they proceeded up town.

The great thoroughfare was nearly deserted, with the exception of a roystering party of fast young men, who were going noisily home after a night of wild dissipation, and a solitary policeman, lounging under a doorway here and there, no person was to be seen, and the footsteps of the party echoed loudly, as they passed along.

At last they came to a house, situated near the corner of Houston Street, in which the lights still burned brightly, and from which proceeded sounds of mirth and boisterous conversation, giving token that a large party was inside.

"We are in luck to-night," said Winstone, as they entered the place, "the boys are out in force, and we shall see some fun."

It was an ordinary sized apartment, fitted up as a drinking saloon, and contained about twenty persons, standing in groups near the counter, and sitting about the room.

As our party entered, the conversation, which had been carried on in a loud tone, ceased, and all the eyes were turned upon the new comers.

Going up to the bar, Winstone ordered drinks, and while they were being prepared, Harry and his friends had an opportunity of surveying the people about them.

They were mostly young men, some were dressed in the costume of firemen off duty, wearing the red shirt, black pantaloons, etc., and these had evidently been at a ball given that evening in the neighborhood, by some amateur Target Company. Others were dressed in that peculiar jaunty style, in which none but the luckier kind of pimps, fighters and small gamblers indulge, and one or two were small newspaper reporters, and members of the lower strata of Bohemia, a term we shall explain more fully hereafter. Among the crowd, and evidently the most important personage there, both in his own estimation, and that of those assembled about him, stood a man about five feet eight inches in height, but broad shouldered, and well put together. He was dressed in what he evidently considered a stunning style, and wore in the bosom of his ruffled shirt, a diamond pin of gigantic proportion, and a massive gold chain, heavy and strong enough to have hung half a dozen men of his weight, drooped in a long curve, over his shining satin waistcoat. His face was vulgar, and brutal

in its expression, and his whole appearance was that of a man, lost to every feeling of humanity, decency or honesty.

As Winstone turned, after putting down his glass, he saw this man, and without going towards him said:

"Have something, Vitriol?"

"Just been there," replied Vitriol, as he turned away sullenly, and Winstone and his friends took seats at one of the little marble-topped tables, which stood at the side of the room.

After a few moments, and when the curiosity of those present, seemed to have been satisfied, in regard to the new comers, the conversation which had been interrupted was renewed, and was carried on for some time, interspersed with invitations to drink and smoke.

The remarks which were made, referred to all sorts of subjects. Politics, in which the biggest blackguards of the party, seemed to take the most interest, formed a prominent topic. It turned out that the individual we have designated as Vitriol was a candidate for nomination to an office of considerable trust and large emoluments, and he swore with many blasphemous and bloody oaths that he would have it or raise — with the party that should go back on him.

It struck our friends from the West, as being strange that a man, such as Vitriol, who from his conversation was evidently ignorant, and from his looks, more fit for the State Prison than any other place, should have had the audacity to aspire to any office within the gift of an intelligent people, however low it might be, but the others present, seemed to look upon it as a matter of course, and even the "gentlemen of the press," and one or two of the more intelligent and decently behaved, encouraged him with offers of such assistance as they could render, and hopes that he would get the office, which they assured him he had deserved by his services to the party.

After some time, during which Vitriol pulled out a roll of bank bills, from his pocket, and offered to bet any man in the room, that he would "git" the nomination, or "take" anybody that interfered with his prospects, a diminutive individual, with a strong Cockney accent, and who, from some remarks he had made, was evidently connected with some newspaper in the capacity of "critic," and whom a gentleman of the theatrical profession, by the high-sounding cognomen of Alcibiades Popson, took every occasion of toadying, proposed they should leave off politics and have some harmony.

"Come," he exclaimed, "cut politics and let's have a song! I'll sing myself, and Popson will give us the 'Landlady's Daughter.'"

This suggestion was immediately acted upon, and the gentleman of the press, who was known as "Little Mosen," broke out into one of those low, pointless, ribald songs, without rhyme, wit or humor, and whose only merit consists in filthy equivocation and dirty perversions of the last syllables at the end of each verse.

This was greeted with immense applause, "Little Mosen" receiving the encomiums passed upon him, with an affected modesty, and then Mr. Alcibiades Popson was called upon to continue the 'armony, as "Little Mosen" called it, by giving his celebrated version of the "Landlady's Daughter," a song for which he was much celebrated in private circles, and which he would have sung with unbounded applause, at all the principal theatres, according to the accounts which "Little Mosen" would have written about it, provided the managers of the principal theatres, aforesaid, had not remained persistently blind to Popson's merits, and insisted upon keeping untold wealth out of their respective treasuries, by refusing to give him a chance before the public.

Popson on this account, considered himself a crushed individual, and had drawn largely upon the sympathy of his friends, by enacting the part of a blighted being whenever occasion offered.

He had been engaged in turn, at all the theatres in the metropolis, but his

continual whining—his passion for gossip and mischief making, and his barbarous treatment of his poor little struggling wife, who played small parts, and took the principal fairy in "leg pieces," had invariably led to his discharge, before the season was half over, and now he vented his spite by abusing the managers to his personal friends, and getting up sympathy among all who would listen to the story of his wrongs.

On being called upon for his famous ballad of the "Landlady's Daughter," he threw himself back in his chair, and after many hems! and throat-clearings, interspersed with declarations of his inability to please, but inclination to do his best, commenced the song, which was evidently of English extraction, and was intended for a very humorous production, each verse ending with a lugubrious "Chorous," as he called it, to the words, "Foo di lum, foo di lum, foo di lum ti da."

By the time this classic performance was over, Vitriol asked the company to drink, an invitation which met with a ready response, and as they were about resuming their seats, for the purpose of listening to another song from the Sporting Reporter of a weekly paper, the door opened, and two individuals entered the room.

One of them was a middle-sized, well-shaped young man, who would be recognized among those acquainted with the peculiarities of character in a large city, as a Fancy Man, that is, a person of prepossessing exterior, and thorough knowledge of the ways of the world, combined with an entire want of all principles, except the one upon which he lived—namely, that the world owed him a living, and that it must fulfill its obligations towards him. He was known as the parasite of an antiquated female of poor morals, who having made a fortune by keeping a house of questionable repute, had retired from business, and lived a quiet life up town, where she only received her most intimate friends, of both sexes, and turned an honest penny occasionally, by acting as procuress for some wealthy old *debauche*.

The young man who now entered the room, was her especial pet. She supplied him with his clothes, board, a limited amount of pocket money, and his lodging occasionally; for which in return, he allowed himself to be recognized as her lover, and escorted her at certain times, in her promenades in Broadway, and to places of amusement, to which he had free access, by means of gratuitous passes furnished him by his acquaintances among the actors, and newspaper people. He was known among all his more intimate associates as the "Duke," a sobriquet of which he was somewhat proud. His character was well known, and yet many men, of professional celebrity, and others whose social position stood high in the city, while they turned their backs upon more deserving but less dashing men, and considered them "slow," and not worthy of recognition in their set, were willing to encourage "The Duke," by their countenance, and he was always a welcome guest at their social reunions.

He was accompanied on the present occasion, by a man about his own age, equally well dressed, but with a far more intelligent expression in his face, and who was well known as a young man of no mean literary ability, but with a penchant for late hours, and who did not object to an occasional scrimmage even in a house of the kind he was now in.

As soon as these two individuals entered, Vitriol rose from his seat, and going towards the Duke's companion, greeted him with a slap on the shoulder, as he said:

"Hullo, old man! What'll you drink? Come, Duke, come in, we've just had our gin, but you're in time."

"All right, my dear boy," responded the Duke's companion, whom we shall call Mayfair, "all right. Give me a brandy cocktail, will you?" he added, as he turned to the bar-keeper, in an imperious manner, as though he were a Brit-

ish nobleman of the first class, and the bar-keeper were one of his "minions."

"I'm glad you've come," Vitriol continued, while the bar-keeper compounded the drink which had been ordered. "I like you. You're one of 'em, you are. I like smart men, and I'm d—d if you aint as smart as they make 'em. Say, I aint seen you for a week. Where have you been? why don't you come around?"

"I have been busy," responded Mayfair, with a laugh as though he considered it a good joke, that Vitriol should put himself on terms of social equality with a gentleman of his superior blood and position.

"Oh, been busy, have you? Well, drink hearty. What you been a doing, eh? Writing for the newspapers?"

Mayfair evaded the question with another laugh, and turning round, greeted in a distant manner some of those present, among whom was Popson and the two "gentlemen of the press," and took a seat by the side of the Duke, who had taken out a short meerschaum pipe, and was blowing a cloud of tobacco smoke from under his moustaches.

Vitriol placed his back to the counter, and surveyed him with a mock admiration, as he said: "Look at him, now! He's a man, he is! the kind o' man I like, he's got brains into his head and he's a fighter, too."

"There will be a row presently," said Winstone, *sotto voce* to Harry and his friends, who had sat apart, silent lookers-on of the scene. "Vitriol is playing off on that man, and if he gives him half a chance, he will go out of here with his eyes in mourning."

Mayfair paid no attention to the last remarks of Vitriol, but joined in the general conversation, and after a while even condescended to sing a song, of his own composition, and of which he promised to give Popson a copy to be added to that gentleman's repertoire.

The Duke and Mayfair had been spending the evening at a Gambling House, and having drank pretty freely, were the more easily affected by the fiery compounds dispensed at the Break o' Day, and as by this time the blood of others was pretty thoroughly inflamed by what they had drank, the boisterousness increased and all gave full reins to their various dispositions.

Vitriol who had continued his mock adulation of Mayfair, during this time, now turned the conversation to fighting, and offered to back Mayfair against any man of his weight, in the city, taking hold of his arm at the same time and calling the attention of the party to his muscle.

This was a subject upon which Mayfair was decidedly weak. He considered himself a giant in feats of strength, and being led thereto by Vitriol, commenced a display of his prowess, by various gymnastic feats, such as holding out chairs at arm's length, lifting them from the floor, etc., at all of which Vitriol expressed the highest delight.

"Kin you lift me with one hand?" asked Vitriol. "I'll bet you kin! Say! I'll bet any man drinks he can lift me. Say do you think you kin?"

"To be sure I can! It's no feat at all to lift you," replied Mayfair confidently.

"Well then, come. I want to treat, anyhow, and I'll bet you drinks you can't."

"Done!" said Mayfair, as he seized Vitriol round the waist, and with a slight degree of effort, raised him clear off the floor.

"Good!" said Vitriol, while Mayfair, looked round with an expression which showed how vain he was of his performance.

"Hold on, now!" said Vitriol. "Afore we take a drink, let me see if I can lift you!"

Mayfair, nothing lothe, allowed himself to be lifted from the floor, when Vitriol held him for a moment, as though he had been a feather, and then stepping

back suddenly, allowed him to fall directly upon a large spittoon, which stood in the centre of the room, while he turned with a laugh to the bar, exclaiming: "Come, let's take a drink!"

Mayfair picked himself up from the *debris* of the spittoon, which had been shattered into fifty pieces by the concussion, and going up to Vitriol, asked in a threatening way:

"Did you do that on purpose?"

"Why?" asked Vitriol.

"Because if you did, it was a very ungentlemanly trick!"

"I am a gentleman!" said Vitriol, with a wicked expression taking possession of his face.

"Well, did you do that on purpose?" asked Mayfair, more emphatically, for he was full of pluck.

"'Spose I did? You aint going to get mad, are you? Can't you take a joke?"

"No, not a joke like that!"

"Do you want to muss about it? You don't want me to take you, do you? If you don't, go and lay down!"

But Mayfair persisted, and words began to be loud and angry, while all in the room crowded round them, some pretending, and others really trying to prevent a quarrel.

At last, Vitriol dashed from those who were trying to pacify him, and putting himself in a position, struck at Mayfair with all his force. Mayfair parried the blow, and returned it with one on Vitriol's chest, and in a moment, the scene became one of the wildest confusion.

Vitriol knocked his antagonist down, and the interference of the Duke in his friend's behalf, was the signal for a general fight, in which "the sporting editor" engaged against the Duke, and all took sides except Alcibiades Popson, who crawled under a table, at the farther end of the room, and looked on tremblingly from his secure retreat.

Vitriol was rapidly getting the best of Mayfair, and the sporting reporter had already put one of the Duke's eyes in mourning, and disarranged his wardrobe to a fearful extent, when Vitriol drew a pistol, and fired without effect.

At the report, all started back, and the fighting ceased for a moment, while Vitriol again raised his revolver, and was about to fire the second time, when a couple of policemen suddenly entered the room, and called upon the belligerents to desist. The bar-keeper sprang over the counter, and wrested the pistol from Vitriol's hands, who immediately seized a decanter, and commenced an indiscriminate assault upon all who came near him. With one blow of his formidable weapon, he knocked poor Mayfair into a chair completely *hors du combat* and was making for the Duke, when that individual, who had been holding the sporting reporter at bay with his pistol, turned its muzzle upon his new enemy, and would have fired with fearful effect, but that he was just then seized from behind, by one of the police, who took away his pistol, and choked him into a corner, while the other policeman, rushed at Vitriol, and was about to strike him with his club, when Vitriol exclaimed:

"All right! Put down your club, I'll be still!" as he put his pistol out of sight.

In a few moments order was restored, and Vitriol taken into custody, a ceremony to which he submitted very quietly.

The Duke was also arrested, together with his friend Mayfair, who with a gash in his forehead, and two black eyes, presented a pitiable spectacle. Some of the rest ran away, and Winstone and his companions, who had already managed to get into the street, had the satisfaction of seeing the officers emerge from the house with the parties we have named in custody.

"That scoundrel Vitriol, ought to be severely punished!" exclaimed Harry. "He was the cause of all the disturbance, and is the only one that has escaped untouched."

"Come with me, and you will see," added Winstone, as, accompanied by Harry and his friends, they followed the officer in the direction of the Station House.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE POLICE COURT.

"Get thee glass eyes, and like a scurvy politician,
Seem to see the things thou dost not."

[SHAKESPEARE.]

By the time they reached the Station House it was broad daylight.

A sergeant of Police presided at the desk in the absence of the captain, and on the entrance of the officers with their prisoners, he woke up from a sound sleep, in which he had been indulging as he sat in his chair, and in a rich Milesian brogue inquired what the matter was.

The officers briefly related the facts, which were substantiated by the bar-keeper, who had by this time made his appearance.

"What have you to say to this, Mr. Vitriol?" enquired the sergeant, in a respectful manner, for he knew Vitriol to be a man of influence.

"Well," replied Vitriol, "I don't know as I've got much to say. I was struck, and went in to take care of myself."

"Who struck ye's?"

"This man!" Vitriol replied, pointing to Mayfair. "And his friend, there," he continued, "He drew a pistol onto me."

"What have you got to say?" the sergeant asked of Mayfair, looking at him very fiercely. "Aint ye's after knowing betther than to be going about at such times of the mornin', and striking dacent people?"

"I was assaulted first," said Mayfair, "and grossly imposed upon by this man."

"Hould yer tongue, or I'll lock ye up to onc't. Mr. Vitriol says you struck him first. How was it, officer?"

"I wasn't in the house when the muss commenced," the officer answered. "When I was called in, I heard a pistol fired a minute before, and when I got in, I found that man," pointing to the Duke, "with a pistol out, and Mr. Vitriol had one too."

"Who fired first?"

"Why, he did!" answered Vitriol. "I didn't fire at all, and I want you to lock these two fellows up. I'll appear against 'em."

"Do you make a charge against 'em, Mr. Vitriol?"

"Yes," replied that individual.

"Take 'em in, officer," exclaimed the sergeant. "Be me soul, it's a shame, such goings on every night!"

"I'll appear agin 'em," said Vitriol, turning to go, as the officers proceeded to conduct Mayfair and the Duke to a cell.

"Stop, Mr. Vitriol, if you please, sir. I'm afraid I shall have to kape ye here, too. I'm sorry, but it's me dooty, and—"

"What! You aint a' goin' to lock me up, are you?" asked Vitriol, interrupting the sergeant, in an indignant tone. "I aint done nothin', and I'm damned if I am goin' to be kept here. Say, are you goin' to lock me up?"

"I shall be obleeged to kape ye till the captain comes," replied the sergeant.

"I ain't a'goin' before no Police Court, I ain't, mind that. Send a man for Alderman Filch. He'll discharge me, he will. You don't get me to be locked up in no Station House," exclaimed Vitriol, with a swagger and a shake of the head.

"I've got no one to send," said the Sergeant, "without one of them off duty, wud go for him to oblige you."

"I say, Bill," Vitriol said, turning to one of the officers, who before his appointment, had been one of Vitriol's set, and who, in fact, owed his place to Vitriol's political influence. "Go into the bunk-room and see if there ain't somebody there to go round and see the Alderman for me, won't you?"

"All right," replied the officer, looking inquiringly at the Sergeant, who nodded his consent, upon which the officer left the room, and in a moment or two returned with another policeman, who had evidently just been aroused from his sleep, and who, expressing his willingness to oblige Mr. Vitriol in any way in his power, left the Station House on his errand.

"You'd better go into the Captain's room and take a nap, while he comes," said the Sergeant to Vitriol, and then turning to the officer who had made the arrest, repeated his orders to conduct Mayfair and the Duke to their cells.

The order was obeyed in spite of the protestations of both Mayfair and the Duke, who were thrust into a cell in company with a lot of filthy, drunken vagrants, while the fortunate and influential Mr. Vitriol, acting on the suggestion of the polite Sergeant, took possession of a comfortable sofa in the Captain's room, where he soon fell into a gentle slumber.

"I'm going to see the end of this," said Harry to Winstone, as they walked away.

"What time does the Police Court open?" asked Frank.

"At nine o'clock," Winstone replied.

"Will you go with us?" asked Charlie.

"Let us go and get a bath, and some breakfast, and then go and see this out."

"I should be happy to do so," replied Winstone, who had kept in the background while in the Station House, and had not until now, spoken a word, "but I have an engagement this morning that will prevent it. That need make no difference, however, as I can give you full directions where to go."

"I am determined to see the result of it," said Harry, "for I could not have believed such things possible, and if you cannot go with us, we will avail ourselves of your directions and go alone."

Before parting with them at the hotel, Winstone gave them all the necessary instructions, as to where the court was held, etc., and after receiving the thanks of the party for his guidance during the night, and promising to see them again soon, he went away.

After a bath and a rub in the fashionable hair-dressing saloon attached to the hotel, Harry and his friends took a hearty breakfast, at the first table, and lighting their cigars strolled in the direction of the Police Court.

It was situated some distance from the hotel, and by the time they arrived there, quite a number of persons were present awaiting the appearance of the Justice. The crowd was a motley one, old and young, rich and poor, the well-dressed and the ragged: some of them were prisoners, others were witnesses, while others attended from curiosity, or for the purpose of seeking redress for real or imaginary grievances. There were several females present, nearly all being of the lowest class. Most of them were foreigners, and the majority of them bore about their faces unmistakable marks of recent frays. Black eyes and scratched noses were abundant, and bloated faces, swollen out of shape, from the effects of drinking, were visible on every side. Among the crowd there was one or two young women, whose tawdry finery, and brazen looks bespoke them of the lowest class of street walkers, and these stand impudently

around the room, or exchange ribald jests among themselves, or with the officers who has them in charge.

It was sometime before the justice arrived, and meanwhile, Mayfair and the Duke were brought in, in charge of the officers who had arrested them, and were ordered to take seats with the rest of the prisoners. The gay Duke was placed cheek by jowl with a frowsy blear-eyed Irish matron, who sat nursing a poor, weazen-faced child, and next to the aristocratic Mayfair, sat a man covered with filth and rags, who kept plucking imaginary snakes from his boots, and uttering suppressed exclamations of fright at the horrors his inflamed brain continued to conjure up.

Vitriol sauntered in just after him, so that it was probable, that his friend Alderman Filch had come to his relief. He walked about here and there, chatting with the officers, most of whom seemed to be on terms of easy, yet respectful familiarity with him, and finally took a seat in the arm chair, near the clerk's desk, and putting his feet on the table before him, commenced paring his finger nails, with a nonchalant air!

At last the officer of the court called out in a loud voice:

"Take off your hats."

An order which was instantly obeyed, as the Justice made his appearance.

He was a man a little above the medium height, and was dressed in a badly fitting black suit, which from its wrinkled and frowzy appearance, looked as though he had slept in it the night before. Perhaps he had. His hair was black, inclined to curl, and was slightly tinged with grey; his face was pale, and puffy, and his eyes leaden and dull. His mouth betokened sensuality, and the general expression of his countenance was that of a cunning, dissipated, sensual man. He walked with a wavering, uncertain step, and as he rubbed his hands down over his face, on taking his seat, it was plain to perceive that his nerves were in a very shaky condition. If he had not been a Justice, and, of course above all such suspicion, he might have been taken for a man who had been on a spree the night before, and who had been trying to brace himself up against its effects, on the principle of *similia similibus curantur*, or who in vulgar parlance had been using "the hair of the dog to cure the bite."

In fact, he did not look a whit better, than two thirds of the prisoners before him, upon whom it would shortly be his duty to pronounce the penalty of the law.

Before looking at the reports, from the various Station Houses in his district, which had been laid before him on the desk, he put his name to several warrants, which were handed to him by the clerk. He did this with difficulty, for his hand shook so violently, that he could scarcely hold the pen, and every letter was crooked and formed of zigzag lines.

As he was about to call the first prisoner on the reports, a poor, miserably dressed, sickly-looking woman, approached him, and speaking in a low tone, was going on to make a complaint!

He interrupted her by inquiring in a gruff tone what she wanted.

She began a heart touching appeal to him. Her husband was a drunken wretch; he spent all her earnings, and left her and her six children to starve with hunger and cold; her life was not safe from his maniacal attacks, and she asked for advice as to what she ought to do for relief and protection.

The Justice scarcely listens to her, she is poor and ragged, pinched with want and sickness, and he can do nothing for her.

"But your honor—" the woman commenced.

"Oh, I tell you I can't help you. Go and make out an affidavit, and I'll issue a warrant, and send him to the Island."

"But I don't want to send him to the Island, yer honor! Perhaps if you speak to him—"

"Oh, go away. I've told you what to do, and that's enough. Here officer, remove this woman."

And the officer taking her roughly by the arm, led her away.

Her place is instantly filled by a man who looks like a hard-working mechanic. He is poorly, but cleanly dressed, and has evidently made himself look as spruce as possible, for the purpose of appearing to urge a complaint against a rich and influential man, who has been guilty of an offence, which if proven against him, will send him to the State Prison.

The cautious Justice hem's and ha's, rubs his throbbing head, and hesitates.

He does not know whether the affidavit will be sufficient, but finding the man knows his rights, and insists upon maintaining them, grudgingly grants the warrant, and tells the officer to whom he gives it, to remember that the person he is to arrest is a "gentleman," and to be careful how he acts.

Another application is made by a man rich and influential, against a poor fellow whom want and temptation have driven to the commission of an offence involving the same penalty. How changed the pliant Justice! His face assumes a severe expression at once. The Majesty of the Law must be upheld. He scarcely looks at the affidavit, the warrant is granted in an instant, and he tells the officer to bring the fellow in at once, and adds:

"If he don't come quietly, use your billy!"

And now he calls the prisoners.

A poor Irishman has got drunk at a wake, and punched a fellow countryman's head in a friendly way. "Blackwell's Island, three months."

A nice young man with money in his pocket, and whom the Judge recognizes as one of the companions of his gayer hours, has beaten an unoffending citizen, insulted a woman, and destroyed a working man's property. He is released, with a slight reprimand, upon his own recognizance, to conduct himself better (or worse) in the future.

Another man, drunk and disorderly, "Ten days in the Tombs." And the Justice's hand trembles so, he can hardly make out the commitment.

And now a splendid carriage draws up to the door of the building in which the court is held. On the box, sits a coachman and by his side sits a footman, both gorgeous in livery. A fashionably dressed woman steps upon the sidewalk and is recognized at once as the keeper of a fashionable house of prostitution.

Daintily she climbs the stairs, and is met at the landing by an obsequious policeman. She has a complaint to make against some fellows, who after having been maddened in her house, by the vile stuff she sold them, have broken one of her chairs.

The officer expresses his sympathy, and hat in hand, preceeds her, not into the vulgar Court Room, bless you! no, but into the Justice's private apartment, and leaves her to inform the Justice of her presence.

He goes to the Justice. He whispers a few words in his ear, and the Justice at once suspends the business before him, and leaves the room to attend to "the lady."

The clerk follows him, and so do one or two other people, among them the newspaper reporter, who is present, and to whom the Justice has whispered a word as he went out.

The lady receives them in the Justice's private room like a Duchess. The Justice addresses her by her Christian name. He calls her Katey, and asks what the matter is. The lady tells her story.

"Shameful!" cries the Justice.

"Horrid!" ejaculated the clerk.

"The contemptible scoundrels!" says the newspaper reporter.

"I'll bring them in," says the officer.

Everybody sympathizes with her, and how polite and attentive they all are!

Were she the most virtuous and exemplary woman in the land, they could not be more obsequious, and we question, whether they would be half as much so.

All will be done that she requires. Her wrongs shall be avenged.

Under the circumstances she could do no less than offer some slight return for the attention shown her, so she sends the officer down stairs into the bar-room, for a bottle of wine, which is brought and drank, and then half an hour is spent in pleasant conversation, while the "poor devils" wait in the Court Room. At last she rises, shakes hands with the Justice, tells the clerk that "Susie" expects to see him soon, invites the officer to come and see her, and is escorted to her carriage and drives off with the greatest possible *eclat*, while the judge returns to the Court Room and resuming his seat upon the Bench, proceeds with the administration of justice.

At last Mayfair and the Duke are called up.

"What is this case, officer?"

The officer relates the circumstances under which he made the arrest, taking especial care to throw the onus of the transaction upon the Duke and Mayfair.

"So you arrested them with pistols in their hands?" asked the Justice, with a severe expression.

"Yes, your honor."

"But," began Mayfair, entirely confounded at the palpable injustice of the whole proceedings, "I beg to assure the court that——"

"Silence, sir!" thundered the Justice. "Silence! Where is the prosecuting witness?"

Upon this, Vitriol walked up to the desk.

"Ah, Mr. Vitriol, good morning. Glad to see you," said the Justice with a smile of welcome.

"Good morning, Judge. I was in the house when this muss took place."

"Did you see this man with a pistol in his hand?" inquired the Justice, indicating the Duke.

"Yes, they both went for me!"

"That will do! Mr. Clerk, fill out a warrant of commitment for felonious assault. I shall require bail in two thousand dollars each, for the appearance of the prisoners."

"But this is scandalous," Mayfair began again.

"Silence, sir!" exclaimed the Justice. "I will punish you for contempt of court. Officer, remove these men."

But this very summary way of disposing of the case, was too one-sided for even Vitriol, himself, who was shrewd enough to know, that if Mayfair or the Duke chose to have the matter investigated, the ventilation of the real facts would place the Justice in no enviable light, and would lead, perhaps, to unpleasant results as regarded himself. Besides, he knew that if the case ever came to trial, the innocence of Mayfair could easily be established, and so he instantly made up his mind to change the current which affairs were taking, knowing, full well, that his influence with the Justice would enable him to do so—more especially as he had, as Chairman of the Judiciary Committee, chosen at the previous Primary Election, been principally instrumental in placing the Justice on his seat, by giving him the nomination.

This seems a strange statement, but we know—we who live here in New York, and are acquainted with the way in which the political machine is run—that the nomination of candidates for most, if not all, of the city offices, including the Judiciary, are made by men of Vitriol's stamp. It is a fact well known to thousands, that not many years ago, a political "rough," under indictment for homicide, actually nominated to his high office, the Judge who subsequently tried him, and under whose "rulings" he was "honorably acquitted." Nor is

it so very long, since a well-known fighting and sporting politician, while undergoing a preliminary examination upon a grave charge, was seen, just as the Justice was about to decide the case, to take from his fob a heavy gold watch, and, attracting the attention of the judicial officer, point meaningly to its inner case, which he displayed, and which the Justice knew contained a complimentary inscription dictated by himself, and which he had caused to be engraved thereon, when he purchased it to present to the "influential gentleman" who controlled the nomination he sought. What could the Justice do? The sight of the watch reminded him that but for the culprit before him, and whom it was his duty to judge, he would not then be seated on the bench and in the enjoyment of some thousands a year, beside the perquisites? What could he do but find the evidence insufficient, and send his estimable friend out of court without a stain upon his character!

The shameful and dangerous results of the election of Judges by the popular voice, are seen and felt every day. How can the judicial ermine be pure, when before it can be worn, it must be dragged in the slime and filth of the political slough? How can the Judge mete out, impartially, the law, against the wretch, who stands defiantly before him, when but for the political influence of that very wretch, he would never have been raised to his bad eminence. How can he, "go back" on him, under such circumstances, knowing that if he does, his present term of office will be his last?

But it is no use moralizing, the case stands as it does. We cannot alter it now, but we hope the time will come, when an elected Judiciary, will be done away with, and Justice be administered by men, who shall be like the wife of Cæsar—above suspicion!

Vitriol knew his power over the Judge—he was his creature—and determined to use it. So, as the Duke and Mayfair, were removed to the body of the court-room by the officers, he bent forward over the desk, and whispered.

"See here, Judge, I guess you had better light up on them 'ere fellows."

"Who are they?" enquired his honor.

"One of 'em is a newspaper sucker, and the other one is in with some of our friends. You'd better light up on 'em. See here, I was in it. It was me, what drew a pistol first, and there was a dozen fellows who saw it. If you lock 'em up, the whole thing will come out, and it will go bad."

"I didn't know, I thought you had put the job up," whispered the Judge.

"What shall I do with 'em?"

"Can't you postpone the case, or something?" suggested Vitriol.

"Do you wish me to?"

"I guess you'd better."

"All right," replied the pliant and obliging Justice. "I guess I'll send 'em into my private room, and fix it. It won't do here."

"Bully for you! A little shaky this morning, ain't you, Judge?" asked the friendly Vitriol, "out on a little jam, last night?"

"Yes," replied the Judge, "we had a late session, and my head buzzes like a saw-mill!"

"Well, hurry up. I'll wait for you down stairs in Jem's, or shall I send a bottle up to your room?"

"That will be the thing. I've got a jury case on this morning, and want something to stiffen me," replied the dispenser of justice, with a wink, as Vitriol got down from the bench, and after whispering a word to the clerk, went out of the court room.

In a few moments, the Justice called up the officer who had the Duke and Mayfair in charge, and directed him to convey his prisoners to his room. The officer obeyed, and much to the surprise of the two "culprits," they were immediately ushered through a small door, at the rear, and, after passing

through a narrow passage, found themselves not in a cell, as they expected, but in a well furnished and comfortable apartment, where they were shortly joined by the Judge, who informed them, that on the representations of the prosecuting witness, he had concluded to dismiss them on their own recognizances.

"But we have done nothing on which you could legally hold us," said Mayfair, his indignation rising, "and you may be assured, that this gross injustice, and——"

"I know what you are going to say, but take my advice and don't say it," the Justice remarked, in a patronizing manner. "You had better let it drop quietly, and say no more about it!"

The Duke seemed to be of the same opinion, and signed to Mayfair to keep silent on the subject of their wrongs. Mayfair succeeded after a struggle, and after some further conversation with the Judge, in which he took care to impress upon them, the obligation they were under to Vitriol and himself, they were allowed to depart. Meeting our young friends on the landing, they all walked away together, and as Harry listened to all that had transpired, he gave vent, in no measured terms, to his ideas of the character and style of the Justice administered in a New-York Police Court.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE DETECTIVE.

"This fellow's of exceeding honesty,
And knows all qualities with a learn'd
Spirit of human dealings."

[SHAKESPEARE.]

As the time grew near, for Charlie to put in an appearance, at the house of that blessed peace-maker, Mrs. Parker, he began to feel more and more uneasy not only on his own account, but on that of the dear, innocent, young creature, upon whose devoted head, he had brought down such wrath, and upon whose pure and sympathetic heart, he felt assured, sorrow sat brooding black as midnight. She must be saved in any event. Her honor must be protected. Never should the blight of scandal fall on her, if he could help it, and though he felt that, while she—dear soul—was the victim of a villain, who could not appreciate a treasure so far beyond all price, he was also in the power of that villain, who was determined to wield that power for his own benefit, not to salve his honor, but to put money in his purse. He knew that Merideth was using the circumstances, in which he found himself placed, against him, not from a feeling of revenge, but from purely mercenary motives, and though he was filled with indignation, at the idea that he was being thus used, his passion for Blanche, and his desire to shield her from all sorrow, inclined him to comply with the demand made upon his purse, rather than expose her—and himself too—to the scandal of a prosecution.

The sum demanded of him, was a large one; one that would just now embarrass him to pay, and he was sitting, reflecting how he could best manage to pay it, when Mr. Winstone came behind him, in the public parlor, where he was sitting, and tapping him on the shoulder, requested a few minutes conversation with him.

"You look thoughtful," said the insinuating Winstone, as he drew a chair to Charlie's side, and seated himself, "has anything happened?"

"No," answered Charlie, "nothing particular. I was——"

"Wondering, perhaps, who the fellow could be, who so unceremoniously re-

lieved you, of your watch and pocket-book?" Winstone observed, interrupting him, with a smile.

"No," answered Charlie. "I never grieve over what cannot be helped. The watch is gone, and there is an end of it!"

"Confess, however, that you would be as much pleased, as surprised, if it should turn up again. It might, you know," said Winstone, in an indifferent tone.

"Yes, it might," answered Charlie, "and it might snow in August, but it don't."

"Suppose, that I should tell you, that I knew where it was, and that it is even now in my possession," said Winstone. "What would you say to that?"

"What should I say? Why, that you were playin' a joke on me," answered Charlie, with a laugh.

"Well then," replied Winstone, more seriously, "I do say so, and to prove I am not joking, look here!" With this he took from his vest pocket, the identical watch, which Charlie had lost, and which he immediately identified, exclaiming:

"Why, that is it! That is my watch!"

"I know it is," said Winstone, quietly.

"Where did you get it?"

"From the man who stole it?"

"When?"

"To-day!"

"How?"

"Ah!" Winstone replied, with a smile, "that is my secret; but, there, take your watch, and hereafter keep your eyes about you in railroad depots!" So, saying, he handed Charlie his watch, and immediately produced his pocket-book, also.

"That's my wallet, too!" Charlie exclaimed in undisguised wonder. "Are you a wizard—or what? I am completely mystified?"

"Well," answered Winstone, "let us get a cigar, and go up to your room; we shall be private there, and I have much to say to you that I should not care to have reach other ears than yours."

Charlie was profuse in his thanks, which Winstone received with much politeness, and, after procuring some cigars, Charlie led the way to his room.

"You will pardon my incivility, I am sure," Charlie said, as soon as they were alone, "but I should really like to know in what mysterious manner you obtained possession of my stolen property. I cannot understand it."

"I suppose not," said Winstone, "I should be as surprised as you are, if you did. But light your cigar; sit down, and listen. I will tell you all about it."

Charlie did as he was desired and Winstone began:

"It is now some six years since your father, the Hon. Stanhope Ross, visited New York. He came here on business connected with his profession as a lawyer. He was desirous of obtaining evidence of a peculiar nature bearing upon a very important case, he was then engaged in, and it became necessary for him to call to his assistance one, who knew all the ins and outs of life in the metropolis. I was the person to whom he applied, and I succeeded in furnishing him with all the evidence of which he was in search, and which, without my aid he would have found it difficult, if not impossible, to obtain. Although our relations were, at first, purely of a business character, a friendship gradually grew up between us. He seemed to take a fancy to me, and no one who knows your father, Mr. Ross, can help admiring and loving him."

With moist eyes and flushed cheek, Charlie was about to pour out his acknowledgements of this flattering reference to his father, but Mr. Winstone checked him, saying:

"I know all you would say, but wait, if you please, until I have finished!"

"On the day upon which you arrived, I happened to be at the depot on business, and your strong resemblance to your father struck me, the moment I saw you; your name painted upon your trunk, confirmed my impression that you were the son of my old friend, and that will, perhaps, account for the manner in which I sought your acquaintance, and have since followed it up!"

"You are then," said Charlie, "no other than——"

"John Winstone, the Detective Officer, at your service!" Winstone added. "And now, perhaps the mystery of the watch and pocket-book is accounted for. When I learned that you had been robbed, I knew at once the *knuck* who had gone through you, and had no difficulty, I assure you, in making the fellow disgorge. The means I employed, are of course, my secret, and, as you may wonder why I have not arrested him, and secured his punishment, I must inform you that, I have my reasons—good ones to me—for not doing so, and those are secret too!"

"I do not desire," Charlie said, "to pry into the mysteries of your profession. You have been very kind, considerate and generous, and I thank you, not only for myself, but for my father, whom you have again obliged through me."

"You are more than welcome, to the trifling service I have rendered you," Winstone replied, "and also to other services, both past and to come. What those services have been and are to be, you will soon know. Now answer the question I am about to put to you, frankly! I think you believe, that you may give me your confidence?"

"I am sure of it!" answered Charlie, with enthusiasm. "I need disguise nothing from you. What were you about to enquire?"

"I was going to ask," said Winstone, with much coolness, and knocking the ashes off the end of his cigar, "whether you have not some acquaintance with a person, by the name of Parker?"

Charlie started as though an electric shock had gone through him, and could do no more than repeat the name—"Parker?"

"Yes, Parker," answered Winstone, as coolly as before. "A woman who lives in Sullivan Street, and who has a niece named Blanche Merideth?"

"What do you know of them?" almost gasped Charlie, "and how did you suspect that they were acquainted with me?"

"As to the manner in which the knowledge came to me, you will excuse me, if I still maintain my mysterious secrecy. You know I live at the Skinner House," he continued, with a meaning look, "and, perhaps, that may furnish you with a clue!"

"Is Blanche—is Mrs. Merideth still there?" Charlie asked, with anxiety.

"I do not know," Winstone answered, "I have not seen her lately!"

A thought crossed Charlie's mind, that perhaps Winstone could find some way for him out of his present difficulty, and wondered whether it would not be better to tell him all the circumstances of his acquaintance with Blanche, his passion for her, the unfortunate interview at the house of Mrs. Parker, the demand made upon him for money, and his anxiety to protect her from the consequences of their unfortunate attachment. The thought was no sooner conceived than put into execution, for turning to Winstone he said:

"In answer to your question, I admit that I do know Mrs. Parker, and her niece Mrs. Merideth."

Winstone smiled as he watched Charlie's manner, and when he had made this admission, asked: "Have you any objection to tell me all the particulars of your acquaintance with these parties?"

"The very thing which I was about to do, for perhaps, you may suggest some plan by which I may shield Mrs. Merideth from the cruelty of her husband and at the same time thwart him in his attempt to—to——"

"To make you pay for his wounded honor," suggested Winstone, seeing Charlie's hesitation.

"Exactly."

"Well, perhaps I can, so begin and make a clean breast of it."

Thus encouraged, Charlie narrated to the shrewd detective all that the reader already knows, in relation to his *liason* with the fascinating Blanche, and ended in putting in Winstone's hands, the letter which he had received from Mrs. Parker.

Winstone read the letter, and instead of handing it back to Charlie, quietly put it in his pocket, asking: "Well. You called upon her?"

"Yes," answered Charlie, "and she has appointed this evening for an interview at which the affair is to be settled?"

"By the payment of how much money?" asked Winstone.

"Five thousand dollars, in all," Charlie answered, "one thousand cash, and my notes for the balance!"

"Ha! ha! ha!" laughed Winstone, "a most business like arrangement! And so you have made up your mind to pay the money?"

"What can I do?" asked Charlie. "If I do not pay, Merideth threatens a suit for *crim. con.* and you understand, that as a man of honor, I cannot permit the woman who loves me, to be so scandalized, beside my own family—yes, I must pay the money."

"This evening, you say?" asked Winstone.

"This evening."

"Will you take my advice?"

"Thankfully!"

"And follow it?"

"Religiously?"

"Then listen to me," said Winstone, seriously, "keep this appointment, go to the house of this Mrs. Parker, and leave the rest to me."

"Am I to pay her the money?" asked Charlie.

"Have you as much about you?"

"Yes, I drew the amount from the Bank to-day."

"Then," said Winstone, "before you go, give it in charge of the clerk at the office, and you had better do so at once! What time are you to be at the house?"

"At seven o'clock, and it is within half an hour of the time!" said Charlie, consulting his newly recovered time-piece.

"Then go at once! Make an excuse, any that may suggest itself to you, for not paying the money. Keep cool, be plucky, and depend on me! I have nothing more to say now, save that you are the dupe of as vile a lot as ever cursed a civilized community!"

"You mean Merideth and Mrs. Parker," said Charlie, with warmth, "I confess my suspicions as to them, have been aroused before, but Blanche——"

"Oh, she is an angel, of course," said Winstone, with a smile at Charlie's enthusiasm. "She is too pretty to be anything else. I have nothing to say against her. You must judge of her for yourself, after the events of this evening, but do not be very much shocked if she should prove no better than the rest!"

"If she prove anything, but a noble, good, loving woman, then I will abandon all faith in the sex!" exclaimed Charlie, with enthusiasm, as the picture of the poor suffering Blanche, rose before his mind!

"You are very young, and very susceptible, Mr. Ross," said Winstone, "and I hope that your opinion of her may be realized. But we shall see."

By this time they had reached the office of the hotel, and sealing up the money, which he had prepared, he handed it to the clerk for safe-keeping, and taking a check therefore, walked out. Winstone went with him to the street,

and shaking his hand, once more enjoined him to be cool and courageous, and left him to pursue his course to the house of Mrs. Parker.

Charlie walked rapidly on, his mind filled with all manner of vague ideas and suspicions. Winstone had been peculiarly reticent, as to the course he meant to pursue, and the more he thought the matter over, the more he found himself involved in an inextricable labyrinth of antagonistic theories, in regard to the manner in which the interview would end.

But nothing could shake his confidence in Blanche. She was beyond suspicion, and lived in his thoughts a paragon of all sincerity, truth and affection. While still wondering where his strange connection with her would eventually lead him, he arrived at the house of Mrs. Parker, and with a throbbing heart, though a firm hand, rang the bell!

CHAPTER XV.

AN EXPOSE.

"What marvel that this hag of hatred works
Eternal evil, latent as she lurks
To make a Pandemonium where she dwells,
And reigns the Hecate of Domestic Hells."

[BYRON.]

THE door was answered, by the same negress, who had given him admission at the time of his other visits, and he was shown into the front parlor, the scene of his former interview with Mrs. Parker.

There was no one in the room, and after turning on the gas, so as to light up the apartment more brilliantly, the negress withdrew, saying that Mrs. Parker would be with him in a few moments.

Charley sat pondering over the strange situation he found himself placed in, and some time elapsed before any one made their appearance. At last, he heard the rustle of a woman's dress, descending the stairs, the door opened, and there stood before him, not Mrs. Parker, but Blanche, looking, to his wrapt fancy, more fascinating, more interesting, and more beautiful than ever!

"Blanche!" exclaimed Charlie, rushing towards her in a transport of surprise, and pleasure, and pressing her to him. "Dear Blanche! This is indeed an unlooked for pleasure!"

"Hush," she said, gently disengaging herself from his embrace. "Hush! My aunt does not know that I am here, but I heard your voice and could not resist the impulse to see you once more. I can stay but a moment, for my aunt expects you, and will soon return."

"She is out, then," said Charlie. "Oh, blessed chance!" He drew her to a sofa beside him, and taking her hand, continued: "You have suffered, I fear!"

"Much," she replied: "but do not think of me, think of yourself! My husband is furious and will not forego one iota of the revenge he meditates for the fancied wrong which you have done him. Mrs. Parker, has, I believe, induced him, under certain promises, to forego his plan of prosecuting you, but I do not know what those promises were, or how far they concern me or you. I only know that I am wretched!"

What could poor Charlie do, with her pretty head laying lovingly upon his shoulder, and her nice, little, soft hand laying prone in his; her soft bosom palpitating against his breast, and her warm, fragrant breath, fanning his burning cheek? What could he do, but press her close to him, imprint a burning kiss upon her red, moist lips, and murmur words of consolation in her willing ear?

And she listened, and sighed, and murmured "Dear Charlie," until Charlie's

blood boiled in his veins, his breath came short and quick, and he felt as though he would have braved the terrors and pains of the *infernò* to call her his own, and do battle for her against the world!

What terrible imprudence he might have been guilty of, we cannot tell, had not the noise of a door opening up stairs, recalled them from their sweet delirium, and upon hearing which, the gushing Blanche drew herself from him, and asked in a half whisper, "What does Merideth require of you?"

"Money," Charlie replied.

"The mercenary wretch!" Blanche murmured between her teeth.

"He shall have it," said Charlie, "for your sake, for, unless I comply with his terms, disgrace, shame, worse than death itself, will be your lot."

"Yes, yes!" exclaimed Blanche. "He is inexorable, unless you comply with his demands, he will expose all and then there will be nothing left for me but to die!"

"Fear not," Charlie said with a loving look, "I will do anything he asks, so that I can but shield you!"

With this Blanche rose and placing her finger upon her lip, glided away from him, passed through the half open folded doors, into the back room, and so disappeared, just as the door of the front room opened, and Mrs. Parker, in all her stateliness, stalked into the room, and greeted Charlie with a smile of welcome and an apology for having detained him so long.

Charlie readily excused her, as she had unwittingly conferred such happiness upon him by her absence.

"I hope Mr. Ross," she commenced, "that we shall be able to arrange this matter now and pleasantly, for I have seen Merideth and he has assured me, that in the event of your complying with the terms I have proposed, he will let the whole matter drop."

"And Blanche?" Charlie enquired, "what is his purpose as regards her? For myself, I care little, but she must not suffer. For her sake I will comply with any terms, do anything, and everything!"

"Have no fear on that score," said Mrs. Parker, firmly, "no exposure will be made, and as he has consented to a quiet separation——"

"A separation!" exclaimed Charlie, catching at the word. "A separation?"

"Yes, he has consented that she shall live here under my protection, and that he will support her, though he will not visit her, until such time as a divorce can be procured without scandal."

If this was said for the purpose of breaking through any suspicion, that might be lingering in Charlie's mind, and make him willing to comply with any demand that might be made upon his purse, it was certainly, a very cunning, shrewd piece of generalship; nor did it fail of its purpose.

"What!" Charlie thought, "separated and divorced from him; relieved of that incubus upon her heart! Ah, she will then be free to love me and I!"——

What would he not have given had he not taken the advice of Winstone left his money behind him? How gladly would he have counted down twice as much, when he could have purchased her freedom at such a paltry price.

His train of thought was interrupted by the abrupt question of Mrs. Parker.

"Have you brought the money?"

"Why no, the fact is—that——" he stammered, "I—that is. If you will wait till——"

"Wait!" she replied, sharply, "I cannot hear of such a thing. The affair must be settled now, on the spot, or I will not be answerable for the consequences. Merideth was to come here at eight o'clock to receive it, and if he finds the arrangement is not consummated, he will be furious and perhaps refuse all compromise hereafter."

All the caution with which he had armed himself, melted from Charlie, before the bright hope which this woman's words had artfully conjured up, and he

could have cursed himself for his weakness in listening to Winstone. The treasure he sought was within his grasp, and yet he must lose it!

"It may be not too late yet," he urged. "It will take but a short time to go to the hotel, and I can return before Merideth arrives!"

"It is eight o'clock, already," Mrs. Parker answered. "He will be punctual. He always is. Nevertheless, it may be worth trying; go—go at once and lose no time."

Charlie seized his hat, and was just opening the door to go out, when a ring at the bell startled them both.

"It is too late!" the woman said. "Too late. What is to be done? He must not see you, or I will not answer for the consequences. I want no murder in my house! Go into the other room and do not breathe. When he has entered, go quietly out, hasten to the hotel, and return as quickly as possible. If he is gone, when you return—and I will contrive that he shall be—I will place a light in the upper window. Now, quick, begone!"

Charlie passed into the back room, just as a man entered the front door, let in by the negress, and stood quietly until he heard him enter the room, he himself had just left; then he passed quickly by the servant, who disappeared down stairs with some surprise, and going quickly to the hall door, opened it.

Just as he did so, and as he was stepping out into the street, he heard the man's voice. It was not that of Merideth!

He stopped; considered for an instant; a strange expression of firm determination passed over his face, and he closed the door with some noise. Then, on tiptoe, he retraced his steps to the back parlor, and crouching near the door, listened, with suppressed breathing, to the voices he heard speaking within!

"Mrs. Parker, I believe?" the gentleman began.

"Yes, sir," replied that lady. "That is my name. May I inquire what business you may have with me?"

"Are we entirely alone?" the man asked, cautiously, "because my business is of a secret and delicate nature, and I wish to confide it to you alone."

Mrs. Parker felt sure that young Ross had left the house, for she had heard him shut the door in going out, as she thought, so she replied confidently: "Yes, we are alone, and in no danger of being overheard. You may state your business with perfect safety, though, as I am engaged on important business, I will thank you to be as brief as possible."

"Well, then," the gentleman began. "I have heard, that you sometimes, for a consideration, receive ladies in your house for the purpose of nursing them at certain times, and I have called to solicit your kind offices, for a lady friend of mine, who has been unfortunate in an *affaire de cœur*, and who wishes to avoid, in the quiet retirement of your house, the disgrace which will surely follow exposure among her friends. Have I been correctly informed and will you assist me in this matter?"

"You have been misinformed, sir!" replied Mrs. Parker. "It is a gross falsehood, and your proposition is an insult to me! Oblige me by leaving my house at once!" and she rose pointing to the door.

"Stay!" said the gentleman. "You may trust me! My name is Barclay! I am a merchant in this city, doing business in South Street, I am rich and am able to reward those who serve me, well. You are right to repose no confidence in a stranger. But I am sure I have not been misinformed, and as I come strictly in a business way to you, I hope you will be frank with me!"

Thus thrown off her guard, the woman, after a little further hesitation, cautiously admitted that she might be induced to take charge of the lady in question.

"It is true," she said, "I do sometimes take ladies to nurse. In fact I have one with me now, but she is nearly well and will leave in the course of a day or two?"

"Then you will undertake this case for me? We will settle on the terms hereafter, which I promise, shall be as liberal as you could ask!"

Mrs. Parker nodded her head, and put on her blandest smile, as she told him he might bring the lady when he pleased, and could rely upon her receiving every attention.

By much adroit questioning, he now succeeded in drawing from her, cunning as she was, a full confession of her business, and then said with his most insinuating manner, and just as she seemed to be pursing up her lips, to ask for a sum of money in advance:

"I know very little of these affairs, but I have heard, that in some cases, after the affair has been attended to, people in your trade, are in the habit of using the knowledge thus gained in a very improper manner; such as by compelling them, by writing threatening letters, to pay large sums as 'hush money,' and that, in this way, many weak-minded females—and men, too—have been harrassed and frightened till they have sought refuge in suicide, or been hunted to an untimely grave through anxiety and fear. Am I safe from this?"

The murderess of unborn babes put on a look of injured innocence, as she denied what she called "the foul aspersion," and assured the gentleman that she was too much of a lady to do anything of the kind, and that his reputation, and that of the lady, would be safe in her hands.

"I have heard, too," continued the stranger, without noticing her stout denial, "that from places like this, women are sent as decoys, who attract the attention, and excite the passions, of wealthy gentlemen, and that pretended husbands and brothers appear at unexpected places, who thenceforward prey upon them, and by threats of exposure, extort large sums of money from them. Am I safe on that score?"

"With me, perfectly," replied the bland Mrs. Parker.

"Did you never do anything of this kind, madam?" the stranger enquired, looking her searchingly in the eye.

"Never," she answered, turning slightly pale.

"What! did you never hatch a plot against a young man named Ross, who was weak enough to be fascinated by the charms of a woman called Emma Dayton—but who is known, among her other aliases, as——"

"No!" exclaimed the woman, interrupting him. "Never! What do you mean?"

"I mean," replied the stranger, "to ask whether you ever did this?" adding, as he moved to the door, and put his back against it, "I have heard of such a case."

"Never! so help me——"

"Stay!" interrupted the stranger. "You need not swear: of course, your word is sufficient. But do you not know that you are rendering yourself liable to be sent to the State Prison; that you have confessed yourself to me, a murderess by profession?"

"Good heaven!" exclaimed the woman—"No!"

"You are!" the stranger continued. "You fled from Boston to avoid the consequences of your crimes there. You know that all I have accused you of is true. You have done all, and more than I have hinted at in the case of young Ross! This very night your plans were to have been perfected. By means of your decoy—the 'Woman in Black,'—you have drawn that young man on to his ruin. To-night he was to have been bled, and that bleeding would have continued till you had wrung from him, his very life's blood, or sent him to his grave beggared, degraded, blasted! You are a murderess, and unless you promise to stop your pursuit of that young man, I'll have you dragged to jail within an hour!"

The woman's face, at first, showed signs of fear, but as the stranger proceed-

ed in his accusation, the expression changed to surprise, and as he finished, it had settled down into a look of fierce determination, and fiend-like malignity as she inwardly cursed herself for falling into such a trap.

"Not so fast!" she hissed, springing to the door, from which the stranger had advanced a few paces. "You know too much! I am not alone! Here! Bob! Blanche! Help!"

The stranger caught her by the arm, and swung her round into the middle of the apartment.

"Silence!" he exclaimed. "Speak another word, or call again for help, and this will be a sorry night for you!"

But her voice had been heard; there was a rush down the stairs, and Merideth entered the room, followed by Blanche, just as Charlie Ross, sprang from the back room, and took his place defiantly by the side of the stranger!

"What is this?" shouted Merideth, advancing a step towards the stranger, who drawing a pistol from his breast, stood upon the defensive, and called out:

"Hold! Move one foot nearer and you are a dead man!"

Merideth stopped while the stranger turning to Ross said: "Ah, you are here! So much the better, you have heard all!"

"What do you mean? Who are you?" asked the hag, Parker, fairly scared at last. "In God's name who are you?"

The stranger quietly unbuttoned his coat, and displayed a silver badge, saying: "I am John Winstone, of the detective force. I have heard of your tricks, and I came here to put a stop to them. You have—you woman, and you Merideth, and your pretended wife—imposed in the most wicked manner, upon this young man, who has been made the victim, of the artful blandishments, of that vile woman," pointing to Blanche, who stood looking at Charlie with a malicious smile of contempt upon her face, "of that man, her pretended husband, and yourself. There is no escape for you, so confess, in his presence, that this is true, or to the Tombs you go, one and all this very night!"

"Don't be too hard on us, Captain," Merideth said. "There is no harm done yet!"

"Do you acknowledge," Winstone insisted, "that this woman is not your wife, but your mistress, and your tool? That after you found this gentleman fairly in her toils you laid a trap for him; that his introduction into this house by her, her pretended love for him, her *abandon* when alone with him, your sudden entrance into the room, your feigned indignation, and your threats of violence, were all parts of a well concerted scheme? That your pretended willingness to compromise, in which Mrs. Parker was the mediator, was a part of the same plan, and that you intended to victimize this man, as you have victimized half a dozen others, by means of the fascination of that prostitute, Emma Dayton, or Blanche Merideth, or as she is better known to the police, 'the Woman in Black.' Is not this all true?"

"Well, Captain, it's no use denying it to you. So we might just as well confess that we did intend to make Mr. Ross pay for his experience; but the game is up, and if you'll let the matter drop, I promise to trouble the gentleman no more."

"What do you say, Mr. Ross. Do you feel disposed to punish these people? Understand that they are in your power—or will you, as he proposes, let the matter drop, and put the whole affair down to the credit of experience in life in New York?"

From the time he had entered the room, Charlie had not spoken a word. As the conversation between Winstone and Mrs. Parker had proceeded, he listened, first with astonishment, then with mortification—and when the climax came, and his adored Blanche, whom he had, in the warmth of his susceptible nature, invested with every angel attribute, stood confessed before him a wanton

heartless, mercenary wretch, his whole nature rebelled indignantly against the infamous trick which had been played upon him, and, had he followed the impulse which seized him, he would have rushed upon Merideth, and torn him to pieces! But, as the Detective thrust home, upon the scoundrel and his confederates, the details of the plan which had been laid to rob him, and he saw the treacherous trio cringing so abjectly before the shrewd officer, he felt ashamed to think that he had been such an easy dupe, and, blushing with mortification, he replied:

"They are not worthy of my anger. Let their punishment be the knowledge that they have been foiled of their prey, even at the time when it seemed within their very grasp. The experience will be a valuable one to me, and, as I am sure, that one day or other, retributive justice will overtake them, I leave them to work out their own fate. Come, Mr. Winstone, let us go."

"You are right," said Winstone, "though it is a pity such a lot should go scot free. Let me advise you Mrs. Parker to try a change of air. I think your health requires a change. New York will not prove a comfortable residence for you any longer, for I assure you, that if you ever again attempt to pursue your hellish calling here, I'll bring down on you the full weight of the law. As for you two, pimp and prostitute," he continued, turning to Blanche and Merideth, "your game is pretty well up. You have arrived at the end of your rope. We shall be sure to meet again. Come, Mr. Ross, let us get out of this den."

As Charlie turned to go, his eye fell upon Blanche, who was sitting by the door, looking as pale as death itself, and spite of his mortification and indignation, he could not entirely smother the feeling which still animated him. He could not believe that she was the wretch he had heard her described, and which she had tacitly acknowledged herself to be, and he would have stopped and spoken to her, had not Winstone foreseen his intention, and taking him by the arm, said:

"Come, none of that. She is still dangerous. The snake is scotched, not killed. She is too sharp a tool for you to play with," and without further ceremony left the place.

"How shall I ever thank you? How can I ever repay you?" exclaimed Charlie to Winstone, as they reached the street.

"By never letting your susceptibility get the better of your judgement," replied the detective. "Let's go and get some brandy and water. My sermon has made me as dry as a fish!"

CHAPTER XVI.

YOUR CHOICE FOR A DOLLAR—A ROUGH AND TUMBLE FIGHT.

"A fool and his money are soon parted." [OLD SAYING.]

"No beast so fierce but knows some touch of pity." [SHAKESPEARE.]

AFTER refreshing themselves in the manner proposed by Winstone, at the famous "De Soto," in Bleeker street, Winstone excused himself on the plea of business, and took his leave, loaded with thanks, having firmly but politely refused all other compensation, and Charlie took his way towards the hotel, filled with reflections upon the strange scene that he had just witnessed.

His nature had experienced a severe shock, for he had felt a warm and sincere passion for Blanche, and he could have wept at the annihilation of all his romantic dreams. He felt too, keenly, the annihilation of Blanche herself—for

she existed no more, to him. In fact, she had never existed at all, but in his imagination. Had she been the being he imagined her, he would have died for her, but her mask had been stripped off, and instead of an angel he found her a fiend, and he grieved, not so much over the fact that she had been unmasked, but that his Blanche, the good, innocent, unhappy, clinging girl, who had so stirred his sympathy and his passion, had never had any existence at all. His Blanche was a myth, the real Blanche a monster, from whose clutches he had escaped as by a miracle.

He was pursuing these reflections, when he felt a hand upon his shoulder, and turning round, discovered Harry and Frank, who greeted him with loud welcome, and many questions, as to where he had been, why he looked so serious, and where he was going.

Charlie evaded all these questions as well as he could, taking care to avoid all reference to Blanche.

"Where are you going?" he at last asked.

"No where in particular, drifting with the current," replied Harry. "Come stroll with us, Broadway by gas-light must be worth seeing. Something will turn up to amuse us, we may be sure."

"All right," said Charlie, glad of any circumstance which would divert his mind from the events of the past four days. "Come along!" and the three friends proceeded along Broadway.

They had not gone far when the sound of a piano, attracted their attention, and turning to see whence it proceeded, their eyes were dazzled by a blaze of light, which came pouring out of a large room, just below the level of the street, and which was filled with glass cases, containing silver-ware, watches, jewelry and a great variety of trinkets, which flashed and glittered in the gas light. A number of people were inside, walking about examining the goods exposed to view, and a young man, of a greasy and beery expression of countenance, was standing on the sidewalk, in front, making himself hoarse, by calling out in stentorian tones:

"Now's your time, walk in! All you see to be given away! Only one dollar! This is the House of Gold! walk in and make your fortune! only one dollar. You may get a pyany, or you may get a gold watch, for only one dollar!"

Here he paused for breath, and a man who stood behind one of the glass cases in the store, near the entrance, took up the cry:

"Step right up, now, and secure your tickets, only one dollar! Everything you see to be given away! Step right up now, only one dollar!"

"Hullo!" exclaimed Frank, "here's a chance for some fun! Let's go in, and make our fortune!"

"What is it?" asked Harry.

"Only one dollar," answered Frank, laughing. "Let us invest!"

The others made no objection, so he led the way, and they entered the place.

The moment they did so the man behind the case, began shouting again at the top of his lungs:—

"Walk right up," and "only one dollar," forming the burden of his cry. Another man on the opposite side, also began calling, while a fellow seated at the piano, commenced pounding away upon it, as if he had made a wager that he would break every string in it, within a given time.

The display in the store was certainly an inviting one. Ice pitchers, castors, soup tureens, butter dishes, goblets, egg stands, and similar articles of silver-ware glistened from the side cases, while in the counter-cases, watches, of gold and silver, diamond rings, breast pins, and necklaces, dazzled the eye, and every thing was glittering, tempting, and rich.

"I wonder what the swindle is," said Frank.

"Shall we make our fortune for 'only one dollar?'"

"Of course," said Harry, "we *may* get a piano, you know."

"Or a gold watch," said Charlie.

"Only one dollar, walk right up and secure your tickets!" shouted the man behind the counter.

So they "walked right up," in obedience to orders, and Harry enquired, of the man with the cast iron lungs, "What do we pay the dollar for?"

"Concert at the Academy of Music," replied the man, in a hoarse voice.

"First class Italian concert! Only one dollar! A prize with every ticket!"

Harry put down one dollar, and the man handed him a red ticket saying:

"Draw if you please, and pointed to a long box full of yellow envelopes, which stood on the plate of glass forming the top of the counter.

Harry drew an envelope, and handed it to the clerk who opened it, and taking out a small card, shouted out:

"One silver pickle fork!"

The three friends laughed, and another loud voice from the end of the room, echoed the cry of the ticket seller: "One silver pickle fork!" and in a moment, Harry was the fortunate possessor of a plated fork, with two tines, worth, perhaps, at retail prices, ten cents!

"No piano, that time!" said Harry.

"Perhaps you may get one next time," insinuated the ticket seller, and just then a stranger, looking like a countryman, paid a dollar, received a ticket, and under instructions drew an envelope, just next to the one which Harry had drawn. The man behind the case opened it, and shouted out in tones of thunder.

"One double hunting case, detached lever, full-jeweled, gold watch, marked H!"

The man at the other end repeated the cry. A third one took it up, and the same man, who had given Harry his pickle fork, approached, holding the watch over his head so that all could see, and repeating the description of the watch, in his loudest tones, he handed it to the excited countryman, who clutched it with nervous eagerness.

"Plenty more of the same sort, gentlemen!" shouted the ticket seller, as everybody, including our three friends, crowded round the countryman to look at his prize.

"There is no mistake about it," said Frank. "It is a real gold watch, worth at least two hundred and fifty dollars."

"And it was the very next envelope to mine," said Harry.

"Let me try this time!" said Charlie.

"Let's all try," said Harry.

And the three rushed to the counter, as a number had done before them, influenced by the luck of the countryman. After some little delay, they secured their tickets, and drawing their envelopes, they received the following valuable articles, to wit:

One brass ring, worth	\$0.00.
One brass breastpin.	0.03.
One pair brass sleeve buttons.	0.03.
Total value of prizes.	\$0.06.

The countryman drew again, but his luck had deserted him, and he received a pair of lady's brass ear-rings only. Others, however, were more fortunate, one received a rich and valuable castor, another an ice pitcher, another a silver watch, a fourth a cake basket, and those who obtained worthless articles seduced by the success of the others, spent more dollars, and drew more trash, our young friends among the number, who kept buying tickets, and getting nothing in return but worthless tinsel, until they had invested a considerable amount, when satisfied that they were not among the lucky ones, they left the "hall of

dazzling light," wondering at the queer freaks of fortune. They would not have wondered if they had known what the reader will know after reading an explanation.

The envelopes placed in the boxes, contained no names of any prizes of real value. Neither watches, pianos, ice pitchers, or any other thing worth more than its weight in old brass could have been found written upon any of the cards in the envelopes!

The "countryman" who drew the gold watch, was not a countryman at all, but a fellow paid by the proprietor of the swindle, to act as "capper," that is, to buy tickets, and draw, through the connivance of the ticket seller, big prizes, which he afterwards returned, thus inducing others to buy. All the valuable prizes called and given out, were given to men thus employed, and nothing was in reality drawn by strangers which was worth anything at all, intrinsically.

Thus Harry and his friends might have drawn every envelope in the boxes, and the highest prize would have proved a silver plated cup, or a call bell, worth about thirty cents.

This swindle is extensively carried on, in various parts of the city, sometimes instead of concert tickets, "shares" in joint stock oil companies are sold, and the swindle is even worse in such cases, for the concert tickets are worth something, if they are used, while the oil shares are not worth the paper they are printed on.

Places where you may have "Your choice for a dollar" out of a whole case full of jewelry, are of the same character, and are among the most successful traps laid by the sharps to cozen the flats.

We would advise all who may read these pages, never to invest a penny in such places. They had better throw their money away, and they may rest assured that whenever they receive a pamphlet or a circular, informing them, that by sending on a dollar or so, for "certificates enclosed," a prize drawn in a lottery—that some one is trying to swindle them, and that every dollar so sent, goes to swell the ill-gotten gains of some scoundrel, who, if he had his deserts, would be the occupant of a cell in the state prison. The best way to treat such missives whenever, or however received, is to put them in the fire. They are, to use an expressive phrase, "Dead Beats," one and all.

Something richer in experience, though poorer in purse, the three friends retraced their steps up Broadway, until they came to Houston street, down which they turned, for the purpose of getting a glass of ale, at one of the numerous ale houses on the European plan, which abound in that vicinity. Not being very certain of the locality of the particular house they sought, they kept on beyond Crosby street, until they came in front of a building which bore evident signs of being the sort of place they were in search of, and they entered accordingly.

The room was not luxuriously furnished, a few plain, cherry tables stood at the sides of the room, and the only decorations consisted of some wretchedly executed sporting cuts, representing prize fights, cock fights, dog fights, pig fights, bull baits, badger baits, rat killing and sundry kindred subjects.

Our friends took places at one of the tables, and after ordering their ale, looked about them. There were several men in the room, a few sitting at the tables, but the majority of them were standing in front of the bar, a motley group, of which a notorious shoulder-hitter, politician and sporting man, was the centre figure, and he was talking in a loud voice to Popson, "the gentleman of the press" whom they had seen on a previous occasion, singing for his whiskey in the Break o' Day House.

The shoulder-hitter was of the medium height, slim, though well put together and nattily dressed. He had a quick, little, grey eye, high cheek bones, and a nose, the original shape of which it would have been almost impossible to

guess, it had been so often broken, mashed, jammed, and skinned. His lips were thin and pale, his hair was cropped short, and he wore a kind of jockey cap, slouched down over his low forehead. He was a man whom Charlie recognized—he having been pointed out to him and described by the detective Winstone—as one of whom they had often heard, as his name, which we will call Camphene, had often figured in the newspapers in connection with prize-fights, bar-room knock downs, and street rows. He had just concluded a discussion on some question in relation to the last prize fight, with little Popson, who had evidently got the worst of the argument, for he had remained silent after the last assertion of his opponent, who turned away from him with a sneer, saying: "What's the use o' talking, come, let's have some gin."

"Gin"—among the class of which this man is a leader and type, is the generic term for all spirituous drinks. Brandy—Rum—Whiskey or whatever, are all known as gin.

"I knew you," said Camphene, to Popson, as he stood before him, glass in hand, "afore you know'd me. You're one o' them fellers wot write for newspapers. I don't know whether you ever put my name in the newspapers or not, but its been in a good many times."

"Oh, no, I never put your name in the papers, Mr. Camphene," Popson said, quickly, "I assure you I never did. I wouldn't, you know."

"Well, I don't know whether you ever did or not," Camphene answered. "If you say you didn't, I s'pose you didn't. I wouldn't care anything about it, if they'd only tell the truth, but they lie, them papers like—thunder. Your name's Popson, aint it?"

Popson admitted with some hesitation that it was.

"Well, I want you to know my friends. Here, I'll introduce you!"

With this, Camphene introduced Popson to his friends separately. The names by which he called them, were all more or less notorious. One had been the hero of a celebrated murder trial, which took place some years before, and out of which he had managed to slip with a whole skin, through the ingenuity of his counsel, who contrived to persuade the jury that he was only guilty of manslaughter in a limited degree. Another was then under indictment for a murderous assault upon a policeman; another, was a noted pugilist who "queered the ogles," "tapped the claret," "smashed the ivories;" and "pounded the bread basket;" of many an adversary; another was an ex-councilman of the —th ward, and the most villanous-looking blackguard of the whole lot; another was the keeper of a low gambling den, and to make up the assortment, another, one of those elegantly dressed, sweet-scented scoundrels, who may be seen on any fine afternoon, lounging on the sunny side of Broadway, on the corner of Houston Street, or in front of the cigar stores. Loafers by day, and pimps, "ropers in," and thieves by night.

Take them all in all, they were a nice lot.

"Say, Camphene, seen the Smasher to-day?" enquired the ex-councilman, after the ceremony of introduction was over.

"No," replied Camphene, lighting a cigar, "I aint seen him in a week!"

"He's been a looking for you. Vitriol told him his friends was a going back on him, and he wants to see you!" said the ex-councilman.

Camphene's reply was emphatic, what it was, cannot be written, it was so interlarded with oaths, epithets, and words not mentionable to ears polite, but he intimated that "the smasher" was good for as many Vitriols, as could be brought against him, and expressed his entire willingness, to punch the head of any individual who would back such "a shyster" as he knew Vitriol to be.

"I aint no sucker," continued Camphene, cooling down a little, and dropping, to a limited extent, his expletive style. "I aint no sucker—my money is good and I'll bet my "ducats" that the smasher can take any of the crowd agin him, if they don't double team him."

As he said these words an expression of devilish wickedness, came over his face that Satan himself might have envied.

"Who'll put up their good soap?" he shouted, producing a large roll of bills, "Here's my ducats!"

"No one accepted the invitation, and there was a dead silence which was broken by the ex-councilman, who invited the party to take some more "gin," after which the conversation became general.

In a short time the individual known as "The Smasher," came in, and all eyes were turned toward him.

He had scarcely entered when Camphene went up to him, giving his right hand, saying: "How are you?"

Before the Smasher could reply, with his open hand, Camphene struck him a blow upon the cheek, leaving the print of his fingers plainly visible, on the flesh, in firm, broad, white lines.

Any one would have supposed that the Smasher would have levelled Mr. Camphene, with one of his huge fists, but he paid no attention to the blow and evidently looked upon the slap as a love tap, expressive of the intense admiration of his friend.

"He hain't no account," exclaimed Camphene, pointing in an admiring manner to the huge form of the prize fighter. "He's a sucker, he is! He can't fight; any shyster cen lick him, and he thinks he's a fighter. The d——d broad-shouldered, bow-legged, long-armed, deep-chested, pug-nosed pup! Come, and take some gin! Say, I'll just bet all my good money, and all I can beg, borrry, and steal, he kin lick any man in a forty-foot ring, that ever peeled for a fight! Come, let's have some gin!"

The Smasher smiled and stroked his moustache, as he walked to the other end of the room while the rest went to the bar and took another drink.

While they were drinking, Vitriol, whom we have met before, entered the house. He walked quietly in, and nodding to such as he knew, he went to the bar and called for a cigar and some brandy. Lighting the one and half-filling his glass with the other, he turned his back to the bar, saying:

"Who'll drink?"

From the moment of his entrance not a word had been spoken, but as soon as he addressed himself to the crowd, Camphene stepped forward, saying:

"I'll take a drink with you, Vitriol. I've been looking for you to drink with! Give me some gin." And the same wicked expression we have noticed before passed over his face.

No one else accepted the invitation, and no one else spoke a syllable.

Camphene drank his liquor, and turning to Vitriol said:

"You're a nice pup! Who are you looking for? Who do you want to take? What's the matter with you? I ain't seen you, since you and Jack Spike double teamed me at Felter's."

Vitriol's mouth began to twitch and the demon in him glowed in his eyes, as he stepped back a pace, saying: "You're a blower, I didn't double team you."

"You're a liar!" exclaimed Camphene, "maybe you think you can take me, now! You can't lick one side o' me," and Camphene shook his fist under Vitriol's nose.

In a moment Vitriol's cravat was off, and in the twinkling of an eye Camphene had planted his fist, with a terrific thud, square in Vitriol's face.

No one moved.

No one tried to interfere between them, as the two combatants exchanged blow for blow, and finally clinched for a struggle!

Nothing was heard save their hard breathings, and the noise of their feet upon the floor, mingled with an occasional oath.

At last Vitriol was thrown with great violence, Camphene falling on him, and then commenced an exhibition to whose sickening and disgusting character no description can do justice.

Camphene in trying to force his thumb into the eye of Vitriol, only succeeded in getting it between his antagonist's teeth, which instantly closed on it like a vice. His other hand was firmly grasped by one of Vitriol's, and amid curses and imprecations, he tried to free himself in vain. Then he bent down his head and tried to bite the nose of his opponent, while Vitriol in order to save his proboscis, let go his hold of the thumb, and in his turn made a short quick snap—like a dog—at the nose of Camphene.

A failure on both sides changed the system of tactics. Camphene, now that his thumb was free, made another effort to gouge out his adversary's eye, but being again thwarted in his kind intentions, made a grab at his throat, which he succeeded in clutching, and again bent down, to seize Vitriol's nose with his teeth.

But Vitriol threw up his head suddenly, and bucked Camphene in the face, who returned the favor by tightening his grasp on Vitriol's throat and striking his fist time after time into his face.

By this time the pressure upon Vitriol's throat began to tell; his tongue protruded from his mouth, and a hollow gurgling sound was heard, as Camphene pressed tighter and tighter, struck faster and faster, and hissed curse after curse from between his teeth.

At last Vitriol ceased to struggle, and then the bystanders made a movement to interfere.

Harry and his friends would have gone out long before this, if they could have done so, but the keeper of the place, as soon as the fight began, locked the door and placed the key in his pocket. He now seized Camphene by one arm, while the ex-councilman took him by the other, and between them, with much exertion they broke his hold upon the victim's throat, and at last succeeded in dragging him away, from the insensible form of Vitriol, who lay upon the floor without motion covered with blood, and with his face beaten out of all semblance to humanity.

As they stood Camphene upon his feet, he gave Vitriol a parting kick with his heavy boot, and shouted: "Give me some gin! I can take any man in the world, I can!"

The landlord and the ex-councilman, after much effort, succeeded in restoring Vitriol to consciousness when he was placed in a carriage and driven away.

Our three friends took advantage of the open door, through which the half-dead form of Vitriol was led, to get away with all the speed they could, and arriving at the hotel, was glad to seek, in slumber, forgetfulness of the fearful scene which they had witnessed.

CHAPTER XVII.

A VISIT TO A CONCERT SALOON—"THE WOMAN IN BLACK" AGAIN AT WORK.

"There was a sound of revelry by night."

[BYRON.]

"He will as easily be led by the nose, as asses are."

[SHAKESPEARE.]

THE continued state of excitement, in which young Ross had existed for so long proved too much for his strength, and he awoke, on the morning after the *expose* at Mrs. Parker's, in a high fever, which for some days threatened to result seriously, but thanks to Doctor Q—s, whom Winstone had summoned, and the kind attentions of his friends, Harry Callow and Frank Dutton, he grew better, and in the course of a fortnight had improved so much, that he was able to leave his room. But, by the advice of his physician, he concluded to forego sight-seeing in the metropolis for a short time, and accompanied by his friends, started on a trout-fishing excursion among the Catskills. They passed some weeks rambling through the wild and romantic scenes of those beautiful mountains, and then made a tour to Niagara, and through the Canadas, returning to New York after an absence of two months, more hungry than ever for the gayity, the excitement, and the sights of the great metropolis.

Winstone, the detective, renewed his acquaintance on their return, and under his guidance, they went everywhere, and saw everything worth seeing. High life, low life, New York in the streets, in the Theatres; New York above ground and under ground; meeting with many adventures, and learning lessons of one kind or another, from every new scene.

Among the many places in the city, where character can be studied in all its Protean phases, none offer more facilities, than the Concert Saloons, and of these they made the rounds, commencing at the lowest, in Water, Cherry, and Greenwich streets, and gradually ascending to the gilded and fatally attractive dens of Broadway.

In one of these some incidents occurred which claim a place among the records of their adventures.

The saloon we are about to describe, is one of the most noted in the city. It is situated on Broadway, where the throng is always the greatest, both by night and by day, for it is in the neighborhood of some of the most fashionable stores and in close proximity to several of the principal theatres.

The outside is not very attractive in appearance. A rough daub of a transparency, representing a very gaudy and "loud" female figure, displaying a large amount of bosom, and a rainbow-hued costume, attracts the attention, and with one or two flaring gas lights, and a fancy sign upon which the name of the "saloon" is painted, attests the character of the place.

Descending a flight of steps, our direct progress is obstructed by a screen, which effectually shuts out a view of the interior from the streets, but a short turn to the left, gives ingress to the room and the whole scene stands revealed before us.

And such a scene!

The room is long and spacious, brilliantly lighted and the walls are covered with fresco paintings, only noticeable for their bad drawing, their flaunting, staring color, and the general nudeness of the figures of the various groups, which compose them.

At the further end of the hall is a stage, with scenery, footlights and all the appurtenances of a theatre.

A hundred, or more, small tables are arranged upon the floor, and at these are seated the customers of the place, smoking, drinking and engaged in conversation, of a more or less boisterous and indecent character.

Flying about the room are some fifty or sixty females. There are the "Pretty waiter girls," as they are called, whose duty it is, to supply the customers with whatever they order, and to entertain the guests.

Each girl has her own set of tables, upon which she attends exclusively, and has generally, if she is attractive, her own set of customers, who never sit at any other table but hers, and who evince their intimacy with her, by calling her by her christian name and taking all sorts of liberties with her whenever she approaches them.

Some of the girls are dressed in fancy costumes, such as Greek Boys, Polish Ladies, Zuaves, Vivandiers, Flower Girls, Swiss Peasants of the female persuasion, etc; others, are dressed in what they esteem the height of the fashion, but their garments are almost invariable of the brightest colors, and they delight in strong contrasts.

All are more or less *decolete*, displaying their cheap and flabby charms with the greatest generosity, and all wear the most expansive of crinolines, and as their skirts are as short below, as their waists are short above, the display which they make, of ankles, calves, etc, as they lean over the tables, or whisk about the room, is calculated to impress the looker-on with a very poor idea of their modesty.

Their cheeks are heavily rouged—or vermillioned,—rouge is dear—their eyebrows are penciled, and their waterfalls and other fantasies of their *coiffure* are wonderful to behold.

They have most of them, spite of their paint and tinsel, a haggard, careworn look. You can see it in their eyes, in the lines of their mouths, and the appearance of languor, fatigue, and general played-out-iveness, which is apparent whenever they are in repose, which is not often.

Evidences of late hours, fast-living, and hard drinking are visible in most of them, and with a very few exceptions, they are coarse, slangy and profane.

They are employed, at a fixed sum per night, and furnished with the dresses they wear, though, in some cases, the girls dress themselves. They receive, besides their regular wages, a certain per centage on the amount of money they take for the proprietor, and receive, also, considerable sums by way of gratuity from visitors. They have other perquisites; among which is the "change" which customers should receive, but which they rarely get, unless they demand it with some firmness.

They never think, in fact, of returning change for a dollar, although the price of the liquor or cigar which is to be paid for, amounts to only one quarter of that sum. All is fish that comes to the pretty waiter girl's net; but we have heard that all

they receive in this way, over a certain sum, is taken from them by the proprietor. The guests who are seated at the tables compose a motley collection. Old grey-headed men, young boys, upon whose cheeks the down is scarcely seen, stalwart countrymen in homely garb, with big hands, rough beards and sheepish looks. Captains and mates of market sloops, and small coasters. Sailors, men-of-war's-men, Fancy men, small gamblers, thieves, watch stuffers, and pocket-book droppers, clerks in stores, politicians, country merchants from the west, merchants of the city, stock jobbers, and a host of hangers-on who are always to be seen in such places, but who cannot be classified, except it be under the heads of panders and pimps, bullies and thieves.

Into this place, Harry, accompanied by his friends, Charlie and Frank, found their way, one evening, under the friendly guidance of the detective Winstone, whom no one could recognize, however, so cunningly was he disguised to look like anybody but himself.

As they passed the screen, the scene we have briefly and partially described, burst on their view, and they took their places at one of the vacant tables, and were instantly greeted by a gaudy Hebe, in a dress very low at the top and very short at the bottom, who proceeded to business by chucking Charlie under the chin, and calling him "Curly," and then in a ginny voice, asked:

"What are you going to order, gents? Bottle of wine?"

Just fancy the "wine!"

The brandy, gin, whiskey, rum, and other stuff, sold in this and kindred places, are compounds fearful to contemplate. But the "wine!" Faugh! one's gorge rises at the very thought of it.

They ordered lager beer, as the least poisonous of the poisons, and some cigars, with which they were quickly supplied, the "pretty waiter-girl" forgetting to give Frank his change, out of the two dollar bill which he had given her in payment.

But Frank had enjoyed the benefit of experience and he asked for the balance due him.

"Oh, you don't want any change. Let me keep it to buy my supper. My! what nice eyes you've got, ain't you?" said the fair waitress with an ogle and a leer which had proved "killing" before on more than one young man.

"No nonsense! Give me my change!" said Frank, utterly regardless of her wiles.

"Well, there aint much coming," said the fair enslaver, taking out a lot of greasy stamps from her pocket. "The beers and cigars is a dollar and twenty cents." "That's a swindle," said Frank, "but never mind, hand over the eighty cents and have done with it."

Finding she had no flat to deal with, the girl counted out the money and flounced off to another table, when she threw herself, bodily, into the lap of a green looking countryman, from whence she looked daggers at Frank and his friends.

Just then the music struck up, and all eyes were attracted towards the stage, upon which emerged from the wing, a female with a piece of printed music in her hand, and arrayed in the most gorgeous style; she was tall and slim, with long bony arms, and hands as red as brick dust. But she was evidently a favorite with the *habitués* of the place, for she was greeted by many "hi, hi's!" and "thunders of applause."

She sang a song, to a popular air, in a coarse, uncultivated voice, and without the slightest approach to anything like skill or finish!

The subject of the song was a vulgar one; the allusions were filthy; the slang was disgusting and the wit beneath contempt. But she did it with unctiousness; pitching the verbal filth from her mouth with the greatest gusto, and seemingly appreciating most, those features of it, which were most unfit to be uttered by a woman.

She retired amid a confusion of approbative sounds, and in answer to the prolonged applause, returned and sung another song worse, if possible, than the first.

Then the orders for liquor poured in fast and furious, and the pretty waiter girls, flew about displaying their ankles and whisking their short skirts in the most reckless manner.

Dancing, singing, and "nigger" scenes followed, in quick succession, and the audience gave itself up to the enjoyment of the hour. The liquor began to have its effect. The old men grew more demonstrative in their attentions to the female waiters and the young men became more boisterous.

As the hours grew late, the customers who had come in, during the earlier part of the evening, began to go, but others took their places, so that the room kept well

filled, and the pretty waiter girls were continually on the go, supplying the guests with liquor, and submitting in the intervals to huggings, squeezings, and amorous pawings, from the men and boys whom they served.

When it was near midnight, a woman appeared on the stage, whose presence was the signal for a tremendous outburst of loud applause, and turning in the direction of the stage, Charlie beheld in the person, who produced this sensation, a female, dressed with great elegance and taste and whose whole demeanor, was different from all the performers who preceded her.

She was very beautiful, and as she stood in the full glare of the footlights, waiting for the conclusion of the prelude to the song she was about to sing, a general silence pervaded the room, as though the magic of her presence had struck the assembly dumb.

Charlie gazed for a moment, and turning to Winstone said:

"Who is that woman?"

"Don't you know her?" inquired Winstone. "Look again!"

"It cannot be," said Charlie, "and yet—by heaven, it is she!"

"Who?" asked Harry and Frank together.

"Oh, I know!" exclaimed Frank. "It's Charlie's angel in black. The woman he met at the Museum. See how he's blushing!"

"Hush!" said Winstone. "Say nothing here. You might attract attention, and for special reasons, I do not care to be observed!"

She commenced to sing, and her voice acted like a spell, and so still were the listeners, that the drop of a pin might have been heard.

Charlie gazed upon her with curious sensations. At first, the old feeling began to take possession of him. Her voice, which was soft and flexible, and full of tearful sympathy, went through him like lightning, and she looked so beautiful, so different from any of her surroundings, that he found himself forgetting all she was, and believing her again to be all he had imagined her.

But a look from Winstone, full of meaning enquiry, brought him to himself, and he remembered her as she appeared to him when he had seen her last, a heartless, mercenary wanton, whose wiles had nearly led him to destruction, and he turned his gaze away from her, with a sickening sensation at his heart.

But spite of himself he could not drive her from his thoughts. What had brought her to such a den as this? Why should she be there, singing to please a lot of low, and brutal debauchees, and stupid degraded men? Had she left Merideth?

As he was sitting next to Winstone, he whispered to him asking him to gratify his curiosity.

"You will probably know all about it before we leave, if my information is correct," said Winstone. "She is here for a purpose you may be sure, but watch and say nothing."

As Winstone spoke she finished her song and as she bowed with much grace in acknowledgement of the applause, a tall, gentlemanly person of middle age, and dressed in a suit of black, rose from one of the tables near the stage, and cast a large bouquet of expensive exotics at her feet. She stooped, and raising the floral tribute, pressed it to her lips, and smiled upon the person who had thrown it, just as Charlie had seen her smile on him. Such a smile! It seemed to impress the whole audience, for a fresh burst of applause which shook all the tables and set the glasses jingling, seemed to be the unanimous expression of the admiration of all who saw her.

She did not appear again, and within a short time, the man who had thrown the bouquet, rose and went quickly out of the place.

As soon as he started to go out, Winstone rose too, saying to Charlie:—"Would you like to see the end of it?"

"The end of what?" asked Charlie.

"Never mind," replied Winstone. "Wait here for me. I shall not be gone long."

Winstone left the place, and the three friends lit some fresh cigars, and quietly awaited the return of their guide.

The audience had dwindled down to not more than twenty or thirty, by this time, the performances being over, and most of the pretty waiter girls had retired, also; none of them, alone, however, but either with their regular "lovers," or such admirers as they might have picked up during the evening, who had yielded to their persuasions to take them out to supper.

The persons left were most of them better dressed than the majority of the frequenters of the place, and occupied tables at the upper end of the room near the

stage, where several of the female performers had joined them, and sat drinking the wine for which there was a continual call.

After an absence of about ten minutes, the man who had thrown the bouquet to Blanche returned, and took his seat at the table where he had previously sat.

Winstone shortly entered, followed by half-a-dozen men, who took seats at various tables about the room.

"It is all right," said Winstone, as he resumed his seat.

"What is all right?" the friends enquired.

"The little drama I have arranged for your amusement," replied the detective.—

"The performance will commence soon! Ah, it has already begun!" he exclaimed, as he looked towards the stage.

Looking in the same direction they saw the Woman in Black, come down a short flight of steps, which led to one of the private boxes, and take her seat at the table with the man who had thrown the bouquet.

"Now, the play will begin in earnest," said Winstone. "Let us get nearer."

They accordingly took their places nearer to the stage, but in such a position that they attracted no attention. Here they were joined by a bevy of the prettiest of the pretty waiter girls, and they gave themselves up, apparently, to the seductions of these syrens, laughing, joking, and drinking with them, who seemed to be congratulating themselves upon the conquest they thought they had made.

At the other tables, the fun grew loud and uproarious. The front doors had been closed, and no fresh visitors could come in, but those who were in the place, had the privilege of remaining as long as they pleased—or rather, as long as they continued to be profitable customers, and kept calling for wines, liquors and cigars, and so the women threw off all restraint; they sung and laughed, sat upon the laps of the men, caressing and caressed, and the scene soon became a regular orgie.

Most of the men seemed to be acquainted, and all soon united in one party, with the exception of Winstone and his friends, and the men who come into the room when he did. These set apart.

The man with Blanche, was the most boisterous of the revellers. He kept calling for wine in large quantities, and paying for it, out of a large roll of bills, which he carried in his pocket. Blanche lavished all her arts upon him, and he seemed delighted with her attentions.

He asked her to sing, and she complied at once, with a song full of passion, but of anything but a refined character.

When she had finished, her admirer called for more wine, in which to drink her health, and gave her a number of bills from the roll he carried, which Blanche took, without hesitation, and rewarded him with a long kiss.

"Give me another kiss like that," the man exclaimed, "and I will give you this ring."

"You will?" said Blanche.

"I will—I swear!" he replied.

Blanche put her arms round his neck, and kissed him in the same way again, and received in return the ring, which she held up for all to see, and which proved to be a cluster of diamonds of great brilliancy and value.

When this took place, Winstone turned to his friends saying:

"Now, for the denouement of this scene. I am sorry to be obliged to mar the festivities of the occasion, but I am afraid I shall be obliged to do so!"

"What do you mean?" asked Harry.

"You shall see," he said, as he arose, and proceeded to the place where Blanche was sitting beside her generous and reckless admirer.

No one seemed to pay any attention to him for a moment, but when taking advantage of a lull in the shouting and bursts of laughter, he laid his hand upon the shoulder of Blanche's friend, he said: "I have some business with you, Mr. Fenkin," and turned and looked at him with curiosity.

"What do you want? I don't know you," said the man.

"You will probably know me better, hereafter," Winstone observed, quietly.

"I arrest you and this woman!"

All rose to their feet!

"Come here, men," Winstone said, turning towards the men, who had been sitting apart, and who rose instantly, and stood beside him.

"What does this mean?" asked Fenkin, as pale as death.

"It means that you and this woman are my prisoners!" Winstone replied, coolly.

"On what charge?"

"That I will explain, hereafter," Winstone said, taking out a pair of handcuffs. "In the meantime, please to give me your hands."

"I insist upon knowing what this is for?" exclaimed Fenkins. "It is an outrage!"

"Step this way, and perhaps I may be able to convince you that it is no outrage at all, but simple justice, and that I am only performing a disagreeable duty," Winstone said, quietly taking him by the arm, and leading him unresistingly on one side. "Keep your eye on that woman," he continued to the men who stood beside him, "and if she attempts to move, put the bracelets on her! Now, sir," he went on, when he and Fenkins were alone, "I will explain. I hold in my hand a warrant for your arrest, issued at the suit of the — Bank. You are a defaulter to that institution to a large amount. The proofs of your guilt are clear, and if you will take my advice you will come with me without further parley!"

Fenkins turned as white as marble, and exclaiming in piteous tones: "At last! at last!" he sunk upon a chair, pale, powerless, and almost fainting.

The other persons had by this time dropped away one by one, and the room was nearly empty, when, after wetting his lips with some water, Fenkins rose, and allowed himself to be led away, followed by the pale and trembling Blanche, in the custody of the other officers.

A carriage stood ready at the door, in which they were placed.

Winstone handed the warrant to one of his fellow officers, saying:

"Take them to the Station House, and see them safely taken care of. I will be at the court in the morning!"

Two officers then entered the carriage, with their prisoners, and were rapidly driven in the direction of the Tombs.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE DEFAULTER.

"Oh what a tangled web we weave,
When first we venture to deceive."

EARLY the next morning, Charlie Ross repaired to that low, squat, Egyptian pile, known as the "Tombs." A more fitting name could not well be given it, for its very appearance must be ominous to the culprit; and it seems to say, though the words are not inscribed over its portal: "Who enters here leaves Hope behind."

When Charlie entered the Police Court, Winstone was not there, and he looked in vain for Fenkins and Blanche. On enquiring, he learned that the examination of the defaulter was set down for twelve o'clock, so he made up his mind to wait until that hour.

The examination of the prisoners who had been brought in for petty offences had just begun, and the room was filled with a motley group of men and women.

Most of them belonged to the very lowest class, and the principal charges against them were for vagrancy, or being drunk and disorderly.

Most of the cases were summarily disposed of, with a sentence of, from five to ten days in the city prison, with the occasional addition of a slight fine.

At twelve o'clock Winstone entered the Court, and informed Charlie that the examination of Fenkins and Blanche would be a private one, held in another room, to which they proceeded, and where the justice shortly made his appearance.

The prisoners were sent for, and in a few moments, Fenkins and Blanche were brought in, in the custody of the two officers, who had taken them to the station-house the preceeding evening.

The officers of the Bank, in which Fenkins had held a very responsible position, were already there, and when Fenkins saw them, his cheek flushed, his lip quivered, and, sitting by the table, he burst into a flood of tears.

Blanche, though pale, looked beautiful and defiant. She glanced round the room, and as her eye fell on Charlie, looking calm and composed, she blushed crimson, let her veil fall over her face, and seated herself with her back to him.

The examination of Fenkins began. The books of the bank were produced, and the false entries which he had made to disguise his robberies were clearly pointed out. The sum abstracted was a large one, and the evidence of his guilt was clear.

"Have you any counsel, Mr. Fenkins?" enquired the judge.

"No," answered Fenkins, "there is no occasion. I confess all! I have fought off this hour for months past. I knew that detection must come, but I have put off the

fatal day as long as I could. For months I have lived a life of agony, fearful each moment, that my guilt would be discovered. Now that the discovery has been made, I rejoice at it. The worst is known; the fearful dread in which I have lived is past, and I feel like a man from whose shoulders a terrible burden has been removed!"

In reply to various questions, put to him by the counsel for the prosecution, and the Justice, Fenkins told the full story of his crime.

He had commenced the career of his crime, by using the funds of the bank, for the purpose of gambling in stocks. At first, fortune seemed to favor him, and he had accumulated quite a snug capital of his own, but at last he was "cornered"—in the slang of the "street"—and it took much more than the money he possessed, to pay the differences in the stock he had engaged to deliver. The funds of the bank were again resorted to. Again he lost, and then he commenced a series of reckless speculations, and stock gambling operations, which led him, step by step, into the very depths of irretrievable ruin, from which it was impossible for him to recover himself.

Up to this time, his social character had been exemplary. He was known among his large circle of acquaintances, as a model husband, a kind father, and a consistent church member. But he was standing on a volcano. Any day might find him stripped of character, and branded as a thief. The thought of the terrible effect, such a revelation would have upon his family, the grief of his wife and daughter, the shame and humiliation it would bring upon all related to him, hung upon him like a dreadful incubus, and at last his home became hateful to him, and he sought in dissipation, relief from the conscientious tortures which racked his soul.

The Concert Saloons furnished the surest, as well as, to him, the safest means of enabling him to forget his sorrows, and to them, and houses of prostitution, he flew night after night for relief, lavishing the money which he took from the bank in the most reckless manner, upon the harlots and blood-suckers who infested these places.

He made the acquaintance of Blanche, at the Concert Saloon, where we have seen her, and soon became a pliant victim in her skillful hands. She wound the meshes of her arts so thoroughly about him, that he obeyed her every wish, and gave himself up entirely to her will, making her the most expensive presents, and supplying her with large sums of money.

For a time, he had, by these means, silenced to some extent, the gnawing of the conscience within him, but one day all his terrors were revived, for a new danger threatened him. Merideth, had watched him, found out who and what he was; shrewdly guessed at the true condition of affairs, and openly threatened him with exposure, unless he paid him to be silent.

He continually drew upon him for large sums of money, which Fenkins was, through his fears, obliged to pay, and in order to do so, he had, of course, to resort to the funds of the bank, and day by day increased the already startling amount of his felonious abstractions.

Merideth pursued him with the malignity of a fiend. He haunted him like his shadow, until the defaulter was driven nearly to insanity, and contemplated suicide. To drown the constant contemplation of his new horror, he became more recklessly dissipated than ever, and joined in the most fearful orgies and scenes of debauchery, in hopes of quelling the demon within.

"When I was arrested, last night," he said, as he concluded his confession, "I was at first completely shattered, but in a short time, I felt an extatic feeling of relief.—This man could pursue me no more, he would be no longer able to prey upon my fears; the worst was known, and I slept last night in my cold and lonely cell—a criminal branded, destroyed, damned, as I am, and must be—as I have not slept for whole months."

Blanche had listened to this confession with a devilish sneer upon her beautiful lip, and when asked what she had to say, replied:

"Nothing—I knew nothing of this man's affairs. I did not know he was a thief.—He made me presents, and I accepted them. I never threatened him with exposure, for I knew nothing to expose!"

"He gave you a valuable ring last night, and some money, did he not?"

"Yes," she replied.

"Where are they?"

"I have them."

"Is that the ring on your finger?"

"Yes."

"Will you let me see it?" asked Winstone.

"She took it off of her small, taper finger, and handed it to him.

"He also presented you with these rings, and all this jewelry, did he not?" asked Winstone, producing from his breast pocket a jewel-case, filled with a number of valuable trinkets and sparkling gems, of great price.

"Where did you get that box?" she asked.

"From your room!" Winstone replied.

"You stole it then! You are a more cowardly thief than Fenkins! Those jewels are mine, bought with my own money, and I claim them!" she exclaimed, entirely unabashed, and with a look of fierce anger darting from her eyes.

"We shall see," replied Winstone. "I think I shall be able to show, that these jewels were all of them purchased by Fenkins, at Tiffany's, and other jewelry stores in the city, and were presented by him to this woman. They are the property of the Bank, as well as the government bonds, which I also found in her room, and I give them into the custody of the court, until such time as it can be decided to whom they rightfully belong."

"Have any steps been taken, for the apprehension of Merideth?" enquired the counsel for the prosecution.

Winstone replied, that there had been a warrant issued for his arrest, and he was in hopes of taking him into custody that very day.

The examination over, Fenkins was committed on his own confession, to answer the charge of embezzlement, and Blanche was held to answer on the charge of receiving stolen property, knowing it to be stolen, and both were remanded to prison.

Fenkins did not utter a word, but quietly followed the officer to his cell. Blanche turned upon Winstone, with flashing eyes, saying: "You shall pay for this, sir! If there's law in the land, I'll make you pay for this. I may be under a social ban, on account of my position, but the law makes no distinction of persons. I know my rights, as you will see!" Then turning to the Justice, she said: "What amount of bail do you require?"

"Five thousand dollars! two securities!"

"Very well," she replied. "Will you allow an officer to go for Mr. C—, my counsel?"

"Certainly," replied the Justice, "you are entitled to your defence!"

"Oh, am I? I did not know," she answered, "When a woman's room can be entered and robbed by the officers of the law, I feared that the law would refuse her all protection!"

With this she allowed herself to be led away, casting a smile of scorn upon Winstone, who took no notice of her, and carefully avoiding the gaze of Charlie, who had sat through the scene, deeply impressed by all he had seen and heard.

CHAPTER XIX.

ANOTHER DEFAULTER. CONCLUSION.

CHARLIE and Winstone parted after the scene we have just described, and did not meet again for several days. The newspapers teemed with sensation accounts of the great defalcation, and everybody told his or her version of it.

Blanche was admitted to bail, and kept her word, in regard to seeking redress, for she commenced suit against Winstone for the recovery of the jewels he had taken from her room, and even sought public sympathy through the newspapers, to which she wrote several letters, setting forth her version of the story and claiming that her notorious character had nothing whatever to do with the strict justice of the case.

Merideth was arrested within a few days and held to bail, though he stoutly denied his guilt, and as he had written no letters, and had conducted his persecution of Fenkins with a great deal of shrewdness, it was next to impossible to establish his guilt, and was eventually discharged on a writ of *habeas corpus*.

Fenkins pleaded guilty on his trial, and was sentenced to the State's Prison for a term of years, but the sentence was not carried out, for the next morning the announcement appeared in the public prints, that he had been found dead in his cell, having committed suicide by severing an artery in his wrist, by means of a piece of his watch crystal which he had broken for the purpose.

Winstone found little difficulty in proving that the jewels and bonds which he had

seized were given to Blanche by Fenkins, and they were handed over to the officers of the bank as their property.

Blanche was tried for receiving stolen property, but escaped through the ingenious defence of her counsel, and the impression her strange beauty made upon the susceptible jury, who tried her, and she was turned loose to prey upon society once more.

The time had now arrived for the return of Charlie and his friends, and on the evening previous to their departure, they invited Mr. Winstone to a dinner at Delmonico's. The dinner was a great success. They discussed their adventures and went over in imagination many of the scenes we have described.

"Of course the case of Fenkins was not forgotten, and Charlie expressed his surprise, that any man of sense should be so thoroughly led away, and rest, a passive tool, in the hands of such harpies as Merideth and Blanche.

"It is not an uncommon case, I assure you," said Winstone, as he sipped his wine. "Such things come within my knowledge, often. Many such transactions never become public. It is not long since I became acquainted with the circumstances of a defalcation case, however, which ended in a very different manner!"

"Refill your glass," Harry said, "and tell us all about it. Your revelations are full of interest, and always contain a lesson, if one were only sharp enough to find it out!"

"The case," said Winstone, after refilling and moistening his throat with the delicious wine, "differs from Fenkins' in this: Fenkins was not a bad man, radically. He was weak, and yielded to temptation. Having committed the crime, he sank under the contemplation of it, and lacked energy and moral courage, to brave the consequences of his act, or repair the evil he had done. In the case I am about to relate, the man was, at heart, a knave. He had no conscientious scruples at all; felt no regret for his crime, but dreaded the punishment, which was sure to follow its detection.

"The circumstances were briefly as follows: Barry Winship, was the receiving teller of one of the Wall Street Banks, and enjoyed the fullest confidence of the officers. He had been employed for a number of years, and was looked upon as a model man in all respects.

During a time of great financial excitement he became involved in some stock operations, which turned out disastrously, and like many a man before him, and as many a man will do after him, under the present system of doing business, and keeping accounts in Banks, he used the funds of the institution, in which he was engaged, to cover his losses and enable him to continue his operations on the street.

"He was a shrewd operator, and often realized large sums; again he would lose; each time going to the Bank for funds, but managing with great skill to cover up his deficiencies, in such a manner that he was never detected. At last, he had a long run of bad luck. He lost large sums, and kept robbing the Bank until his defalcations amounted to two hundred thousand dollars."

"A large sum," said Frank, "to be abstracted without discovery!"

"Discovery did threaten him at last," the detective continued. "His large losses began to be whispered about on the street. People began to wonder how Winship could stand such a heavy drag, and he fancied that the officers of the Bank began to look upon him with suspicious eyes.

"What was to be done? Any day might reveal his robberies, and he dreaded the consequence. In his emergency he took a bold course, he resolved to seek the advice of a cunning, shrewd, old lawyer, who was up to all the zigzag turnings of the law, and who had become famous for getting men out of what are called 'tight places'.

"He called on the lawyer, pledged him to secrecy—gave him a large fee, with the promise of a larger one, if he saved him, and plainly told him his story. He had robbed the Bank of two hundred thousand dollars, and detection was imminent.—What could he do?

"The lawyer was staggered.

"The sum was a large one, and the embezzlement easy of proof.

"Can't you turn it into breach of trust?" asked Winship.

"The Lawyer did not know. Perhaps I will think it over," he said. "Call here to-morrow morning as you go to the bank, and I will give you the result of my reflections!"

"But," urged Winship, "a single day, nay an hour, may reveal all!"

"Well we must take the chances of that. Come to-morrow and perhaps, by that time, I shall be able to see my way more clearly," said the lawyer emphatically, and Winship took his leave full of anxiety.

The next morning on the way to the bank, he called on the lawyer, who received him with a smile.

"Well?" asked Winship, "what have you to say?"

The lawyer gave a premonitory ahem! and seating himself opposite to him, said:

"You have taken in all two hundred thousand dollars, you say?"

"Yes."

"How much of that sum can you command?"

"None!"

"All lost?"

"All!"

"Hem! You are still in your place? You still apparently, at least, enjoy the confidence of the officers. I see no way for it but for you to double the amount of your defalcation."

"Double it?"

"Yes. It is the only plan. Can you manage to abstract from the vaults to-day, a sum equal in amount to that you have already taken?"

"I suppose I could."

"Then you must! Go, immediately, to the bank. Go regularly about your business; at the very first opportunity take the sum, or more if you can, leave the bank as soon as possible and come directly to me with the money!"

"But," urged Winship, really frightened at the proposition. "I do not see—"

"Never mind," said the lawyer interrupting him sharply,—"whether you see or not. I do. Desperate cases require desperate remedies. Will you do as I direct? Yes or no?"

Winship hesitated a minute and then said with determination:

"Yes."

"Then lose no time about it," said the lawyer. "But go at once!"

Winship did as directed, and in the course of the morning abstracted from the vaults of the bank, securities, etc., to the value of two hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars, and, watching his chance, left the bank with the treasure in his possession. He proceeded at once to the lawyer and laid the money before him.

"All right," observed the lawyer quietly: "Now write your resignation, and send it with this letter which I have written, to the President and Directors of the Bank."

"What does the letter contain?" asked Winship.

"All the information you have given me!" replied the lawyer. "A full statement of your numerous defalcations. In fact, a full confession."

"A full confession!" exclaimed Winship.

"And a proposition," replied the lawyer.

"A proposition!"

"Yes. There is here in our possession, now, no less a sum than two hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars. This, with what you have already taken, amounts to four hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars. Now I reason thus: The whole sum is too large for the Bank to lose. The publication of the loss, which would be made by your arrest, would shake its credit. I am of the opinion—and I think I am right in coming to the conclusion—that they will, in consideration, condone the taking of the two hundred thousand dollars and submit to the loss, rather than submit to a loss of more than double the amount, and place the credit of the bank in jeopardy besides. So I have proposed to return the sum of two hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars, if they consent to accept your resignation and hush the matter up."

"The boldness of the plan took away Winship's breath, but he was a bold man, and on consideration consented that his resignation and the lawyer's letter should be sent and the prepared plan followed to the letter!

The shock which the worthy bank President received, when he received this startling news may be imagined, for it turned out that Winship was not suspected at all, and the directors were instantly summoned to consider the matter.

"To be brief," said Winstone—"the Lawyer's shrewd calculations proved correct. His proposition was agreed to. The resignation of the defaulting teller was accepted and the Bank pocketed the loss without any *expose*. Winship went to California and is now one of the richest men in the state, and but very few know why he left the Bank, or how near that Institution was to bankruptcy!"

* * * * * The next day Charlie and his friends departed for the homes in the West, with a pretty good insight into the dark side of life in the Metropolis.

Within six months after their return, Charlie married a lovely and amiable girl, and established himself as a lawyer, in which profession he is prosperous and gives promise of occupying a front rank at the bar.

Harry and Frank are also lawyers, doing business in partnership, and the three often meet to talk over the adventures they met with while seeing "Gay Life New York."

Merideth, was arrested not long ago on the charge of forgery, and is now an inmate of the State's Prison.

The "Skinner House," is still in existence, and we would caution our distant readers to give it a wide berth when they visit the city, for Pierce Boxby is as smug as ever and has not forgotten how to charge his guests with "extras."

Camphene was killed in a distant city by the police, while running a muck in a of drunkenness, during which he killed no less than six unoffending and peaceable citizens.

Vitriol, is still in New-York, where he is a prominent politician, and has grown rich by fat jobs, to which he is indebted to the Aldermanic "Ring," who thus reward him for his numerous exertions, in behalf of the individual members of that immaculate organization!

Mr. Winstone is still on the Detective force, and is known as one of the most shrewd and accomplished officers in the United States.

Mrs. Parker left the city shortly after the *expose* made by Winstone, but returned not long ago, and is the proprietress of a Concert Saloon in Broadway.

Blanche, or "the Woman in Black," disappeared for a time after her acquittal, and it was discovered that she had gone to Europe, as the mistress of a rich stock broker. On her return, he abandoned her, and she became the principal attraction of a gilded "Palace of Mirrors," but becoming disgusted with this life, she retired, and went into the country to recuperate her health. On her return she took up her residence at one of the most fashionable boarding houses in the city. Her elegant manners, her varied accomplishments, and her great beauty, added to her quiet and modest demeanor, blinded all to her true character, and within a year past she was married to a rich widower, who adores her, and thinks her a paragon of perfection! She is fabulously extravagant. She has spent over a hundred thousand dollars since her marriage, and is one of the most extensive purchasers at Stewart's and Tiffany's. Her husband pays all her bills without grumbling, and little suspects that the wife, of whom he is so proud; the beautiful woman, whom he worships, the spoiled doll, who knows so well how to coax and please her dear "hubby," is known to hundreds in New-York, for what she really is, and that not a day passes, on which she not pointed out, either in the park, the street, the theatre or the opera house, wherever she goes, as one of the most dangerous confidence women, that ever practised her wily arts.

She knows it, and knows that an *expose* must come, sooner or later, so with a prudence quite characteristic of her, she is laying in a goodly store of diamonds and Bank stocks, so that when the truth does come out, she will not lose her doting husband, and her means of gratifying her luxurious tastes at the same time.

Our task is done. The incidents related in the course of our little pictures of life in New-York, are all true. We have only disguised names. We have written it with a good motive, and if those who read it, profit by the lessons it is intended to teach, our object will be served.

THE END.

