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# EAST LYNNE.

BY

MRS. HENRY WOOD,

AUTHOR OF

“DANESBURY HOUSE.”

Truly the heart is deceitful, and out of its depths of corruption  
Rise, like an exhalation, the misty phantoms of passion :  
Angels of light they seem, but are only delusions of Satan.

\* \* \* \* \*  
This is the cross I must bear ; the sin and the swift retribution.

LONGFELLOW.

Second Edition.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.



LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET,

Publisher in Ordinary to Her Majesty.

1862.

LONDON  
PRINTED BY SPOTTISWOODE AND CO.  
NEW-STREET SQUARE

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# EAST LYNNE.

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## PART THE THIRD

CONTINUED.

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### CHAPTER IV.

THEN YOU'LL REMEMBER ME.

IN a soft grey damask dress, not unlike the colour of the walls from which the room took its name, a cap of Honiton lace shading her delicate features, sat Mrs. Hare. The justice was in London with Squire Pinner, and Barbara had gone to the Grove, and brought her mamma away in triumph. It was evening now, and kind Mrs. Hare was paying a visit to the grey parlour. Miss Carlyle had been dining there, and Lady Isabel, under plea of a violent headache, had begged to decline the invitation to take tea in the drawing-room, for she feared the sharp eyes of Miss Carlyle. Barbara, upon leaving the dessert-table, went to the nursery as usual to her baby, and Mrs. Hare took the opportunity to go and sit a few minutes with the governess; she feared that

governess must be very lonely. Miss Carlyle, scorning usage and ceremony, had remained in the dining-room with Mr. Carlyle, a lecture for him, upon some defalcation or other, most probably in store. Lady Isabel was alone. Lucy had gone to keep a birthday in the neighbourhood, and William was in the nursery. Mrs. Hare found her in a sad attitude, her two hands pressed upon her temples. She had not yet made acquaintance with her, beyond a formal introduction.

“I am sorry to hear you are not well this evening,” she gently said.

“Thank you. My head aches much”—which was no false plea.

“I fear you must feel your solitude irksome. It is dull for you to be here all alone.”

“I am so used to solitude.”

Mrs. Hare sat down, and gazed with sympathy at the young, though somewhat strange-looking woman before her; she detected the signs of mental suffering on her face. “You have seen sorrow,” she uttered, bending forward and speaking with the utmost sweetness.

“Oh, great sorrow,” burst from Lady Isabel, for her wretched fate was very palpable to her mind that evening, and the tone of sympathy rendered it nearly irrepressible.

“My daughter tells me that you have lost your children, that you have lost your fortune and position. Indeed I feel for you. I wish I could comfort you!”

This did not decrease her anguish. She completely lost all self-control, and a gush of tears fell from her

eyes. "Don't pity me! don't pity me, dear Mrs. Hare; indeed it only makes endurance harder. Some of us," she added, looking up with a sickly smile, "are born to sorrow."

"We are all born to it," cried Mrs. Hare. "I, in truth, have cause to say so. Oh, you know not what my portion has been—the terrible weight of grief that I have to bear. For many years, I can truly say that I have not known one completely happy moment."

"All have not to bear this killing sorrow," said Lady Isabel.

"Rely upon it, sorrow of some nature comes sooner or later to all. In the brightest lot on earth, dark days must mix. Not that there is a doubt but that it falls unequally. Some, as you observe, seem born to it, for it clings to them all their days: others are more favoured. As we reckon favour: perhaps this great amount of trouble is no more than is necessary to take us to heaven. You know the saying; 'Adversity hardens the heart, or it opens it to Paradise.' It may be, that our hearts are so hard, that the long-continued life's trouble is requisite to soften them. My dear, Mrs. Hare added, in a lower tone, while the tears glistened on her pale cheeks, "there will be a blessed rest for the weary, when this toilsome life is ended: let us find comfort in that thought."

"Ay! ay!" murmured Lady Isabel. "It is all that is left to me."

"You are young to have acquired so much experience of sorrow."

“We cannot estimate sorrow by years. We may live a whole lifetime of it in a single hour. But we generally bring ill fate upon ourselves,” she continued, in a desperation of remorse: “as our conduct is, so will our happiness or misery be.”

“Not always,” sighed Mrs. Hare. ‘Sorrow,’ I grant you, comes all too frequently from ill doing: but the worst is, that the consequences of this wrong doing fall upon the innocent as well as upon the guilty. A husband’s errors will involve his innocent wife; the sins of the parents will fall upon their children; children will break the hearts of their parents. I can truly say—speaking in all humble submission—that I am unconscious of having deserved the great sorrow which came upon me; that no act of mine invited it; but, though it has nearly killed me, I entertain no doubt that it is lined with mercy, if I could only bring my weak, rebellious heart to look for it. You, I feel sure, have been equally undeserving.”

Mrs. Hare did not mark the flush of shame, the drooping of the eye-lids.

“You have lost your little ones,” Mrs. Hare resumed. “This is grief; great grief, I would not underrate it; but believe me it is as *nothing* compared to the awful fate of finding your children grow up and become that, which makes you wish they had died in their infancy. There are times when I am tempted to regret that *all* my treasures are not in the next world; that they have not gone before me. Yes; sorrow is the lot of all.”

“Surely not of all,” dissented Lady Isabel. “There are some bright lots on earth.”



“There is not a lot, but must bear its appointed share,” returned Mrs. Hare. “Bright as it may appear, ay, and as it may continue to be for years, depend upon it some darkness must overshadow it earlier or later.”

“Mr. and Mrs. Carlyle—what sorrow can there be in store for them?” asked Lady Isabel, her voice ringing with a strange sound: which Mrs. Hare noted, though she understood it not.

“Mrs. Carlyle’s lot is bright,” she said, a sweet smile illumining her features. “She loves her husband with an impassioned love; and he is worthy of it. A happy fate indeed is hers; but she must not expect to be exempted from sorrow. Mr. Carlyle has had his share of it,” concluded Mrs. Hare.

“Ah!”

“You have doubtless been made acquainted with his history. His first wife left him; left her home and her children. He bore it bravely before the world; but I know that it wrung his very heart-strings. She was his heart’s early idol.”

“She! Not Barbara?”

The moment the word “Barbara” had escaped her lips, Lady Isabel recollected herself. She was only Madame Vine, the governess: what would Mrs. Hare think of her familiarity?

Mrs. Hare did not appear to have noticed it: she was absorbed in the subject. “Barbara?” she uttered: “certainly not. Had his first love been given to Barbara, he would have chosen her then. It was given to Lady Isabel.”

“It is given to his wife now.”

Mrs. Hare nearly laughed. “Of course it is:

would you wish it to be buried in the grave with the dead?—and with one who was false to him? But, my dear, she was the sweetest woman, that unfortunate Lady Isabel. I loved her then, and I cannot help loving her still. Others blamed her, but I pitied. They were well matched: he, so good and noble; she, so lovely and endearing.”

“And she left him; threw him to the winds, with all his nobility and love!” exclaimed that poor governess, with a gesture of the hands, that looked very like despair.

“Yes. It will not do to talk of: it is a miserable subject. How she could abandon such a husband, such children, was a marvel to many; but to none more than it was to me and my daughter. The false step—though I feel almost afraid to speak out the thought, lest it may appear to savour of triumph—while it must have secured her own wretchedness, led to the happiness of my child; for it is pretty certain Barbara would never have loved another as she loves Mr. Carlyle.”

“You think it did secure wretchedness to her?” cried Lady Isabel, her tone one of bitter mockery, more than anything else.

Mrs. Hare was surprised at the question. “No woman ever took that step yet, without its entailing on her the direst wretchedness,” she replied. “It cannot be otherwise. And Lady Isabel was of a nature to feel remorse, to meet it half way. Refined, modest, with every feeling of an English gentlewoman, she was the very last one would have expected to act so. It was as if she had gone away in a dream, not knowing what she was doing: I

have thought so many a time. That, terrible mental wretchedness and remorse did overtake her, I know."

"How did you know it? Did you hear it?" exclaimed Lady Isabel, her tone all too eager, had Mrs. Hare been suspicious. "Did *he* proclaim that—Francis Levison? Did you hear it from him?"

Mrs. Hare, gentle Mrs. Hare, drew herself up, for the words grated on her feelings and on her pride. Another moment, and she was mild and kind again, for she reflected that that poor sorrowful governess must have spoken without thought.

"I know not what Sir Francis Levison may have chosen to proclaim," she said, "but you may be sure he would not be allowed opportunity to proclaim anything to me, or to any other friend of Mr. Carlyle's; nay, I should say, nor to any one good and honourable. I heard it from Lord Mount Severn."

"From Lord Mount Severn!" repeated Lady Isabel. And she opened her lips to say something more, but closed them again.

"He was here on a visit in the summer; he stayed a fortnight. Lady Isabel was the daughter of the late earl—perhaps you may not have known that. He—Lord Mount Severn—told me, in confidence, that he had sought out Lady Isabel when the man, Levison, left her: he found her sick, poor, broken-hearted, in some remote French town, utterly borne down with remorse and repentance."

"Could it be otherwise?" sharply asked Lady Isabel.

"My dear, I have said it could not. The very thought of her deserted children would entail it, if

nothing else did. There was a baby born abroad," added Mrs. Hare, dropping her voice, "an infant in its cradle then, Lord Mount Severn said: but that child, we know, could only bring pain and shame."

"True," issued from her trembling lips.

"Next, came her death: and I cannot but think it was sent to her in mercy. I trust she was prepared for it, and had made her peace with God. When all else is taken from us, we turn to Him: I hope she had learned to find the Refuge."

"How did Mr. Carlyle receive the news of her death?" murmured Lady Isabel, a question which had been often in her thoughts.

"I cannot tell: he made no outward sign, either of satisfaction or grief. It was too delicate a subject for any one to enter upon with him, and most assuredly he did not enter upon it himself. After he was engaged to my child, he told me that he should never have married during Lady Isabel's life."

"From—from—the remains of affection?"

"I should think not. I inferred it to be from conscientious scruples. All his affection is given to his present wife. There is no doubt that he loves her with a true, a fervent, a lasting love: though there perhaps was more romantic sentiment in the early passion felt for Lady Isabel. Poor thing! she gave up a sincere heart, a happy home."

Ay, poor thing! She had very nearly wailed forth her vain despair.

"I wonder whether the drawing-room is tenanted yet," smiled Mrs. Hare, breaking a pause which had

ensued. "If so, I suppose they will be expecting me there."

"I will ascertain for you," said Lady Isabel, speaking in the impulse of the moment: for she was craving an instant to herself, even though it were but in the hall.

She quitted the grey parlour and approached the drawing-room. Not a sound came from it; and, believing it was empty, she opened the door and looked cautiously in.

Quite empty. The fire blazed, the chandelier was lighted, but nobody was enjoying the warmth or the light. From the inner room, however, came the sound of the piano, and the tones of Mr. Carlyle's voice. She recognised the chords of the music: they were those of the accompaniment to the song he had so loved when she sang it to him. Who was about to sing it to him now?

Lady Isabel stole across the drawing-room to the other door, which was ajar. Barbara was seated at the piano, and Mr. Carlyle stood by her, his arm on her chair, and bending his face on a level with hers, possibly to look at the music. So, once had stolen, so, once had peeped the unhappy Barbara, to hear this self-same song. *She* had been his wife then; she had received his kisses when it was over. Their positions were reversed.

Barbara began. Her voice had not the brilliant power of Lady Isabel's, but it was a sweet and pleasant voice to listen to.

"When other lips and other hearts  
Their tales of love shall tell,



In language whose excess imparts  
 The power they feel so well.  
 There may perhaps in such a scene  
 Some recollection be,  
 Of days that have as happy been—  
 And you'll remember me."

Days that had as happy been! Ay. *Did* he remember her? Did a thought of her, his first and best love, flit across him, as the words fell on his ear? Did a past vision of the time when she sat there and sung it to him, arouse his heart to even a momentary recollection?

Terribly, indeed, were their positions reversed; most terribly was she feeling it. And by whose act and will had the change been wrought? Barbara was now the honoured and cherished wife, East Lynne's mistress. And what was she? Not even the welcomed guest of an hour, as Barbara had then been: but an interloper; a criminal woman who had thrust herself into the house; her act, in doing so, not justifiable, her position a most false one. Was it right, even if she should succeed in remaining undiscovered, that she and Barbara should dwell in the same habitation, Mr. Carlyle being in it? Did she deem it to be right? No, she did not: but one act of ill-doing entails more. These thoughts were passing through her mind as she stood there, listening to the song; stood there as one turned to stone, her throbbing temples pressed against the door's pillar.

The song was over, and Barbara turned to her husband, a whole world of love in her bright blue eyes. He laid his hand upon her head; Lady Isabel

saw that, but she would not wait to see the caress that most probably followed it. She turned and crossed the room again, her hands clasped tightly on her bosom, her breath catching itself in hysterical sobs. Miss Carlyle was entering from the hall. They had not yet met, and Lady Isabel swept meekly past her with a hurried curtsy. Miss Carlyle spoke, but she dared not answer: to wait, would have been to betray herself.

Sunday came, and that was the worst of all. In the old East Lynne pew at St Jude's, so conspicuous to the congregation, sat she, as in former times: no excuse dared she, the governess, make, to remain away. It was the first time she had entered an English Protestant church, since she had last sat in it, there, with Mr. Carlyle. That fact alone, with all the terrible remembrances it brought in its train, was sufficient to overwhelm her with emotion. She sat at the upper end now, with Lucy; Barbara occupied the place that had been hers, by the side of Mr. Carlyle. Barbara there, in her own right, his wife: she, severed from him for ever and for ever!

She scarcely raised her head; she tightened her thick veil over her face; she kept her spectacles bent towards the ground. Lucy thought she must be crying: she had never seen any one so still at church before. Lucy was mistaken: tears come not to solace the bitter anguish of hopeless, self-condemning remorse. How she sat out the service, she could not tell: she could not tell how she should sit out other services, as the Sundays came round. The congregation did not forget to stare at her: what an extraordinary looking governess Mrs. Carlyle had picked up!

They went out when it was over. Mr. and Mrs. Carlyle in advance; she, humbly following them, with Lucy. She glanced aside at the tomb in the church-yard's corner, where mouldered the remains of her father; and a yearning cry went forth from the very depth of her soul. "Oh, that I were laid there with him! Why did I come back again to East Lynne?"

Why, truly? But she had never thought that her cross would be so sharp as this.



## CHAPTER V.

## AN M.P. FOR WEST LYNNE.

As this is not a history of the British constitution, it is not necessary to relate how or why West Lynne got into hot water with the House of Commons. The House threatened to disenfranchise it, and West Lynne, under the fear, went in mourning for its sins. The threat was not carried out; but one of the sitting members was unseated with ignominy, and sent to the right about. Being considerably humiliated thereby, and in disgust with West Lynne, he retired accordingly, and a fresh writ was issued. West Lynne then returned the Honourable Mr. Attley, a county nobleman's son; but he died in the very midst of his first session, and another writ had to be issued.

Of course the consideration now was, who should be the next candidate. All the notables within ten miles were discussed, not excepting the bench of justices. Mr. Justice Hare? No: he was too uncompromising; would study his own will, but not that of West Lynne. Squire Pinner? He never made a speech in his life, and had not an idea beyond

turnips and farming stock. Colonel Bethel? He had no money to spend upon an election. Sir John Dobede? He was too old. "By a good twenty years," laughed Sir John, himself. "But here we stand, like a pack of noodles, conning over the incapables, and passing by the right one," continued Sir John. "There's only one man amongst us fit to be our member."

"Who's that?" cried the meeting.

"Archibald Carlyle."

A pause of consternation; consternation at their collective forgetfulness: and, then a murmur of approbation, approaching to a shout, filled the room. Archibald Carlyle. It should be no other.

"If we can get him," cried Sir John. "He may decline, you know."

All agreed that the best thing was to act promptly. A deputation, half the length of the street — its whole length, if you include the tagrag and bobtail that attended behind — set off, on the spur of the moment, to the office of Mr. Carlyle. They found that gentleman about to leave it for the evening, to return home to dinner. For, in the discussion of the all-important topic, the meeting had suffered time to run on to a late hour: those gentlemen who dined at a somewhat earlier one, had for once in their lives patiently allowed their dinners and their stomachs to wait — which is saying a great deal for the patience of a justice.

Mr. Carlyle was taken by surprise. "Make me your member?" cried he, merrily. "How do you know I should not sell you all?"

"We'll trust you, Carlyle. Too happy to do it."

"I am not sure that I could spare the time," deliberated Mr. Carlyle.

"Now, Carlyle, you must remember that you avowed to me, no longer ago than last Christmas, your intention of going into parliament some time," struck in Mr. Justice Herbert. "You can't deny it."

"Some time!—yes," replied Mr. Carlyle. "But I did not say when. I have no thoughts of it yet awhile."

"You must allow us to put you in nomination, you must indeed, Mr. Carlyle. There's nobody else fit for it. As good send a pig to the House, as some of us."

"An extremely flattering reason for proposing to shift the honour upon me," laughed Mr. Carlyle.

"Well, you know what we mean, Carlyle. There's not a man in the whole county so suitable as you, search it through: you must know there is not."

"I don't know anything of the sort," returned Mr. Carlyle.

"At any rate, we are determined to have you. When you walk into West Lynne to-morrow, you'll see the walls alive with placards, 'Carlyle for ever!'"

"Suppose you allow me until to-morrow to consider of it, and defer the garnishing of the walls a day later," said Mr. Carlyle, a serious tone peeping out in the midst of his jocularly.

"You do not fear the expense?"

It was but a glance he returned in answer. As soon as the question had been put—it was stupid old Pinner who propounded it—they had felt how foolish it was. And indeed the cost would be a mere nothing, were there no opposition.

“Come, decide now, Carlyle. Give us your promise.”

“If I decide now, it will be in the negative,” replied Mr. Carlyle. “It is a question that demands consideration. Give me till to-morrow for that, and it is possible that I may accede to your request.”

This was the best that could be made of him: the deputation backed out, and, as nothing more could be done, departed to their several dinner tables. Mr. Dill, who had been present, remained rubbing his hands with satisfaction, and casting admiring glances at Mr. Carlyle.

“What’s the matter, Dill?” asked the latter. “You look as though you were pleased at this movement, and assumed that I should accept it.”

“And so you will, Mr. Archibald. And as to looking pleased, there’s not a man, woman, or child in West Lynne who won’t be glad.”

“Don’t make too sure, Dill.”

“Of what, sir?—of your becoming our member, or of the people looking pleased?”

“Of either,” laughed Mr. Carlyle.

He quitted the office to walk home, revolving the proposition as he did so. That he had long thought of sometime entering parliament, was certain; though no definite period of the “when” had fixed itself in his mind. He did not see why he should confine his days entirely to toil, to the work of its calling. Pecuniary considerations did not require it, for his realised property, combined with the fortune brought by Barbara, was quite sufficient to meet expenses, according to their present style of living. Not that

he had the least intention of giving up his business ; it was honourable (as he conducted it) and lucrative ; and he really liked it : he would not have been condemned to lead an idle life for the world. But there was no necessity for his being always at it. Mr. Dill made as good a principal as he did, and—if length of service and experience might be counted—a better one. He could safely be left to manage, during the time it would be necessary for Mr. Carlyle to be in London. He would rather represent West Lynne than any other spot on the face of the earth, no matter what might be that other's importance ; and as West Lynne was now in want of a member, perhaps his opportunity had come. That he would make a good and efficient public servant, he believed ; his talents were superior, his oratory was persuasive, and he had the gift of a true and honest spirit. That he would have the interest of West Lynne at heart, was certain, and he knew that he should serve his constituents to the very best of his power and ability. They knew it also.

Before Mr. Carlyle had reached East Lynne, he had decided that it should be.

It was a fine spring evening, for the months had gone on. The lilac was in bloom, the hedges and trees were clothed in their early green, all things seemed full of promise. Even Mr. Carlyle's heart was rejoicing in the prospect opened to it : he was sure he should like a public life. But, in the sanguine, moments of realisation or of hope, some dark shade will step in to mar the brightness.

Barbara stood at the drawing-room window watching for him. Not in her was the dark shade. Her

dress was a marvel of vanity and prettiness, and she had chosen to place on her fair hair a dainty head-dress of lace. As if her hair required such adornment! She waltzed up to Mr. Carlyle when he entered, and saucily held up her face, the light of love dancing in her bright blue eyes.

“What do you want?” he provokingly asked, putting his hands behind him and letting her stand there.

“Oh, well—if you won’t say good evening to me! I have a great mind to say you should not kiss me for a week, Archibald.”

He laughed. “Who would be most punished by that?” whispered he.

Barbara pouted her pretty lips, and the tears positively came to her eyes. “Which is as much as to say it would be no punishment to you. Archibald! *don’t* you care for me?”

He threw his arms round her, and clasped her to his heart, taking plenty of kisses then. “You know whether I care or not,” he fondly whispered.

But now, will you believe that that unfortunate Lady Isabel had been a witness to this? Well? it was only what his greeting to her had once been. Her pale face flushed scarlet, and she glided out of the room again as softly as she had entered it. They had not seen her. Mr. Carlyle drew his wife to the window, and stood there, his arm round her waist.

“Barbara, what should you say to living in London for a few months out of the twelve?”

“London? I am very happy where I am. Why should you ask me that? You are not going to live in London.”



"I am not sure of that. I think I am, for a portion of the year. I have had an offer made me this afternoon, Barbara."

She looked at him, wondering what he meant; wondering whether he was serious. An offer to him? What sort of an offer? Of what nature could it be?

He smiled at her perplexity. "Should you like to see M.P. attached to my name? West Lynne wants me to become its member."

A pause to take in the news; a sudden rush of colour; and then she gleefully clasped her hands round his arm, her eyes sparkling with pleasure.

"Oh, Archibald, how glad I am! I knew you were appreciated; and you will be appreciated more and more. This is right: it was not well for *you* to remain for life a private individual, a country lawyer."

"I am perfectly contented with my lot, Barbara," he said seriously, "I am too busy to be otherwise."

"I know that were you but a labouring man, toiling daily for the bread you eat, you would be contented, feeling that you were fulfilling your appointed duty to the utmost; but, Archibald, could you not still be a busy man at West Lynne, although you should become its representative?"

"If I could not, I would not accept the honour, Barbara. For some few months of the year, I must of necessity be in town, but Dill is an efficient substitute; and I can run down for a week or so, between times. Part of Saturday, Sunday, and part of Monday I can always pass here, if I please. Of course, these changes have their drawbacks, as well as their advantages."

“Where would be the drawbacks in this?” she interrupted.

“Well,” smiled Mr. Carlyle, “in the first place, I suppose you could not always be with me.”

Her hands fell; her colour faded. “Oh, Archibald!”

“If I do become their member, I must go up to town as soon as elected: and I don’t think it will do for my little wife to be quitting her home to travel about just now.”

Barbara’s face wore a very blank look. She could not dissent from Mr. Carlyle’s reasoning.

“And you must remain in London to the end of the session, while I am here! Separated! Archibald,” she passionately added, while the tears gushed into her eyes; “I could not *live* without you.”

“Then what is to be done? Must I decline it?”

“Decline it! Oh, of course not. I know: we are looking on the dark side of things. I can go very well with you for a month, perhaps two.”

“You think so?”

“I am sure so. And, mind! you must not encourage mamma to talk me out of it. Archibald,” she continued, resting her head upon his breast, her sweet face turned up beseechingly to his, “you would rather have me with you, would you not?”

He bent his own down upon it. “What do you think about it, my darling?”

Once more, an inopportune moment for her to enter—Lady Isabel. Barbara heard her this time, and sprang away from her husband. Mr. Carlyle turned round at the movement, and saw Madame



Vine. She came forward; her lips ashy, her voice subdued.

She had now been six months at East Lynne, and had hitherto escaped detection. Time and familiarity render us accustomed to most things, to danger amongst the rest; and she had almost ceased to fear recognition. She and the children were upon the best terms: she had greatly endeared herself to them, and they loved her: perhaps nature was asserting her own hidden claims.

What of William? William had been better through the winter, but with the first blush of spring he had begun to fade again. He was constantly weary, had frequent pain in his side, and his appetite failed. Mr. Wainwright attended him daily now. In the day he looked tolerably well, for the exceeding beauty and brightness of his complexion disarmed suspicion; but, towards evening, so soon as twilight came on, his illness showed itself outwardly. His face would be of a pallid whiteness, he could scarcely speak for weakness, and his favourite resting-place was the hearth-rug in the grey parlour. There he would lie down at full length, a cushion under his head, and his eyes closed.

“My child,” Madame Vine would say to him, “you would be better on the sofa.”

“No. I like this.”

“But, if I draw it quite close to the fire for you? Try it, William.”

He did, one or two evenings: and then the old place was resumed, and he would not quit it. He was lying there as usual on this evening when Hannah came in with the tea-things. She gazed

down for a minute or two at the boy, whom she supposed to be sleeping, so still and full of repose did he look, and then turned to Madame Vine.

“Poor child! he’s one that’s going fast on to his grave.”

The words utterly startled her. Daily familiarity with illness sometimes renders us partially blind to its worst features, and thus it had been with Lady Isabel. Upon her arrival at East Lynne, she had been, if not alarmed, much concerned at the appearance of William: the winter improvement had dispelled that concern; while the spring change had come on so gradually that her fears had not taken alarm. She judged him to be a delicate boy, one who required care.

“Hannah!” she uttered, in a tone of reproof, to the servant.

“Why, ma’am, I wonder that you can’t see it yourself!” returned Hannah. “It’s plain, poor lad, that he has no mother, or there would have been an outcry over him long ago. Of course, Mrs. Carlyle can’t be expected to have the feelings of one for him: and as to old Wainwright, he’s as blind as any bat.”

She took the reproach to herself, and it smote upon her heart: had *she* been blind; she, his mother?

“There is nothing particular the matter with him, Hannah. He is only weakly.” But she spoke these words in braving defiance of her thoughts; anxious, if we may so say it, to deceive herself: even as she gave expression to them, her pulses were going pit-a-pat with the fear, the next to certainty, that there was worse the matter with him.

“Are you asleep, William?” she softly said, bending down towards him.

No reply. No movement in answer.

“He might not have been asleep, Hannah. You should be more cautious in your remarks.”

“Anybody may see that he’s asleep, ma’am, lying so still as that. Of course I wouldn’t say anything in his hearing.”

“Why do you fancy him to be in a critical state?”

“It is not fancy, returned Hannah. “I have had some experience in fading children.”

Lucy entered at this juncture, and nothing more was said. When Hannah quitted the room, Lady Isabel gazed down at William, as if she would have devoured him, a yearning, famished sort of expression upon her features. He was white as death. The blue veins were conspicuous in his face, and his nostrils were slightly working with every breath he drew, as will be the case with the sickly. From passive security she had jumped to the other extreme, for Hannah’s words had roused every fear within her.

“Madame Vine, why are you looking like that at William?” asked Lucy, who was watching.

“Hannah thinks he is ill,” she mechanically answered, Her reflections were buried five fathoms deep, and she was debating whether she ought not on that very instant to make known these new fears to Mr. Carlyle. To *Mr.* Carlyle, you observe: her jealous heart would not recognise the right of Mrs. Carlyle over her children—although she had to submit to its exercise.

She quitted the parlour. She had heard Mr.

Carlyle come in. Crossing the hall, she tapped softly at the drawing-room door, and then as softly entered. It was the moment of Mr. Carlyle's fond greeting to his wife. They stood together, heedless of her.

Gliding out again, she paced the hall, her hands pressed upon her beating heart. How *dared* that heart rise up in sharp rebellion at these witnessed tokens of love? Was Barbara not his wife? Had she not a legal claim to all his tenderness? Who was she, that she should resent them in her sick jealousy? What, though they had once been hers, hers only; had she not signed and sealed her own forfeit of them, and so made room for Barbara?

Back to the grey parlour, there she stood, her elbow on the mantel-piece, her eyes hidden by her hand. Thus she remained for some minutes, and Lucy thought how sad she looked.

But Lucy felt hungry, and was casting longing glances towards the tea-table. She wondered how long her governess meant to keep it waiting. "Madame Vine," cried she, presently, "don't you know that tea is ready?"

This caused Madame Vine to raise her eyes. They fell upon the pale boy at her feet. She made no immediate answer, only placed her hand on Lucy's shoulder.

"Oh, Lucy dear, I—I have many sorrows to bear."

"The tea will warm you, and there's some nice jam," was Miss Lucy's offered consolation.

"Their greeting, tender as it may be, is surely over by this time," thought Lady Isabel, an expression

something like mockery curving her lips. "I will venture again."

Only to see him with his wife's face on his breast, and his own lips bent upon it. But they had heard her this time, and she had to advance, in spite of her spirit of misery and her whitened features.

"Would you be so good, sir, as to come and look at William?" she asked, in a low tone, of Mr. Carlyle.

"Certainly."

"What for?" interjected Barbara.

"He looks so very ill. I do not like his looks. I fear he is worse than we have thought."

They went to the grey parlour, all three of them. Mr. Carlyle was there first, and had taken a long, silent look at William before the others entered.

"What is he doing on the floor?" exclaimed Barbara, in her astonishment. "He should not lie on the floor, Madame Vine."

"He lies down there at the dusk hour, and I cannot get him up again. I try to persuade him to the sofa, but it is of no use."

"The floor will not hurt him," said Mr. Carlyle. *This* was the dark shade: his boy's failing health.

William opened his eyes. "Who's that? Papa?"

"Don't you feel well, William?"

"Oh yes, I'm very well; but I am tired."

"Why do you lie down here?"

"I like lying here. Papa, that pretty white rabbit of mine is dead."

"Indeed. Suppose you get up and tell me all about it."

"I don't know about it myself yet," said William,

slowly rising. "Blair told Lucy when she was out just now; I did not go; I was tired. He said —"

"What has tired you?" interrupted Mr. Carlyle, taking the boy's hand.

"Oh, nothing. I am always tired!"

"Do you tell Mr. Wainwright that you are tired?"

"No. Why should I tell him? I wish he would not order me to take that nasty medicine, that cod liver oil."

"But it is to make you strong, my boy."

"It makes me sick. I always feel sick after it, papa. Madame Vine says I ought to have cream. That would be nice."

"Cream?" repeated Mr. Carlyle, turning his eyes on Madame Vine.

"I have known cream to do a vast deal of good in a case like William's," she observed. "I believe that no better medicine can be given; that it has, in fact, no substitute."

"It can be tried," said Mr. Carlyle.

"Pray give your orders, Madame Vine, for anything you think may be beneficial to him," added Mrs. Carlyle. "You have had more experience with children than I. Joyce —"

"What does Wainwright say?" interrupted Mr. Carlyle, speaking to his wife, his tone low.

"I do not always see him when he comes, Archibald. Madame Vine does, I believe."

"Oh dear!" cried Lucy, "can't we have tea? I want some bread-and-jam."

Mr. Carlyle turned round, smiled, and nodded at her. "Patience is good for little girls, Miss



Lucy. Would you like some bread-and-jam, my boy."

William shook his head "I can't eat jam. I am only thirsty."

Mr. Carlyle cast a long and intent look at him, and then left the room. Lady Isabel followed him, her thoughts full of her ailing child.

"Do you think him very ill, sir?" she whispered.

"I think he looks so. What does Mr. Wainwright say?"

"He says nothing to me. I have not inquired his true opinion. Until to-night, it did not occur to me that there was danger."

"Does he look so much worse to-night?"

"Not any worse than usual. Latterly he has looked just like this in an evening. It was a remark of Hannah's that aroused my alarm: she thinks he is on the road to death. What can we do to save him?"

She clasped her hands, as she spoke, in the intensity of her emotion: she almost forgot, as they stood there together talking of the welfare of the child, their child, that he was no longer her husband. Almost; not quite; utterly impossible would it be for her wholly to forget the dreadful present. Neither he nor the child could belong to her again in this world.

A strange rising of the throat in her wild despair, a meek curtsey as she turned from him, his last words ringing in her ears. "I shall call in further advice for him, Madame Vine."

William was clinging round Mrs. Carlyle in a coaxing attitude, when she re-entered the grey parlour. "I know what I could eat, mamma, if you would let

me have it," cried he, in answer to her remonstrance that he must eat something.

"What could you eat?"

"Some cheese."

"Cheese! Cheese with tea!" laughed Mrs. Carlyle.

"For the last week or two he has fancied strange things—the effect of a diseased appetite," explained Madame Vine. "But if I allow them to be brought in, he barely tastes them."

"I am sure, mamma, I could eat some cheese now," said William.

"You may have it," answered Mrs. Carlyle.

As she turned to leave the room, the impatient knock and ring of a visitor was heard. Barbara wondered who could be arriving at that, their dinner hour. Sailing majestically into the hall, her lips compressed, her aspect threatening, came Miss Carlyle.

Now, it turned out that Miss Corny had been standing at her own window, grimly eyeing the ill doings of the street, from the fine housemaid opposite, who was enjoying a flirtation with the baker, to the ragged urchins pitchpoling in the gutter and the dust: and there she caught sight of the string,—justices and others, who came out of the office of Mr. Carlyle. So many of them were they, that Miss Corny involuntarily thought of a conjuror flinging flowers out of a hat: the faster they come, the more it seems there are to come. "What on earth's up?" cried Miss Corny, pressing her nose flat against the pane, that she might see the better.

They filed off, some one way, some another. Miss Carlyle's curiosity was keener than her appetite, for she remained at the window, although just informed



that her dinner was served. Presently Mr. Carlyle appeared, and she knocked on the window with her knuckles. He did not hear it; he had turned off at a quick pace towards his home. Miss Corny's temper rose.

The clerks came out next, one after another; and the last was Mr. Dill. He was less hurried than Mr. Carlyle had been, and heard Miss Corny's signal.

"What, in the name of wonder, did all those people want at the office?" began she, when Mr. Dill had entered in obedience to it.

"That was the deputation, Miss Cornelia."

"What deputation?"

"The deputation to Mr. Archibald. They want him to become their new member."

"Member of what?" cried she, not guessing at the actual meaning.

"Of parliament, Miss Corny; to replace Mr. Attley. The gentlemen came to solicit him to be put in nomination."

"Solicit a donkey!" irascibly uttered Miss Corny, for the tidings did not meet her approbation. "Did Archibald turn them out again?"

"He gave them no direct answer, ma'am. He will consider of it between now and to-morrow morning."

"*Consider* of it?" shrieked she. "Why, he'd never, never be such a flat as to comply! He go into parliament! What next?"

"Why should he not, Miss Corny? I'm sure I should be proud to see him there."

Miss Corny gave a sniff. "You are proud of things more odd than even, John Dill. Remember that fine shirt-front! What has become of it? Is it laid up in lavender?"

“Not exactly in lavender, Miss Corny? It lies in the drawer; for I have never liked to put it on since, after what you said.”

“Why don’t you sell it at half price, and buy a couple of good useful shirts with the money?” returned she, tartly. “Better that, than keep the foppish thing as a witness of your folly. Perhaps *he’ll* be buying embroidered fronts next, if he goes into that idle, do-nothing House of Commons. I’d rather enter myself for six months at the treadmill.”

“Oh, Miss Corny! I don’t think you have well considered it. It’s a great honour, and worthy of him: he will be elevated above us all: and he deserves to be.”

“Elevate him on to a weathercock,” raged Miss Corny. “There! you may go. I have heard quite enough.”

Brushing past the old gentleman, leaving him to depart, or not, as he might please, Miss Carlyle strode up-stairs, flung on her shawl and bonnet, and strode down again. Her servant looked considerably surprised, and addressed her as she crossed the hall.

“Your dinner, ma’am?” he ventured to say.

“What’s my dinner to you?” returned Miss Corny, in her wrath. “You have had yours.”

Away she strode. And thus it happened that she was at East Lynne almost as soon as Mr. Carlyle.

“Where’s Archibald?” began she, without ceremony, the moment she saw Barbara.

“He is here. Is anything the matter?”

Mr. Carlyle, hearing the voice, came out, and she pounced upon him with her tongue.

“What’s this about your becoming the new member for West Lynne?”

“West Lynne wishes it,” said Mr. Carlyle. “Sit down, Cornelia.”

“Sit down yourself,” retorted she, keeping on her feet. “I want my questions answered. *Of course* you will decline.”

“On the contrary, I have made up my mind to accept.”

Miss Corny untied the strings of her bonnet and flung them behind her. “Have you counted the cost?” was asked, and there was something quite sepulchral in her solemn tone.

“I have given it consideration, Cornelia: both as regards money and time. The expense will not be worth naming, should there be no opposition. And if there is—”

“Ay!” groaned Miss Corny. “If there is?”

“Well? I am not without a few hundreds to spare for the plaything,” he said, turning upon her the good-humoured light of his fine countenance.

Miss Carlyle emitted some dismal moans. “That ever I should have lived to see this day! To hear money talked of as though it were dirt. And what’s to become of your business?” she sharply added. “Is that to run to rack and ruin, while you are kicking your heels in that wicked London, under plea of being at the House, night after night?”

“Cornelia,” he gravely said, “were I dead, Dill could carry on the business just as well as it is being carried on now. I might go into a foreign country for seven years, and come back to find the business as flourishing as ever, for Dill could keep it together.

And even were the business to drop off—though I tell you it will not do so—I am independent of it.”

Miss Carlyle faced tartly round upon Barbara. “Have you been setting him on to this?”

“I think he had made up his mind before he spoke to me. But,” added Barbara, in her truth, “I urged him to accept it.”

“Oh! you did! Nicely moped and miserable you’ll be here, if he goes to London for months upon the stretch! You did not think of that, perhaps.”

“But he would not leave me here,” said Barbara, her eyelashes becoming wet at the thought, as she unconsciously moved to her husband’s side. “He would take me with him.”

Miss Carlyle made a pause, and looked at them alternately.

“Is that decided?” she asked.

“Of course it is,” laughed Mr. Carlyle, willing to joke the subject and his sister into good humour. “Would you wish to separate man and wife, Cornelia?”

She made no reply. She rapidly tied her bonnet strings, the ribbon trembling ominously in her fingers.

“You are not going, Cornelia! You must stay dinner, now you are here. It is ready. And we will talk this further over afterwards.”

“This has been dinner enough for me for one day,” spoke she, putting on her gloves. “That I should have lived to see my father’s son throw up his business, and change himself into a lazy, stuck-up parliament man!”

“Do stay and dine with us, Cornelia! I think I

can subdue your prejudices, if you will let me talk to you."

"If you wanted to talk to me about it, why did you not come in when you left the office?" cried Miss Corney, in a greater amount of wrath than she had shown yet. And there is no doubt that, in his not having done so, lay one of the sore points.

"I did not think of it," said Mr. Carlyle. "I should have come in and told you of it to-morrow morning."

"I dare say you would," she ironically answered. "Good evening to you both." And in spite of their persuasions, she quitted the house, and went stalking down the avenue.

Two or three days more, and the address of Mr. Carlyle to the inhabitants of West Lynne appeared in the local papers, while the walls and posts, convenient, were embellished with various coloured placards: "Vote for Carlyle." "Carlyle for ever!"

## CHAPTER VI.

## SIR FRANCIS LEVISON AT HOME.

WONDERS never cease. Surprises are the lot of man. But perhaps a greater surprise had never been experienced, by those who knew him, than when it went forth to the world—that Sir Francis Levison had converted himself from—from what he was, into a red-hot politician.

Had he been offered the post of prime minister? Or did his conscience smite him?—as was the case with a certain gallant captain, renowned in song. Neither the one nor the other. The simple fact was, that Sir Francis Levison was in a state of pecuniary embarrassment, and required something to prop him up: some snug sinecure; plenty to get and nothing to do.

“He, in pecuniary embarrassment!” cries the reader. “How could that be?” No easier thing “to be” in this world, if a man plunges into the amusements favoured by Francis Levison. When he came into his fortune, there was a weighty amount to pay for debts and damages, a far larger amount than he had believed. Not a farthing, beyond what was obliged to come to him by entail, did Sir Peter leave him; but, of that which remained, he was no



sooner in possession than he began to squander right and left. His marriage intervened, but it did not stop him: on the contrary, it was an addition to the outlay: and, not contented with living as was suitable to his rank, he and his wife set up housekeeping in an outrageously costly manner. Added to this, he had, since his marriage, entered heart and soul into the pretty little pastimes of horse-racing, betting, and gambling. Cock-fighting he had always patronised.

The time went on: and things went on; till they could go on no longer, and Sir Francis woke up to his condition. Every shilling of available money was gone, every stiver of unsecured property was parted with; debts and duns had taken their place, and Francis Levison, the reigning baronet, was far more worried and embarrassed than ever had been Francis Levison, the obscure and but half-expectant heir. He had fallen into the condition formerly described as being that of the late Lord Mount Severn. But, while the earl had contrived to weather out the storm for years, Francis Levison would not be able to weather it for as many months: and he knew it.

Patch himself up, he must. But how? He had tried the tables, but luck was against him; he made a desperate venture upon the turf, a grand coup. that would have set him on his legs for some time, but the venture turned out the wrong way, and Sir Francis was a defaulter. He began then to think there was nothing for it but to drop into some nice government nest, where, as I have told you, there would be plenty to get and nothing to do. Any place with much to do would not suit him, or he it; he was too empty-headed for work requiring talent—you may



have remarked that a man, given to Sir Francis Levison's favourite pursuits generally is.

He dropped into something good—or, that promised to be good: nothing less than the secretaryship to Lord Headthelot, who swayed the ministers in the Upper House. But that he was a connection of Lord Headthelot's, he never would have obtained it, and very dubiously the minister consented to try him. Of course, one condition was, that he should enter parliament the first opportunity, his vote to be at the disposal of the ministry: rather a shaky ministry, and supposed, by some, to be on its last legs. And this brings us to the present time.

In a handsome drawing-room in Eaton Square, one sunny afternoon, sat a lady, young and handsome. Her eyes were of a violet blue, her hair was auburn, her complexion delicate. But there was a stern look of anger, amounting to sullenness, on her well-formed features, and her pretty foot was beating the carpet in passionate impatience. It was Lady Levison.

The doings of the past had been coming home to her for some time now: past doings, be they good, or be they ill, are sure to come home, one day or another, and to bring their fruits with them. If you sow wheat, it will come up wheat, gladdening you with its good: if you sow noxious weeds, noxious weeds spring forth, and you must do battle with them as you best can. It is the inevitable law of nature, and none can flee from it.

In the years past, many years past now, Francis Levison had lost his heart—or whatever the thing might be that, with him, did duty for one—to Blanche Challoner. He had despised her once to Lady Isabel,—but that was done to suit his own

purpose, for he had never, at any period, cared for Lady Isabel as he had cared for Blanche. He gained her affections in secret, and in secret they engaged themselves to each other. Blanche's sister, Lydia Challoner, two years older than herself, suspected it, and taxed Blanche with it. Blanche, true to her compact of keeping it a secret, denied it with many protestations. "*She* did not care for Captain Levison: rather disliked him in fact." "So much the better," was Miss Challoner's reply; for she had no respect for Captain Levison, and deemed him an unlikely man to marry.

Years went on, and poor, unhappy Blanche Challoner remained faithful to her love. In spite of what he was — and she could not blind her eyes to the fact that he was just the opposite of what he ought to be — her heart was true to him. She heard of his scrapes, she knew of his embarrassments, she bore with his neglect: but she loved on. Even the escapade with Lady Isabel Carlyle did not serve to extinguish her attachment, though it shook it for a time. Upon his return to London, after his accession to the title, their friendship was renewed: a cold, hollow, watery sort of friendship it had grown then on the gentleman's side, but Blanche never doubted that he would now marry her, impediments being removed.

He played fast and loose with her: professing attachment for her in secret, and visiting at the house: perhaps he feared an outbreak from her, an exposure that might be anything but pleasant, did he throw off all relations between them. Blanche summoned up her courage, and spoke to him, urging the marriage: she

had not yet glanced at the fear that his intention of marrying her (had he ever possessed such) was over. Bad men are always cowards. Sir Francis shrank from an explanation; and, so far forgot honour, as to murmur some indistinct promise that the wedding should be speedy.

Lydia Challoner had married, and been left a well jointured widow. She was Mrs. Waring: and at her house resided Blanche; for the girls were orphans. Blanche was beginning to show symptoms of her nearly thirty years: not the years, but the long-continued disappointment, the heart-burnings, were telling upon her. Her hair was thin, her face was pinched, her form had lost its roundness. "Marry her, indeed!" scoffed Sir Francis Levison to himself.

There came to Mrs. Waring's, upon a Christmas visit, a younger sister, Alice Challoner, a fair girl of twenty years. She resided generally with an aunt in the country. Far more beautiful was she, than Blanche had ever been: and Francis Levison, who had not seen her since she was a child, fell — as he would have called it — in love with her. Love! He became her shadow; he whispered sweet words in her ear; he turned her head giddy with its own vanity; and he offered her marriage. She accepted him, and preparations for the ceremony immediately began. Sir Francis urged speed, and Alice was nothing loth.

And what of Blanche? Blanche was stunned. A despairing stupor took possession of her; and, when she awoke from it, desperation set in. She insisted upon an interview with Sir Francis; and evade it he could not, though he tried hard.

Will it be believed that he denied the past?— that he met with mocking suavity her indignant reminders of what had been between them. “Love? marriage? Nonsense! her fancy had been too much at work.” Finally, he defied her to prove that he had regarded her with more than ordinary friendship, or had ever hinted at such a thing as a union.

She could not prove it. She had not so much as a scrap of paper, written on by him; she had not a single friend, or enemy, to come forward and testify that they had heard him breathe to her a word of love. He had been too wary for that. Moreover, there were her own solemn protestations to her sister Lydia, that there *was not* anything between her and Francis Levison: who would believe her if she veered round now, and avowed those protestations were false? No: she found that she was in a sinking ship, one there was no chance of saving.

But one chance she determined to try. An appeal to Alice. Blanche Challoner’s eyes were suddenly and rudely opened to the badness of the man, and she was aware now how thoroughly unfit he was to become the husband of her sister. It struck her that only misery could result from the union, and that, if possible, Alice should be saved from entering upon it. Would she have married him herself then? Yes. But it was a different thing for that fair, fresh young Alice: *she* had not wasted her life’s best years in waiting for him.

When the family had gone to rest and the house was quiet, Blanche Challoner proceeded to her sister’s bedroom. Alice had not begun to undress: she was sitting in a comfortable chair before the fire, her

feet on the fender, reading a love-letter from Sir Francis.

“Alice, I am come to tell you a story,” said she, quietly. “Will you hear it?”

“In a minute. Stop a bit,” replied Alice. She finished the perusal of the letter, put it aside, and then spoke again. “What did you say, Blanche? A story?”

Blanche nodded. “Several years ago, there was a fair young girl, none too rich, in our station of life. A gentleman, who was none too rich either, sought and gained her love. He could not marry: he was not rich, I say. They loved on in secret, hoping for better times, she wearing out the years and her heart.

Oh, Alice, I cannot describe to you how she loved him; how she has continued to love him up to this moment! Through evil report she clung to him, tenaciously and tenderly as the vine clings to its trellis, for the world spoke ill of him.”

“Who was the young lady?” interrupted Alice. “Is this a fable of romance, Blanche, or a real history?”

“A real history. I knew her. All those years; years, and years I say; he kept leading her on to love, letting her think that his love was hers. In the course of time, he succeeded to a fortune, and the bar to their marriage was over. He was abroad when he came into it, but returned home at once; their intercourse was renewed, and her fading heart woke up once more to life. Still, the marriage did not seem to come on; he said nothing of it; and she spoke to him. Very soon, now should it be, was his answer, and she continued to live on—in hope.”

“Go on, Blanche,” cried Alice, who had grown interested in the tale, never suspecting it could bear a personal interest.

“Yes, I will go on. Would you believe, Alice, that almost immediately after this last promise, he saw one whom he fancied he should like better, and asked her to be his wife, forsaking the one to whom he was bound by every tie of honour; repudiating all that had been between them, even his own words and promises?”

“How disgraceful! Were they married?”

“They are to be. Would you have such a man?”

“I!” returned Alice, quite indignant at the question. “It is not likely that I would.”

“That man, Alice, is Sir Francis Levison.”

Alice Challoner gave a start, and her face became scarlet. “How dare you say so, Blanche? It is not true. Who was the girl, pray? She must have traduced him.”

“She has not traduced him,” was the subdued answer. “The girl was myself.”

An awkward pause. “I know!” cried Alice, throwing back her head resentfully. “He told me I might expect something of this: that you had fancied him in love with you, and were angry because he had chosen me.”

Blanche turned upon her with streaming eyes: she could no longer control her emotion. “Alice, my sister, all the pride is gone out of me; all the reticence that woman loves to observe as to her wrongs and her inward feelings, I have broken through for you this night. As sure as that there is a heaven above us, I have told you but the truth.



Until you came, I was engaged to Francis Levison."

An unnatural scene ensued. Blanche, provoked at Alice's rejection of her words, told all the ill she knew, or had heard, of the man; she dwelt upon his conduct with regard to Lady Isabel Carlyle, his heartless after-treatment of that unhappy lady. Alice was passionate and fiery. She professed not to believe a word of her sister's wrongs, and, as to the other stories, they were no affairs of hers, she said: what had she to do with his past life?

But Alice Challoner did believe: her sister's earnestness and distress, as she told the tale, carried conviction with them. She did not care very much for Sir Francis: he was not entwined round her heart, as he was round that of Blanche: but she was dazzled with the prospect of so good a settlement in life, and she would not give him up. If Blanche broke her heart—why, she must break it. But she need not have mixed taunts and jeers with her refusal to believe; she need not have *triumphed* openly over Blanche. Was it well done? As we sow, so, I tell you, we shall reap. She married Sir Francis Levison, leaving Blanche to her broken heart, or to any other calamity that might grow out of the injustice. And there sat Lady Levison now, her three years of marriage having served to turn her love for Sir Francis into contempt and hate.

A little boy, two years old, the only child of the marriage, was playing about the room. His mother took no notice of him; she was buried in all-absorbing thought; thought which caused her lips to contract and her brow to scowl. Sir Francis entered, his attitude lounging, his air listless. Lady Levison



roused herself, but no pleasant manner or tone was hers, as she addressed him.

“I want some money,” she said.

“So do I,” he answered.

An impatient stamp of the foot, and a haughty toss. “And I must have it. I *must*. I told you yesterday that I must. Do you suppose I can go on, without a sixpence of ready money, day after day?”

“Do you suppose it is of any use to put yourself in this fury?” retorted Sir Francis. “A dozen times a week do you bother me for money, and a dozen times do I tell you I have got none. I have got none for myself. You may as well ask that baby for money, as ask me.”

“I wish he had never been born!” passionately said Lady Levison. “Unless he had had a different father.”

That the last sentence, and the bitter scorn of its tone would have provoked a reprisal from Sir Francis, his flashing countenance betrayed. But at that moment a servant entered the room.

“I beg your pardon, sir. That man, Brown, forced his way into the hall, and—”

“I can’t see him, I won’t see him,” interrupted Sir Francis, backing to the farthest corner of the room, in what looked very like abject terror, as if he had completely lost his presence of mind. Lady Levison’s lips curled.

“We got rid of him, sir, after a dreadful deal of trouble, but while the door was open in the dispute, Mr. Meredith entered. He has gone on into the library, sir, and he vows he won’t stir till he sees you, whether you are sick or well.”

A moment's pause, a half muttered oath, and then Sir Francis quitted the room. The servant retired, and Lady Levison caught up her child.

"Oh, Franky dear," she wailed forth, burying her face in his warm neck, "I would leave him for good and all, if I dared: but I fear he might keep you."

Now, the secret was, that for the last three days Sir Francis Levison had been desperately ill, obliged to keep his bed, and could see nobody; his life depending upon quiet. Such was the report, or something equivalent to it, which had gone in to Lord Headthelot (or, rather, to the official office, for that renowned chief was, himself, out of town): it had also been delivered to all callers at Sir Francis Levison's house. The real truth being, that Sir Francis was as well in health as you or I, but from something which had transpired, touching one of his numerous debts, did not dare to show. That morning the matter had been arranged; patched up for a time.

"My stars, Levison!" began Mr. Meredith, who was a whipper-in of the ministry, "what a row there is about you! Why, you look as well as ever you were!"

"A great deal better to-day," coughed Sir Francis.

"To think that you should have chosen the present moment for skulking! Here have I been, dancing attendance at your door, day after day, in a state of incipient fever, enough to put me into a real one, and could neither get admitted nor a letter taken up. I should have blown the house up to day and got in amidst the flying débris. By the way, are you and my lady *two*, just now?"

“Two?” growled Sir Francis.

“She was stepping into her carriage yesterday when they turned me from the door, and I made inquiry of her. Her ladyship’s answer was, that she knew nothing either of Sir Francis, or his illness.”

“Her ladyship is subject to flights of temper,” chafed Sir Francis. “What desperate need have you of me, just now? Headthelot’s away, and there’s nothing doing.”

“Nothing doing up here; a deal too much doing somewhere else. Attley’s seat is in the market.”

“Well?”

“And you ought to have been down there about it three or four days ago. Of course you must step into it.”

“Of course I shan’t,” returned Sir Francis. “To represent West Lynne will not suit me.”

“Not suit you! West Lynne! Why, of all places, it is the most suitable. It’s close to your own property.”

“If you call ten miles close. I shall not put up for West Lynne, Meredith.”

“Headthelot came up this morning,” said Mr. Meredith.

The information somewhat aroused Sir Francis. “Headthelot! What brings him back?”

“You. I tell you, Levison, there’s a hot row. Headthelot expected you would be at West Lynne days past, and he has come up in an awful rage. Every additional vote we can count in the House is worth its weight in gold: and you, as he says, are allowing West Lynne to slip through your fingers! You must start for it at once, Levison.”

“No.”

“Then you lose your post. Thornton goes in for West Lynne, and takes your place with Headthelot.”

“Did Headthelot send you here to say this?” asked Sir Francis.

“He did. And he means it, mind; that’s more. I never saw a man more thoroughly in earnest.”

Sir Francis mused. Had the alternative been given him, he would have preferred to represent a certain warm place underground, rather than West Lynne. But, to quit Headthelot, and the snug post he anticipated, would be ruin irretrievable: nothing short of outlawry, or the Queen’s prison. It was awfully necessary to get his threatened person into parliament, and he began to turn over in his mind whether he *could* bring himself to make further acquaintance with West Lynne. “The thing must have blown over for good by this time,” was the result of his cogitations, unconsciously speaking aloud.

“I can understand your reluctance to appear at West Lynne,” cried Mr. Meredith; “the scene, unless I mistake, of that notorious affair of yours. But private feelings must give way to public interests; and the best thing you can do is to *start*. Headthelot is angry enough, as it is. He says, had you been down at first, as you ought to have been, you would have slipped in without opposition: but now there will be a contest.”

Sir Francis looked up sharply. “A contest? Who is going to stand the funds?”

“Psha! As if we should let funds be any barrier! Have you heard who is in the field?”

“No,” was the apathetic answer.

“Carlyle.”

“Carlyle!” shouted Sir Francis. “Oh, by George! I can’t stand against him.”

“Well, there’s the alternative. If you can’t, Thornton will.”

“I should run no chance. West Lynne would not elect me if he is a candidate. I’m not sure, indeed, that West Lynne would have me in any case.”

“Nonsense! you know our interest there. Government put in Attley, and it can put in you. Yes, or no, Levison.”

“Yes,” replied Sir Francis.

An hour’s time, and Sir Francis Levison went forth. On his way to be conveyed to West Lynne? Not yet. He turned his steps to Scotland-yard. In considerably less than another hour, the following telegram, marked “Secret” went down from the head office to the superintendent of police at West Lynne.

“Is Otway Bethel at West Lynne? If not, where is he? and when will he be returning to it?”

It elicited a prompt answer.

“Otway Bethel is not at West Lynne. Supposed to be in Norway. Movements uncertain.”

Lady Levison heard of the scheme that was in the wind. When Sir Francis went to tell her (as a matter of the merest courtesy) that he was about to go into the country for some days, she turned upon him fiercely.

“If you have any sense of shame in you, you would shoot yourself, rather than go where you are going, to do what you are about to do.”

That ill feeling had come to an extreme pitch be-

tween her and her husband, and that he had been long giving her ample cause of resentment, you may be sure: otherwise she could not so have spoken. He bent his dark looks upon her.

“I know the errand you are bent upon. You are going forth to enter yourself in opposition to Mr. Carlyle. You must possess a front of brass, a recollection seared to shame, or you could not do it. Any one, but you, would sink into the earth with humiliation, at sight of a man so injured.”

“Hold your tongue,” said Sir Francis.

“I held it for months and months; held it because you were my husband; though I was nearly mad. I shall never hold it again. Night and morning one prayer goes up from me—that I may find a way of being legally separated from you. I *will* find it.”

“You had better have left me to Blanche,” sneered Sir Francis. “The taking me was a dead robbery on her, you know. You knew it then.”

She sat, beating her foot on the carpet, really striving to calm down her irritability. “Allow me to recommend you to pause and consider, ere you enter upon this insult to Mr. Carlyle,” she resumed.

“What is Carlyle to you? You don’t know him.”

“I know him by reputation: know him to be a noble, honourable man, beloved by his friends, respected by all. If ever two men presented a contrast, it is you and he. Ask your uncle’s widow what the world thinks of Mr. Carlyle.”

“Had another been my adversary, I should not have cared to stand the contest,” maliciously returned Sir Francis. “The thought that it is he who is my

opponent, spurs me on. I'll oppose and crush him."

"Take care that you do not get crushed yourself," retorted Alice Levison. "Luck does not *always* attend the bad."

"I'll take my chance," sneered Sir Francis.



## CHAPTER VII.

## A MISHAP TO THE BLUE SPECTACLES.

MR. CARLYLE and Barbara were seated at breakfast, when, somewhat to their surprise, Mr. Dill was shown in. Following close upon his heels came Justice Hare; and close upon *his* heels came Squire Pinner; while, bringing up the rear, was Colonel Bethel. All the four had come up separately, not together, and all four were out of breath, as if it had been a race which should arrive soonest.

Quite impossible was it for Mr. Carlyle at first to understand the news they brought. All were talking at once, in the utmost excitement; and the fury of Justice Hare, alone, was sufficient to produce temporary deafness. Mr. Carlyle caught a word of the case presently.

“A second man? Opposition? Well, let him come on,” he good-humouredly cried. “We shall have the satisfaction of ascertaining who wins in the end.”

“But you have not heard who it is, Mr. Archibald,” cried old Dill. “It —”

“Stand a contest with *him!*” raved Justice Hare.

“He —”

“The fellow wants hanging,” interjected Colonel Bethel.

“Couldn’t he be ducked?” suggested Squire Pinner.

Now all these sentences were ranted out together, and their respective utterers were fain to stop till the noise subsided a little. Barbara could only look from one to the other in astonishment.

“Who is this formidable opponent?” asked Mr. Carlyle.

There was a pause. Not one of them but had the delicacy to shrink from naming that man to Mr. Carlyle. The information came at last from old Dill, who dropped his voice while he spoke it.

“Mr. Archibald, the candidate, who has come forward, is that man, Levison.”

A scarlet flush dyed the brow of Mr. Carlyle. Barbara bent down her face, but her eyes flashed with anger.

“Benjamin went through the town early this morning, exercising his horses,” stuttered Justice Hare. “He came back, telling me that the walls were placarded with ‘Levison for ever!’ ‘Vote for Sir Francis Levison!’ I nearly knocked him down. ‘It’s true, master,’ says he, ‘as I’m a living sinner. And some folks I spoke to told me that he came down last evening.’ There was news for a respectable man to hear before breakfast!”

“He got here by the last train,” said Mr. Dill, “and has put up at the Buck’s Head. The printers must have sat up all night to get the placards ready. He has got an agent, or something of the sort, with him, and some other chap, said to be a member of the government.”

“Boasting that the field is theirs at the onset, and

that the canvass will be a matter of mere form!" added Colonel Bethel, bringing down his cane violently. "He is mad to offer himself as a candidate here."

"It's done purposely to insult Mr. Carlyle," said the meek voice of Squire Pinner.

"To insult us all, you mean, squire," retorted Colonel Bethel. "I don't think he will go off quite so glibly as he has come."

"Of course, Carlyle, you'll go into it now, neck and crop," cried Justice Hare.

Mr. Carlyle was silent.

"You won't let the beast frighten you from the contest!" uttered Colonel Bethel, in a loud tone.

"There's a meeting at the Buck's head at ten," said Mr. Carlyle, not replying to the immediate question. "I will be with you there."

"Did you say he is at the Buck's Head?" asked Squire Pinner. "I had not heard that."

"That he was," corrected Mr. Dill. "I expect he is ousted by this time. I asked the landlord what he thought of himself, for taking in such a character, and what he supposed the justices would say to him. He vowed with tears in his eyes that the fellow should not be there another hour, and that he never should have entered the house had he known who he was."

A little more conversation, and the visitors filed off. Mr. Carlyle sat down calmly to finish his breakfast. Barbara approached him.

"Archibald, you will not suffer this man's insolent doings to deter you from your plans? you will not withdraw?" she whispered.

“I think not, Barbara. He has thrust himself offensively upon me in this measure: I believe my better plan will be to take no more heed of him, than I should of the dirt under my feet.”

“Right, right,” she answered, a proud flush deepening the rose on her cheeks.

Mr. Carlyle was soon walking into West Lynne. There were the placards, sure enough, side by side with his own. Bearing the name of that wicked coward, who had done him the greatest injury one man can do another. Verily he must possess a face of brass to venture there; as his wife had said, and Mr. Carlyle was thinking.

“Archibald, have you heard the disgraceful news?”

The speaker was Miss Carlyle, who had come down upon her brother like a ship with all its sails set. Her cheeks wore a flush, her eyes glistened, her tall form was drawn up to its most haughty height.

“I have heard it, Cornelia. And, had I not, the walls would have enlightened me.”

“Is he out of his mind?”

“Out of his reckoning, I fancy,” replied Mr. Carlyle.

“You will carry on the contest now,” she continued, her countenance flashing. “I was averse to it before, but I now withdraw all my objection: you will be no brother of mine, if you yield the field to him.”

“I do not intend to yield it.”

“Good. You bear on upon your course; and let him crawl on upon his. Take no more heed of him than if he were a viper. Archibald, you must canvass now.”

“No,” said Mr. Carlyle, “I shall be elected without canvass. You’ll see, Cornelia.”

“There will be plenty canvassing for you, if you don’t condescend to take the trouble, my indifferent brother. I will give a thousand pounds myself for ale, to the electors.”

“Take care,” laughed Mr. Carlyle. “Keep your thousand pounds in your pocket, Cornelia. I have no mind to be unseated, on the plea of ‘bribery and corruption.’ Here’s Sir John Dobede galloping in, with a face as red as the sun in a fog.”

“Well it may be. He has heard the news. I can tell you, Archibald, West Lynne is in a state of excitement, that has not been its lot for many a day.”

Miss Carlyle was right. Excitement and indignation had taken possession of West Lynne. How the people rallied round Mr. Carlyle! Town and country were alike up in arms. But government interest was rife at West Lynne, and, whatever the private and public feeling might be, collectively or individually, many votes would be recorded for Sir Francis Levison.

Barbara had accompanied her husband that morning to the park gates. In returning, she met Madame Vine and the two children. William seemed quite well; he always did in a morning.

“Mamma,” exclaimed Lucy, “how warm you look! You have such a colour.”

“I am angry,” replied Barbara; smiling at her own answer.

“Why are you angry?”

“Because a man has come forward to oppose your papa. A second candidate.”

“Has he not a right?” asked William. “Papa said the field was open.”

“Open to all the world, but to him who has dared to enter it,” replied Barbara, her indignation getting ahead of her discretion. “He is a base, contemptible man, one whom all good people scorn and shun. And he has had the face to thrust himself here in opposition to your papa.”

“What is his name, mamma?”

Barbara recollected herself then. But, if the children did not hear the name from her, they soon would from other quarters.

“It is Sir Francis Levison.”

Was it a sound of pain, or of terror, or of surprise, that burst from the governess? It sounded like a combination of all. Barbara turned to her; but she was leaning down her head then, coughing, her handkerchief to her face, which had changed to a deadly pallor.

“Are you in pain?” gently demanded Barbara.

“Pain! Oh no, thank you. Some—some dust must have got into my mouth, and caused the cough.”

Mrs. Carlyle said no more. But she wondered: for the words shook as she spoke them, almost as much as did her ashy lips.

“Can she know Francis Levison?” thought Barbara. “Was it the mention of his name that has so agitated her?”

Strangely absent was Madame Vine at the lesson that day.

One of the first to become cognisant of the affair was Lord Mount Severn. He was at his club one evening in London, poring over an evening paper,



when the names "Carlyle" "West Lynne" caught his view. Knowing that Mr. Carlyle had been named as the probable member, and heartily wishing he might become such, the earl naturally read the paragraph.

He read it, and read it again; he rubbed his eyes, he rubbed his glasses; he pinched himself to see whether he were awake or dreaming, For, believe what that newspaper asserted—that Sir Francis Levison had entered the lists in opposition to Mr. Carlyle, and was at West Lynne, busily canvassing—he could not.

"Do you know anything of this infamous assertion?" he inquired of an intimate friend—"infamous, whether it be true or false."

"It is true. I heard of it an hour ago. Plenty of cheek, that Levison must have.

"*Cheek!*" repeated the dismayed earl, feeling as if every part of him, body and mind, were outraged by the news, "don't speak of it in that way. The hound deserves to be gibbeted."

He threw aside the paper, quitted the club, returned home for a carpet-bag, and went shrieking and whistling down to West Lynne, taking his son with him. Or, if he did not whistle and shriek, the engine did. Fully determined was the Earl of Mount Severn to show *his* opinion of the affair.

On these fine spring mornings, their breakfast over, Lady Isabel was in the habit of going into the grounds with the children. They were on the lawn before the house, when two gentlemen came walking up the avenue; or, rather, one gentleman, and a handsome young stripling growing into another.



Lady Isabel thought she should have dropped, for she stood face to face with Lord Mount Severn. The earl stopped to salute the children; and he raised his hat to the strange lady.

“It is my governess, Madame Vine,” said Lucy.

A silent curtsey from Madame Vine. She turned away her head and gasped for breath.

“Is your papa at home, Lucy?” cried the earl.

“Yes. I think he is at breakfast. I’m so glad you are come!”

Lord Mount Severn walked on, holding William by the hand, who had eagerly offered to “take him” to papa. Lord Vane bent over Lucy to kiss her. A little while, a very few more years, and my young lady would not hold up her rosy lips so boldly.

“You have grown a dearer girl than ever, Lucy. Have you forgotten our compact?”

“No,” laughed she.

“And you will not forget it?”

“Never,” said the child, shaking her head. “You shall see if I do.”

“Lucy is to be my wife,” cried he, turning to Madame Vine. “It is a bargain, and we have both promised. I mean to wait for her till she is old enough. I like her better than anybody else in the world.”

“And I like him,” said Miss Lucy. “And it’s all true.”

Lucy was a child; it may almost be said an infant; and the viscount was not of an age to render such avowed previsions important: nevertheless the words thrilled through the veins of the hearer. She spoke, she thought, not as Madame Vine would have

spoken and thought, but as the unhappy mother, the ill-fated Lady Isabel.

“You must not say these things to Lucy. It could never be.”

Lord Vane laughed. “Why?” asked he.

“Your father and mother would not approve.”

My father would. I know he would. He likes Lucy. As to my mother—oh, well, she can’t expect to be master and mistress too. You be off for a minute, Lucy: I want to say something to Madame Vine. Has Carlyle shot that fellow?” he continued, as Lucy sprang away. “My father is so stiff, especially when he’s put up, that he would not sully his lips with the name, when we arrived, or make a single inquiry, neither would he let me, and I walked up here with my tongue burning.”

She would have responded, What fellow? but she suspected too well, and the words died away on her unwilling lips.

“That brute, Levison. If Carlyle riddled his body with shots, for this move, and then kicked him till he died, he’d only get his deserts; and the world would applaud. *He* oppose Carlyle! I wish I had been a man a few years ago: he’d have got a shot through his heart then. I say,” dropping his voice, “did you know Lady Isabel?”

“Yes—no—yes.” She was at a loss what to say: almost as unconscious what she did say.

“She was Lucy’s mother, you know: and I loved her. I think that’s why I love Lucy, for she is the very image of her. Where did you know her. Here?”

“I knew her by hearsay,” murmured Lady Isabel, arousing to recollection.

“O—hearsay! *Has* Carlyle shot the beast, or is he on his legs yet? By Jove! to think that he should sneak himself up in this way, at West Lynne!”

“You must apply elsewhere for information,” she gasped. “I know nothing of these things.”

She turned away with a beating heart, took Lucy’s hand and departed. Lord Vane set off on a run towards the house, his heels flying behind him.

And now the contest began in earnest — that is, the canvass. Sir Francis Levison, his agent, and the friend from town, who, as it turned out, instead of being some great gun of the government, was a private chum of the baronet’s, by name Drake, sneaked about the town like dogs with their tails burnt, for they were entirely alive to the odour in which they were held; their only attendants being a few young gentlemen and ladies in rags, who commonly brought up the rear. The other party presented a stately crowd: county gentry, magistrates, Lord Mount Severn. Sometimes Mr. Carlyle would be with them, arm-in-arm with the latter. If the contesting groups came within view of each other, and were likely to meet, the brave Sir Francis would disappear down an entry; behind a hedge; anywhere: with all his “face of brass,” he could not meet Mr. Carlyle and that condemning jury around him.

One afternoon, it pleased Mrs. Carlyle to summon Lucy and the governess to accompany her into West Lynne. She was going shopping. Lady Isabel had a dread and horror of appearing there, whilst that man was in the town, but she could not help herself. There was no pleading illness, for she was quite well; there must be no saying “I will not go,” for she was

only a dependent. They set off, and had walked as far as Mrs. Hare's gate, when Miss Carlyle turned out of it.

"Your mamma is not well, Barbara."

"Is she not?" cried Barbara, with quick concern. "I must go in and see her."

"She has had one of those ridiculous dreams again," pursued Miss Carlyle, ignoring the presence of the governess and Lucy. "I was sure of it by her very look when I got in; shivering and shaking, and glancing fearfully around, as if she feared a dozen spectres were about to burst out of the walls. So I taxed her with it, and she could make no denial. Richard is in some jeopardy, she protests; or will be. And there she is, shaking still, although I told her that people who put faith in dreams were only fit for a lunatic asylum."

Barbara looked distressed. She did not believe in dreams, any more than did Miss Carlyle; but she could not forget how strangely peril to Richard *had* supervened upon some of these dreams. "I will go in now and see mamma," she said. "If you are returning home, Cornelia, Madame Vine can walk with you, and wait for me there."

"Let me go in with you, mamma," pleaded Lucy.

Barbara mechanically took the child's hand. The gate closed on them, and Miss Carlyle and Lady Isabel proceeded in the direction of the town. But, not far had they gone when, in turning a corner, the wind which was high, flew away with the veil of Lady Isabel; and, in raising her hands in trepidation to save it, before it was finally gone, she contrived to knock off her blue spectacles. They fell to the ground, and were broken.

“However did you manage that?” uttered Miss Carlyle.

How indeed? She bent her face on the ground, looking at the damage. What should she do? The veil was over the hedge, the spectacles were broken: how could she dare to show her unshaded face? That face was rosy just then, as in former days, the eyes were bright, and Miss Carlyle caught their expression, and stared in very amazement.

“Good heavens above!” she muttered, “what an extraordinary likeness!” and Lady Isabel’s heart turned faint and sick within her.

Well it might. And, to make matters worse, bearing down right upon them, but a few paces distant, came Sir Francis Levison.

Would *he* recognise her?

## CHAPTER VIII.

## A TREAT IN A GREEN POND.

STANDING in the high wind at the turning of the road, were Miss Carlyle and Lady Isabel Vane. The latter, confused and perplexed, was picking up the remnant of her damaged spectacles: the former, little less perplexed, gazed at the face which struck her as being so familiar. Her attention, however, was called off to the apparition of Sir Francis Levison.

He was close upon them, Mr. Drake and the other comrade being with him, and some tag-rag in attendance, as usual. It was the first time he and Miss Carlyle had met, face to face. She bent her condemning brow, haughty in its bitter scorn, full upon him. Sir Francis, when he arrived opposite, raised his hat to her. Whether it was done in courtesy, in confused unconsciousness, or in mockery, cannot be told: Miss Carlyle assumed it to have been the latter; and her lips, in their anger, grew almost as pale as those of the unhappy woman who was cowering behind her.

“Did you intend that insult for me, Francis Levison?”

“As you please to take it,” returned he, calling up insolence to his aid.



“*You* dare to lift off your hat to me? Have you forgotten that I am Miss Carlyle?”

“It would be difficult for *you* to be forgotten, once seen.”

Now this answer *was* given in mockery; and his tone and manner were most insolent. The two gentlemen looked on in discomfort, wondering what it meant; Lady Isabel hid her face as she best could, terrified to death lest his eyes should fall upon her; while the spectators who had collected listened with interest, especially some farm labourers of Squire Pinner's.

“You contemptible worm!” ejaculated Miss Carlyle. “Do you think you can outrage me with impunity, as you are outraging West Lynne? Out upon you, for a bold, bad man!”

Now Miss Corny, in so speaking, had certainly no thought of present and immediate punishment for the gentleman: but it appeared that the mob around had. The motion was commenced by those stout-shouldered labourers. Whether excited thereto by the words of Miss Carlyle—who, whatever may have been her faults of manner, had the respect of the neighbourhood, and was looked up to only in a less degree than her brother; whether Squire Pinner, their master, had let drop in their hearing a word of the ducking he had hinted at, when at East Lynne; or whether their own feelings alone spurred them on, was best known to the men themselves. Certain it is, that the ominous sound of “Duck him,” was breathed forth by a voice, and it was caught up and echoed around.

“Duck him! Duck him! The pond be close at

hand. Let's give him a taste of his deservings! What do he, the scum, turn himself up at West Lynne for, bearding Mr. Carlyle? What have he done with Lady Isabel? *Him* put up for us others at West Lynne! West Lynne don't want him: it have got a better man: it won't have a villain. Now, lads!"

His face turned white, and he trembled in his shoes: worthless men are frequently cowards. Lady Isabel trembled in hers: and, well she might, hearing that one allusion. They set upon him, twenty pairs of hands at least, strong, rough, determined hands; not to speak of the tag-rag's help, who went in with cuffs and kicks, and pokes, and taunts, and cheers, and a demoniac dance.

They dragged him through a gap in the hedge, a gap that no baby could have got through in a cool moment, but we most of us know the difference between coolness and excitement. The hedge was extensively damaged, but Justice Hare, to whom it belonged, would forgive that. Mr. Drake and the lawyer—for the other was a lawyer—were utterly powerless to stop the catastrophe. "If they didn't mind their own business and keep theirselves clear, they'd get served the same," was the promise held out in reply to their remonstrances; and the lawyer, who was short and fat, and could not have knocked a man down had it been to save his life, backed out of the *mêlée*, and contented himself with issuing forth confused threatenings of the terrors of the law. Miss Carlyle stood her ground majestically, and looked on with a grim countenance. Had she interfered for his protection, she could not have been

heard, and it is by no means certain that she had any wish to interfere.

On, to the brink of the pond: a green, dank, dark, slimy, sour, stinking pond. His coat tails were gone by this time, and sundry rents and damages appeared in — in another useful garment. One pulled him, another pushed him, a third shook him by the collar, half a dozen buffeted him, and all abused him.

“In with him, boys!”

“Mercy! mercy!” shrieked the victim, his knees bending, and his teeth chattering, “a little mercy, for the love of Heaven!”

“Heaven! Much he knows of Heaven!”

A souse, a splash, a wild cry, a gurgle, and Sir Francis Levison was floundering in the water, its green poison, not to mention its adders and toads and frogs, going down his throat by bucketsful. A hoarse derisive laugh, and a hip, hip, hurrah! broke from the actors; while the juvenile tag-rag, in wild delight, joined hands around the pool, and danced the demon's dance, like so many red Indians. They had never had such a play acted for them before.

Out of the pea-soup before he was quite dead, quite senseless. Of all drowned rats he looked the worst, as he stood there with his white, rueful face, his shivery limbs, and his dilapidated garments, shaking the wet off him. The labourers, their duty done, walked coolly away; the tag-rag withdrew to a safe distance, waiting for what might come next; and Miss Carlyle moved away also. Not more shivery was that wretched man, than Lady Isabel, as she walked by her side. A sorry figure to cut, that, for her once chosen cavalier. What did she think

of his beauty now? I know what she thought of her past folly.

Miss Carlyle did not speak a word. She sailed on, with her head up, though it was turned occasionally to look at the face of Madame Vine, at the deep, distressing blush which this gaze called into her cheeks. "It's very odd," thought Miss Corny. "The likeness, especially in the eyes, is — Where are you going, madame?"

They were passing a spectacle shop, and Madame Vine had halted at the door, one foot on its step. "I must leave my glasses to be mended, if you please."

Miss Carlyle followed her in. She pointed out what she wanted done to the old glasses, and said she would buy a pair of new, to wear while the job was about. The man had no blue ones, no green; plenty of white. One ugly old pair of green things he had, with tortoise-shell rims, left by some stranger, ages and ages ago, to be mended, and never called for again. This very pair of ugly old green things was chosen by Lady Isabel. She put them on, there and then, Miss Carlyle's eyes searching her face inquisitively all the time.

"Why do you wear glasses?" began Miss Corny, abruptly, as soon as they were within the doors of her own house.

Another deep flush, and an imperceptible hesitation. "My eyes are not strong."

"They look as strong as eyes can look. But, why wear coloured glasses? White ones would answer every purpose, I should suppose."

"I am accustomed to coloured ones. I should not like white ones now."

Miss Corny paused. "What is your Christian name, madame?" began she again.

"Jane," replied madame, popping out an unflinching story, in her alarm.

"Here! here! what's up? What's this?"

There was a crowd in the street, and rather a noisy one. Miss Corny flew to the window, Lady Isabel in her wake. Two crowds, it may almost be said; for, from the opposite way, the scarlet-and-purple party—as Mr. Carlyle's was called, in allusion to his colours—came in view. Quite a collection of gentlemen; Mr. Carlyle and Lord Mount Severn heading them.

What could it mean, the mob they were encountering? The yellow party doubtless, but in a disreputable condition. Who or what *was* that object in advance of it, supported between Drake and the lawyer, and looking like a drowned rat? Hair hanging, legs tottering, cheeks shaking, and clothes in tatters! While the mob, behind, had swollen to the length of the street, and was keeping up a perpetual fire of derisive shouts, groans, and hisses. The scarlet-and-purple halted in consternation, and Lord Mount Severn, whose sight was not as good as it had been twenty years back, stuck his pendent eye-glasses astride on the bridge of his nose.

*Sir Francis Levison?* Could it be? Yes, it actually was! What on earth had put him into that state? Mr. Carlyle's lip curled: he continued his way, and drew the peer with him.

"What the deuce is a-gate now?" called out the followers of Mr. Carlyle. "That's Levison! Has he been in a railway smash, and got drenched by the engine?"



“He have been *ducked!*” grinned the yellows, in answer. “They have been and ducked him in the rush pool, on Mr. Justice Hare’s land. Go it, my pippin! keep up on your legs.”

The last sentence was pitched at the sufferer. “Who did it?” asked the purples, striving to keep their countenances.

“Squire Pinner’s men led it on, they did. Hooray!”

“Hooray!” echoed Squire Pinner himself, as he heard it, pushing forward to the front, with a great crimson and purple star in his coat, and totally forgetting his good manners. “That is glorious news. My labourers? I’ll give ’em a crown a piece for drink to-night, dashed if I don’t.”

The soaked and miserable man increased his speed as much as his cold and trembling legs would allow him; he would have borne on without legs at all, rather than remain under the enemy’s gaze. The enemy loftily continued their way, their heads in the air, and scorning further notice; all save young Lord Vane. He hovered round the ranks of the unwashed, and looked vastly inclined to enter upon an Indian jig, on his own account. “What a thundering ass I was, to try it on at West Lynne!” was the enraged comment of the sufferer.

Miss Carlyle laid her hand upon the shrinking arm of her pale companion. “You see him; my brother Archibald?”

“I see him,” faltered Lady Isabel.

“And you see *him*, that pitiful outcast, who is too contemptible to live? Look at the two, and contrast them. Look well.”

“Yes?” was the gasping answer.



“The woman who called that noble man husband, quitted him for the other! Did she come to repentance, think you?”

You may wonder that the submerged gentleman should be *walking* through the streets, on his way to his quarters, the Raven Inn—for he had been ejected from the Buck’s Head—but he could not help himself. As he was dripping and swearing on the brink of the pond, wondering how he should get to the Raven, an empty fly drove past, and Mr. Drake immediately stopped it. But when the driver saw the passenger was Sir Francis Levison, he refused the job. His fly was just fresh lined with red velvet, and he warn’t a going to have it spoilt, he called out, as he whipped his horse and drove away, leaving the three in wrathful despair. Sir Francis wanted another conveyance procured: his friends urged that if he waited for that, he might catch his death, and that the shortest way would be to hasten to the inn on foot. He objected. But his jaws were chattering, his limbs were quaking, so they seized him between them, and made off. But they never bargained for the meeting with Mr. Carlyle and his party; Francis Levison would have stopped in the pond, of his own accord, head downwards, rather than face *them*.

Miss Carlyle went that day to dine at East Lynne, walking back with Mrs. Carlyle, Madame Vine, and Lucy. Lord Vane found them out and returned at the same time: of course East Lynne was the headquarters of himself and father. He was in the seventh heaven, and had been, ever since the encounter with the yellows. “You’d have gone into laughing convulsions, Lucy, had you seen the drowned cur. I’d give all my tin for six months to come, to have a

photograph of him as he looked then!" Lucy laughed in glee: she was unconscious, poor child, how deeply the "drowned cur" had injured her.

When Miss Carlyle was in her dressing-room taking her things off—the room where once had slept Richard Hare—she rang for Joyce. Those two rooms were still kept for Miss Carlyle—for she sometimes visited them for a few days—they were called "Miss Carlyle's rooms."

"A fine row we have had in the town, Joyce, this afternoon!"

"I have heard of it, ma'am. Serve him right, if they had let him drown! Bill White, Squire Pinner's ploughman, called in here and told us the news. He'd have burst with it if he hadn't, I expect: I never saw a chap so excited. Peter cried."

"Cried!" echoed Miss Carlyle.

"Well, ma'am, you know he was very fond of Lady Isabel, was Peter, and somehow his feelings overcame him. He said he had not heard anything to please him so much for many a day; and with that he burst out crying, and gave Bill White half-a-crown out of his pocket. Bill White said it was he who held one leg when they soured him in. Afy saw it—if you'll excuse my mentioning her name to you, ma'am, for I know you don't think well of her; and when she got in here she fell into hysterics."

"How did she see it?" snapped Miss Carlyle, her equanimity upset by the sound of the name. "I didn't see her; and I was present."

"She was coming here with a message from Mrs. Latimer to the governess: news that Mrs. Latimer had received from Germany, from some German count's young wife. Afy said she took the field way,

and had just got to the stile, near the pond, when the uproar began."

"What did she go into hysterics for?" again snapped Miss Carlyle.

"It upset her so, she said," returned Joyce.

"It wouldn't have done her harm, had they ducked her too," was the angry response.

Joyce was silent. To contradict Miss Corny brought triumph to nobody. And she was conscious, in her inmost heart, that Afy merited a little wholesome correction; not perhaps to the extent of a ducking.

"Joyce," resumed Miss Carlyle, abruptly changing the subject, "of whom does the governess put you in mind?"

"Ma'am?" repeated Joyce, in some surprise, as it appeared. "The governess? Do you mean Madame Vine?"

"Do I mean you? or do I mean me? Are we governesses?" irascibly cried Miss Corny. "Who should I mean, but Madame Vine?"

She turned herself round from the looking-glass, gazed full in Joyce's face, waiting for the answer. Joyce lowered her voice as she gave it.

"There are times when she puts me in mind of my late lady, both in her face and manner. But I have never said so, ma'am: for you know Lady Isabel's name must be an interdicted one in this house."

"Have you seen her without her glasses?"

"No: never," said Joyce.

"I did, to-day," returned Miss Carlyle. "And I can tell you, Joyce, that I was confounded at the likeness. It is an extraordinary likeness. One

would think it was the ghost of Lady Isabel Vane, come into the world again."

"Oh, ma'am, please don't joke! it's not a topic for it," cried Joyce, her tone an imploring one.

"Joke? When do you know me to joke?" returned Miss Carlyle. But she said no more. "What is this that I hear, about William's being worse?" she resumed, after a pause.

"I don't think he's much worse, ma'am. Weak and poorly he seems, there's no denying it, especially towards night-time: but I never will believe that he is going in a bad way; as some of them want to make out."

"If I am to believe what I hear, he is in a bad way," said Miss Corny.

"Ma'am, who told you?"

"The governess; this afternoon. She spoke of it as being quite a case of despair — and her tone was as despairing as her words."

"I know she thinks he is very ill. She has talked about him to me several times in the last few days."

"I should not be surprised if he did drop off," concluded Miss Corny, with equanimity. "He is his mother again all over, so far as constitution goes: and I'm sure she never was good for much."

That evening, after dinner, Miss Carlyle and Lord Mount Severn sat side by side on the same sofa, coffee cups in hand. Sir John Dobede and one or two more gentlemen were of the party. Young Vane, Lucy, and Mrs. Carlyle were laughing together; and there was considerable noise and talking in the room. Under cover of it, Miss Carlyle turned to the earl.

"Was it a positively ascertained fact that Lady Isabel died?"

The earl stared with all his might: he thought it the strangest question that ever was asked him. "I scarcely understand you, Miss Carlyle. Died? Certainly she died."

"When the result of the accident was communicated to you, you made inquiry, yourself, into its truth, its details, I believe?"

"It was my duty to do so. There was no one else to undertake it."

"Did you ascertain positively, beyond all doubt, that she did die?"

"Of a surety I did. She died in the course of the same night. She was terribly injured."

A pause. Miss Carlyle was ruminating. But she returned to the charge, as if difficult to be convinced.

"You deem that there could be no possibility of an error? You are sure that she is dead?"

"I am as sure that she is dead, as that we are living," decisively replied the earl; and he spoke but according to his belief. "Wherefore should you be inquiring this?"

"A thought came over me—only to-day—to wonder whether she was really dead."

"Had any error occurred at the time, any false report of her death, I should soon have found it out by her drawing the annuity I settled upon her. It has never been drawn since. Besides, she would have written to me, as was agreed upon. No, poor thing! she is gone, beyond all doubt, and has taken her sins with her."

Convincing proofs. And Miss Carlyle lent her ear to them.

The following morning, Lord Vane, Lucy, and William were running races on the lawn, the viscount

having joined Madame Vine's breakfast-table, without the ceremony of asking. William's racing, indeed, was more pretence than work, he and his breath were so soon tired; and Lord Vane gave Lucy "half," and beat her then, the forfeit if she lost, being five kisses. Lucy told him one was enough, but he battled it out, and got five. Lady Isabel had made prisoner of Archibald, and was holding him on her knee in the grey parlour, clasped to her in the impassioned manner that few, save a mother, can clasp a child, when Mr. Carlyle entered.

"Do you admit intruders here, Madame Vine?" cried he, with his sweet smile and his attractive manner.

She let the boy slip to the ground, and rose; her face burning, her heart throbbing. Archie immediately ran off to his elders on the grass.

"Keep your seat, pray," said Mr. Carlyle, taking one opposite to her, and admiring no doubt her tortoiseshell spectacles. "How does William seem? for that is what I have come to ask you."

She laid her hand upon her bosom, striving to make it still; she essayed to control her voice to calmness. Alone, with him! "There was no difference," she murmured; and then she took courage, and spoke more openly.

"I understood you to say the other night, sir, that he should have further advice."

"Ay. I intended to take him over to Lynneborough to Dr. Martin, and the drive would have done him good; but I have been so much engaged there has been no time to think of it. Neither do I know when I shall be at liberty."

"Let me take him, sir," she cried, yearningly.



“Indeed, I think no time should be lost. We could go by train. What objection have you?” she quickly added. “Surely you can trust him with me!”

Mr. Carlyle smiled. “I can trust him and you too,” cried he, “and I think the plan would be a good one, if you do not mind the trouble.”

Mind the trouble! when her boy’s life was at stake. “Let us go to-day, sir,” she said, with feverish impatience.

“I will ascertain whether Mrs. Carlyle wants the pony carriage,” said he. “It will be better to go in that than boxed up in the railway train.”

Her heart rose rebelliously as he quitted the room. Were Mrs. Carlyle’s capricious “wants” to be studied before her child’s life? A moment’s battle, and she clasped her hands meekly on her knee: was that the spirit in which she had promised to take up her daily cross? She had put the same question to herself many times lately.

Mr. Carlyle returned. “The pony carriage will be at your service, Madame Vine. John will drive you to the Royal, the hotel I used in Lynneborough, and Dr. Martin lives within a few doors of it. Order any refreshment you please at the hotel: it will be put down to my account. Perhaps you had better dine there: it may not be well for William to wait.”

“Very well, sir. Thank you. What time can we start?”

“Any time you like. Ten o’clock? Will that suit?”

“Oh, quite well, sir. Thank you very much.”

“Thank me for what?” laughed Mr. Carlyle: “for giving you a troublesome journey? Let me

see—the doctor's fee will be a guinea," he said, taking out his purse.

"Oh, that is nothing," she hastily interrupted. "I will pay for him myself: I would rather."

Mr. Carlyle looked surprised. He said nothing; simply laid down the sovereign and shilling on the table. Madame Vine blushed vividly: how could she, the governess, so have forgotten herself?

Poor, unhappy Lady Isabel! A recollection flashed over her of that morning, years ago, when Lord Mount Severn had handed out to her some gold, three sovereigns: and of the hundred-pound note so generously left in her hands afterwards by another. *Then* she was his chosen love: ay, she was; though it had not been declared. *Now?*—A pang, as of death, shot through her bitter heart.

"You can remind Dr. Martin that the child's constitution is precisely what his mother's was," continued Mr. Carlyle, a tinge lighting his face. "It may be a guide to his treatment. He said, himself, it was, when he attended him for an illness a year or two ago."

"Yes, sir."

He crossed the hall on his entrance to the breakfast-room. She tore up-stairs to her chamber, and sank down in an agony of tears and despair. Oh! to love him as she did now! to yearn after his affection with this passionate, jealous longing, and to know that they were separated for ever and for ever; that she was worse to him than nothing!

Softly, my lady! This is not bearing your cross.

## CHAPTER IX.

APPEARANCE OF A RUSSIAN BEAR AT WEST  
LYNNE.

MR. CARLYLE harangued the populace from the balcony of the Buck's Head, a substantial old house, renowned in the days of posting, now past and gone. Its balcony was an old-fashioned, roomy balcony, painted green, where there was plenty of space for his friends to congregate. He was a persuasive orator, winning his way to ears and hearts: but, had he spoken with plums in his mouth, and a stammer on his tongue, and a break-down at every sentence, the uproarious applause and shouts would have been equally rife. Mr. Carlyle was intensely popular in West Lynne, setting aside the candidateship and his oratory; and West Lynne made common cause against Sir Francis Levison.

Sir Francis Levison harangued the mob from the Raven, but in a more ignoble manner. For the Raven possessed no balcony, and he was fain to let himself down, with a stride and a jump, from the first-floor window to the top of the bow-window of the parlour, and stand there. The Raven, though a comfortable, old established, and respectable inn, could boast only of casements for its upper windows, and they are not convenient to deliver speeches

from. He was wont, therefore, to take his stand on the ledge of the bow-window, and that was not altogether convenient either, for it was but narrow, and he hardly dared move an arm or a leg, for fear of pitching over, on to the upturned faces. Mr. Drake let himself down also, to support him on one side, and, the first day, the lawyer supported him on the other. For the first day only: for that worthy, being not so high as Sir Francis Levison's or Mr. Drake's shoulder, and about five times their breadth, had those two been rolled into one, experienced a slight difficulty in getting back again. It was accomplished at last, Sir Francis pulling him up, and Mr. Drake hoisting him from behind, just as a ladder was being brought out to the rescue, amidst shouts of laughter. The stout wiped man the perspiration from his face when he was landed in safety, and recorded a mental vow never to descend from a window again. After that, the candidate and his friend shared the shelf between them. The lawyer's name was Rubiny, ill-naturedly supposed to be a corruption of Reuben.

They stood there one afternoon, the eloquence of Sir Francis in full play (but he was a shocking speaker), and the crowd, laughing, hissing, groaning, and applauding, blocking up the road. Sir Francis could not complain of one thing—that he got no audience. For it was the pleasure of West Lynne extensively to support him in that respect: a few to cheer, a great many to jeer and hiss. Remarkably dense was the mob on this afternoon, for Mr. Carlyle had just concluded his address from the Buck's Head, and the crowd who had been listening to him, came rushing up to swell the ranks of the other

crowd. They were elbowing and pushing and treading on each other's heels, when an open barouche drove suddenly up, to scatter them. Its horses wore scarlet and purple rosettes; and one lady, a very pretty one, sat inside it. Mrs. Carlyle.

But the crowd could not be so easily scattered: it was too thick: the carriage could advance but at a snail's pace, and now and then came to a stand-still. Sir Francis Levison's speech came to a stand-still also, till the confusion should subside. He did not bow to Barbara: he remembered the result of his having done so to Miss Carlyle: and the little interlude of the pond had washed most of his impudence out of him. He remained at his post, not looking at Barbara, not looking at anything in particular, but waiting till the interruption should have passed.

Barbara, under cover of her dainty lace parasol, turned her eyes upon him. At that very moment he raised his right hand, slightly shook his head back, and tossed his hair off his brow. His hand, ungloved, was white and delicate as a lady's, and his rich diamond ring gleamed in the sun. The pink flush on Barbara's cheek deepened to a crimson damask, and her brow contracted as with a remembrance of pain.

“The very action Richard described! the action he was always using at East Lynne! I believe from my heart that man is Thorn: Richard was labouring under some mistake, when he said he knew Sir Francis Levison.”

She let her hands fall upon her knee as she spoke, heedless of the candidate, heedless of the crowd, heedless of all, save her own troubled thoughts. A hundred respectful salutations were uttered, she an-

swered them mechanically; a shout was raised, "Long live Carlyle! Carlyle for ever!" Barbara bowed her pretty head on either side, and the carriage at length got on.

The parting of the crowd brought Mr. Dill (who had come to listen for once to the speech of the second man) and Mr. Ebenezer James close to each other. Mr. Ebenezer James was one who for the last twelve or fifteen years had been trying his hand at many trades, and had not come out particularly well at any. A rolling stone gathers no moss. First, he had been clerk to Mr. Carlyle; next he had been seduced into joining the corps of the Theatre Royal at Lynneborough; then he turned auctioneer; then traveller in the oil and colour line; then a parson, the urgent pastor of some sect; then omnibus-driver; then collector of the water-rate; and now he was clerk again; not in Mr. Carlyle's office, but in that of Ball and Treadman, other solicitors of West Lynne. A good humoured, good natured idle chap was Mr. Ebenezer James, and that was the worst that could be urged against him, save that he was sometimes out at pocket and out at elbows. His father was a respectable man, had made money in trade; but he had married a second wife, had a second family, and his eldest son did not come in for much of the paternal money; though he did for a large share of the paternal anger.

"Well, Ebenezer, and how goes the world with you?" cried Mr. Dill, by way of salutation.

"Jogging on. It never gets to a trot."

"Didn't I see you turning into your father's house yesterday?"

"I pretty soon turned out of it again. I'm like



the monkey when I venture there—get more kicks than halfpence. Hush, old gentleman! we interrupt the eloquence.”

Of course “the eloquence” applied to Sir Francis Levison, and they set themselves to listen, Mr. Dill with a serious face, Mr. Ebenezer with a grinning one. But, soon, a jostle and movement carried them to the outside of the crowd, out of sight of the speaker, though not entirely out of hearing. By these means they had a view of the street, and discerned something advancing towards them, which they took for a Russian bear on its hind legs.

“I’ll—be—blest,” uttered Mr. Ebenezer James, after a prolonged pause of staring consternation, “if I don’t believe it’s Bethel!”

“Bethel!” repeated old Dill, gazing at the approaching figure. “What has he been doing to himself.”

Mr. Otway Bethel it was, just arrived from foreign parts in his travelling costume. Something shaggy, terminating all over with tails. A shaggy cap surmounted his head, and the hair on his face would have set up Mr. Justice Hare in wigs for his life. A wild object he looked, and Mr. Dill rather backed as he drew near, as if fearing he were a real animal which might bite him.

“What’s your name?” cried he.

“It used to be Bethel,” replied the wild man, holding out his hand to Mr. Dill. “So you are in the world, James, and kicking yet!”

“And hope to kick in it for some time to come,” replied Mr. James. “Where did you hail from last? A settlement at the North Pole?”

“Didn’t get quite so far. What’s the row here?”

“When did you arrive, Mr. Otway?” inquired old Dill.

“Now. Four o’clock train. I say, what’s up?”

“An election; that’s all,” said Mr. Ebenezer. “Attley went and kicked the bucket.”

“I don’t ask about the election; I heard all that at the railway station,” returned Otway Bethel, impatiently. “What’s *this*?” waving his hand at the crowd.

“One of the candidates, wasting breath and words. Levison.”

“I say,” repeated Otway Bethel, looking at Mr. Dill, “wasn’t it rather—rather of the ratherest, for *him* to oppose Carlyle?”

“Infamous! contemptible!” was the old gentleman’s excited answer. “But he’ll get his deserts yet, Mr. Otway; they have already begun. He was treated to a ducking yesterday in Justice Hare’s green pond.”

“And he did look a miserable devil when he came out, trailing through the streets,” added Mr. Ebenezer, while Otway Bethel burst into a laugh. “He was smothered into some hot blankets at the Raven, and a pint of burnt brandy put into him. He seems all right to-day.”

“Will he go in and win?”

“Chut! Win against Carlyle! He has not the ghost of a chance; and government—if it is the government who put him on it—must be a pack of fools: they can’t know the influence of Carlyle. Bethel, is that style of costume the fashion where you come from?”

“For cold weather and slender pockets. I’ll sell ’em to you now, James, at half price. Let’s get a

look at this Levison, though. I have never seen the fellow."

Another interruption to the crowd, even as he spoke, caused by the railway van bringing up some luggage. They contrived, in the confusion, to push themselves to the front, not far from Sir Francis. Otway Bethel stared at him in unqualified amazement.

"Why — what brings *him* here? What is he doing?"

"Who?"

He pointed with his finger. "The one with the white handkerchief in his hand."

"That is Sir Francis."

"No!" uttered Bethel, a whole world of astounded meaning in his tone. "By Jove! *He* Sir Francis Levison?"

At that moment their eyes met, Francis Levison's and Otway Bethel's. Otway Bethel raised his shaggy cap in salutation, and Sir Francis appeared completely scared. Only for an instant did he lose his presence of mind. The next, his eye-glass was stuck in his eye, and turned on Mr. Bethel with a hard, haughty stare; as much as to say, Who are you, fellow, that you should take such a liberty? But his cheeks and lips were growing as white as marble.

"Do you know Levison, Mr. Otway?" inquired old Dill.

"A little. Once."

"When he was not Levison, but somebody else," laughed Mr. Ebenezer James. "Eh, Bethel?"

Bethel turned as reproving a stare on Mr. Ebenezer, as the baronet had just turned on him. "What do you mean, pray? Mind your own business."

A nod to old Dill, and he turned off and disappeared, taking no further notice of James. The old gentleman questioned the latter.

“What was that little bit of by-play, Mr. Ebenezer?”

“Nothing, much,” laughed Mr. Ebenezer. “Only he,” nodding towards Sir Francis, “was not always the great man that he is now.”

“Ah!”

“I have held my tongue about it, for it’s no affair of mine, but I don’t mind letting you into the secret. Would you believe that that grand baronet there, would-be member for West Lynne, used, years ago, to dodge about Abbey Wood, mad after Afy Hallijohn? He didn’t call himself Levison then.”

Mr. Dill felt as if a hundred pins and needles were pricking at his memory, for there rose up in it certain doubts and troubles, touching Richard Hare and one Thorn. He laid his eager hand upon the other’s arm. “Ebenezer James, what did he call himself?”

“Thorn. A dandy then, as he is now. He used to come galloping down the Swainson road at dusk, tie his horse in the wood, and monopolise Miss Afy.”

“How do you know this?”

“Because I have seen it, a dozen times. I was spoony after Afy myself in those days, and went down there a good deal in an evening. If it hadn’t been for him, and — perhaps that murdering villain, Dick Hare, Afy would have listened to me. Not that she cared for Dick; but, you see, they were gentlemen. I am thankful to the stars, now, for my luck in escaping her. With her for a wife, I should have been in a pickle always: as it is, I do get out of it once in a way.”

“Did you know then that he was Francis Levison?”

“Not I. He called himself Thorn, I tell you. When he came down, to offer himself for member and oppose Carlyle, I was thunderstruck; like Bethel was, a minute ago. Ho, ho, said I, so Thorn’s defunct, and Levison has risen.”

“What had Otway Bethel to do with him?”

“Nothing — that I know of. Only Bethel was fond of the wood also — after other game than Afy, though — and must have seen Thorn often. You saw that he recognised him.”

“Thorn — Levison, I mean — did not appear to like the recognition,” said Mr. Dill.

“Who would, in his position?” laughed Ebenezer James. “I don’t like to be reminded of many a wild scrape of my past life, in my poor station; and what would it be for Levison, were it to come out that he once called himself Thorn, and came running after Miss Afy Hallijohn.”

“Why did he call himself Thorn? Why disguise his own name?”

“Not knowing, can’t say. *Is his name Levison? or is it Thorn?*”

“Nonsense, Mr. Ebenezer!”

Mr. Dill, bursting with the strange news he had heard, endeavoured to force his way through the crowd, that he might communicate it to Mr. Carlyle. The crowd was, however, too dense for him, and he had to wait the opportunity of escape with what patience he might. When it came, he made the best of his way to the office, and entered Mr. Carlyle’s private room. That gentleman was seated at his desk, signing letters.]

“ Why, Dill, you are out of breath ! ”

“ Well I may be ! Mr. Archibald, I have been listening to the most extraordinary statement. I have found out about Thorn. Who do you think he is ? ”

Mr. Carlyle laid down his pen, and looked full in the old man's face : he had never seen him so excited.

“ It's that man, Levison. ”

“ I do not understand you, ” said Mr. Carlyle. He did not. It was Hebrew to him.

“ The Levison of to-day, your opponent, is the Thorn who went after Afy Hallijohn. It is so, Mr. Archibald. ”

“ It cannot be ! ” slowly uttered Mr. Carlyle, thought upon thought working through his brain. “ Where did you hear this ? ”

Mr. Dill told his tale. Otway Bethel's recognition of him ; Sir Francis Levison's scared paleness — for he had noticed that ; Mr. Ebenezer's revelation.

“ Bethel has denied to me more than once that he knew Thorn, or was aware of such a man being in existence, ” observed Mr. Carlyle.

“ He must have had a purpose in it, ” returned Mr. Dill. “ They knew each other to-day. Levison recognised him, for certain ; although he carried it off with a high hand, pretending that he did not. ”

“ And it was not as Levison, but as Thorn, that Bethel recognised him. ”

“ There's little doubt of that. He did not mention the name, Thorn ; but he was evidently struck with astonishment at hearing that it was Levison. If they have not some secret between them, Mr. Archibald, I'll never believe my own eyes again. ”

“ Mrs. Hare's opinion is, that Bethel had to do with the murder, ” said Mr. Carlyle, in a low tone.



“If the murder is their secret, rely upon it Bethel had,” was the answer. “Mr. Archibald, it seems to me that now or never is the time to clear up Richard.”

“Ay. But how set about it?” responded Mr. Carlyle.

Meanwhile, Barbara had proceeded home in her carriage, her brain as busy as Mr. Carlyle’s, perhaps more troubled. Her springing lightly and hastily out, the moment it stopped, disdainful the footman’s arm, her compressed lips and absent countenance, proved that her resolution was set upon some plan of action. William and Madame Vine met her in the hall.

“We have seen Dr. Martin, Mrs. Carlyle.”

“And, mamma, he says——”

“I cannot stay to hear now, William. I will see you later, madame.”

She ran up-stairs to her dressing-room, Madame Vine following her with her reproachful eyes. “Why should she care?” thought madame. “He is not her child.”

Throwing her parasol on one chair, her gloves on another, Barbara sat down to her writing-table. “I will write to him, I will have him here, if it be but for an hour!” she passionately exclaimed. “This shall be, so far, cleared up. I am sure that it is that man. The very action Richard described! and there was the diamond ring! For better, for worse, I will send for him: but it will not be for worse if God is with us.”

She dashed off a letter, getting up, ere she had well begun it, to order her carriage round again: she would trust none but herself to put it in the post.

“My dear Mr. Smith,—We want you here.

Something has arisen that it is necessary to see you upon. You can get here by Saturday. Be in *these* grounds, near the covered walk, that evening at dusk.

“Ever yours,  
“B.”

And the letter was addressed to Mr. Smith, of some street in Liverpool, the address furnished by Richard. Very cautious, you see, was Barbara. She even put “Mr. Smith” inside the letter.

“Now stop,” cried Barbara to herself, as she was folding it, “I ought to send him a five-pound note, for he may not have the means to come. And I don’t think I have one of that amount in the house.”

She looked in her secretaire. Not a single five-pound note. Out of the room she ran, meeting Joyce, who was coming along the corridor.

“Do you happen to have a five-pound note, Joyce?”

“No, ma’am. Not by me.”

“I dare say Madame Vine has. I paid her last week, and there were two five-pound notes amongst it.” And away went Barbara to the grey parlour.

“Could you lend me a five-pound note, Madame Vine? I have occasion to enclose one in a letter, and find I do not possess one.”

Madame Vine went to her room to get it. Barbara waited. She asked William what Dr. Martin said.

“He tried my chest with—oh, I forget what they call it; and he said I must be a brave boy and take my cod-liver oil well. And port wine, and everything I liked that was good. And he said he should be at West Lynne next Wednesday afternoon, and I am to be there, and he would call in and see me.”

“Where are you to meet him?”

“He said either at papa’s office, or at Aunt Cornelia’s, as we might decide. Madame fixed it for papa’s office, for she thought he might like to see Dr. Martin. I say, mamma?”

“What?” asked Barbara.

“Madame Vine has been crying ever since. Why should she?”

“I’m sure I don’t know. Crying?”

“Yes: but she wipes her eyes under her spectacles, and thinks I don’t see her. I know I am very ill, but why should she cry for that?”

“Nonsense, William! Who told you you were very ill?”

“Nobody. I suppose I am,” he thoughtfully added. “If Joyce or Lucy, cried, now, there’d be more sense in it, for they have known me all my life.”

“You are so apt to fancy things! you are always doing it. It is not likely that madame would be crying because you were ill.”

Madame came in with the bank-note. Barbara thanked her, ran up-stairs, and in another minute or two was in her carriage.

She was back again and dressing, when the gentlemen returned to dinner. Mr. Carlyle came up-stairs. Barbara, like most persons who do things without reflection, having had time to cool down from her ardour, was doubting whether she had acted wisely in sending so precipitately for Richard. She carried her doubt and care to her husband: her sure refuge in perplexity.

“Archibald, I do fear I have done a foolish thing.”

He laughed. “I fear we all do that at times, Barbara. What is it?”

He had seated himself in one of Barbara's favourite low chairs, and she stood before him, leaning on his shoulder, her face a little behind, so that he could not see it. In her delicacy, she would not look at him, while she spoke what she was going to speak.

"It is something that I have had upon my mind for years. And I did not like to tell it to you."

"For years!"

"You remember that night, years ago, when Richard was at the Grove in disguise? He —"

"Which night, Barbara? He came more than once."

"The night—the night that Lady Isabel quitted East Lynne," she answered, not knowing how better to bring it to his recollection: and she stole her hand lovingly into his, as she said it. "Richard came back after his departure, saying he had met Thorn in Bean-lane. He described the peculiar motion of his hand as he threw back his hair from his brow: he spoke of the white hand and the diamond ring, how it glittered in the moonlight. Do you remember?"

"I do."

"The motion appeared perfectly familiar to me, for I had seen it repeatedly used by one, then staying at East Lynne. I wondered you did not recognise it. From that night I had little doubt as to the identity of Thorn. I believed that he and Captain Levison were one."

A pause. "Why did you not tell me so, Barbara?"

"How could I speak of that man to you?—at that time? Afterwards, when Richard was here, that snowy winter's day, he asserted that he knew Sir Francis Levison; that he had seen him and Thorn together; and that put me off the scent. But, to-

day, as I was passing the Raven, in the carriage, going very slow on account of the crowd, he was perched out there, addressing the people, and I saw the very same action, the old action that I remember so well."

Barbara paused. Mr. Carlyle did not interrupt her.

"I feel a conviction that they are the same: that Richard must have been under some unaccountable mistake, in saying he knew Francis Levison. Besides, who, but he, in evening dress, would have been likely to go through Bean-lane that night? It leads to no houses: but one, who wished to avoid the high road, could get into it from these grounds, and so on to West Lynne. It was proved, you know, that he met—met the carriage coming from Mrs. Jeafferson's, and returned in it to East Lynne. He must have gone back directly on foot to West Lynne, to get the post-chaise, as was proved; and he would naturally go through Bean-lane. Forgive me, Archibald, for recalling these things to you, but I feel so sure that Levison and Thorn are one."

"I know they are," he quietly said.

Barbara, in her astonishment, drew back and stared him in the face. A face of severe dignity it was, just then.

"Oh, Archibald! Did you know it at that time?"

"I did not know it until this afternoon. I never suspected it."

"I wonder you did not. I have wondered often."

"So do I—now. Dill, Ebenezer James, and Otway Bethel—who came home to-day—were standing before the Raven, listening to his speech, when Bethel recognised him. Not as Levison: he was infinitely astonished to find he was Levison. Levison,

they say, was scared at the recognition, and changed colour. Bethel would give no explanation, and moved away, but James told Dill that Levison was the man Thorn, who used to be after Afy Hallijohn."

"How did he know?" breathlessly asked Barbara.

"Because Mr. Ebenezer was after Afy himself, and repeatedly saw Thorn in the wood. Barbara, I believe now that it was Levison who killed Hallijohn: but I should like to know what Bethel had to do with it."

Barbara clasped her hands. "How strange it is!" she exclaimed, in some excitement. "Mamma told me yesterday that she was convinced some discovery was impending relative to the murder. She had had the most distressing dream, she said, connected with Richard and Bethel and somebody else, whom she appeared to know in the dream, but could not recognise, or remember, when she awoke. She was very ill; she puts so much faith in these wretched dreams."

"One would think you did also, Barbara, by your vehemence."

"No, no; you know better. But it is strange — you must acknowledge that it is — that so sure as anything fresh happens, touching the subject of the murder, so sure is a troubled dream the forerunner of it. Mamma does not dream at other times. Bethel denied to you that he knew Thorn."

"I know he did."

"And now it turns out that he does know him; and he is always in mamma's dreams; none more prominent in them than Bethel. But, Archibald, I am not telling you — I have sent for Richard."

"You have?"



“I felt sure that Levison was Thorn; I did not expect that others would recognise him, and I acted in the impulse of the moment and wrote to Richard, telling him to be here on Saturday evening. The letter is gone.”

“Well, we must shelter him as we best can.”

“Archibald, dear Archibald, what can be done to clear him?” she asked, the tears rising to her eyes.

“I cannot act against Levison.”

“Not act? not act for Richard?”

He bent his clear, truthful eyes upon her. “My dearest, how can I?”

She looked a little rebellious, and the tears fell.

“You have not considered, Barbara. It would look like my own revenge.”

“Forgive me,” she softly whispered. “You are always right. I did not think of it in that light. But what steps can be taken?”

“It is a case encompassed with difficulties,” mused Mr. Carlyle. “Let us wait till Richard comes.”

“Do you happen to have a five-pound note in your pocket, Archibald? I had not one to send to him, and borrowed it from Madame Vine.”

He took out his pocket-book and gave her the money.

## CHAPTER X.

## A FADING CHILD.

IN the grey parlour, in the dark twilight of the April evening, for it was getting on into the night, were William Carlyle and Lady Isabel. It had been a warm day, but the spring evenings were still chilly, and a fire burned in the grate. There was no blaze, the red embers were smouldering and half dead, but Madame Vine did not heed the fire. William lay on the sofa, and she sat by, looking at him. Her glasses were off, for the tears wetted them continually: and it was not the recognition of the children that she feared. He was tired with the drive to Lynneborough and back, and lay with his eyes shut; she thought asleep. Presently he opened them.

“How long will it be before I die?”

The words took her utterly by surprise, and her heart went round in a whirl. “What do you mean, William? Who said anything about your dying?”

“Oh, I know. I know by the fuss there is over me. You heard what Hannah said the other night?”

“What? When?”

“When she brought in the tea, and I was lying on the rug. I was not asleep, though you thought I was. You told her she ought to be more cautious, for that I might not have been asleep.”

“I don't remember much about it,” said Lady Isabel, at her wits' end how to remove the impression Hannah's words must have created, had he indeed heard them. “Hannah talks great nonsense sometimes.”

“She said I was going on fast to the grave.”

“Did she? Nobody attends to Hannah. She is only a foolish girl. We shall soon have you well, when the warm weather comes.”

“Madame Vine.”

“Well, my darling?”

“Where's the use of your trying to deceive me? Do you think I don't see that you are doing it? I am not a baby: you might if it were Archibald. What is it that's the matter with me?”

“Nothing. Only you are not strong. When you get strong again you will be as well as ever.”

William shook his head in disbelief. He was precisely that sort of child from whom it is next to impossible to disguise facts; quick, thoughtful, observant, and advanced beyond his years. Had no words been dropped in his hearing, he would have suspected the evil by the care evinced for him, but plenty of words had been dropped; hints, by which he had gathered suspicion; broad assertions, like Hannah's, which had too fully supplied it: and the boy, in his inmost heart, knew as well that death was coming for him, as that death itself did.

“Then, if there's nothing the matter with me, why could not Dr. Martin speak to you before me to-day? Why did he send me into the other room while he told you what he thought? Ah, Madame Vine, I am as wise as you.”

“A wise little boy, but mistaken sometimes,” she said, from her aching heart.

"It's nothing to die, when God loves us. Lord Vane says so. He had a little brother who died."

"A sickly child who was never likely to live; he had been pale and ailing from a baby," said Lady Isabel.

"Why! did you know him?"

"I—I heard so," she replied, turning off her thoughtless avowal in the best manner she could.

"Don't *you* know that I am going to die?"

"No."

"Then why have you been grieving since we left Dr. Martin's? And why do you grieve at all for me? I am not your child."

The words, the scene altogether, overcame her. She knelt down by the sofa, and her tears burst forth freely. "There! you see," cried William.

"Oh, William, I—I had a little boy of my own once, and when I look at you, I think of him, and that is why I cry."

"I know. You have told us of him before. His name was William, too."

She leaned over him, her breath mingling with his, she took his little hand in hers. "William, do you know that those whom God loves best, He takes the first. Were you to die, you would go to heaven, leaving all the cares and sorrows of the world behind you. It would have been happier for many of us had we died in infancy."

"Would it have been happier for you?"

"Yes," she faintly said. "I have had more than my share of sorrow. Sometimes I think that I cannot support it."

"Is it not past, then? Have you sorrow now?"

"I have it always. I shall have it till I die. Had

I died a child, William, I should have escaped it. Oh! the world is full of it! full and full."

"What sort of sorrow?"

"Pain, sickness, care, trouble, sin, remorse, weariness," she wailed out. "I cannot enumerate the half that the world brings upon us. When you are very, very tired, William, does it not seem a luxury, a sweet happiness, to lie down at night in your little bed, waiting for sleep?"

"Yes. And I am often tired; as tired as that."

"Then, just so do we, who are tired out with the world's cares, long for the grave in which we shall lie down to rest. We *covet* it, William; long for it; almost pray for it: but you cannot understand that."

"We don't lie in the grave, Madame Vine."

"No, no, child. Our bodies lie there, to be raised again in beauty at the last day. We go into a blessed place of rest, where sorrow and pain cannot come. I wish—I wish," she added with a bursting heart, "that you and I were both there!"

"Who says the world is so sorrowful, Madame Vine? I think it is lovely, especially when the sun's shining on a hot day, and the butterflies come out. You should see East Lynne on a summer's morning, when you are running up and down the slopes, and the trees are waving overhead, and the sky's blue, and the roses and flowers are all out. You would not call it a sad world."

"A pleasant world; one we might regret to leave, if we were not wearied by pain and care. But, what is this world, take it at its best, in comparison with that other world, heaven? I have heard of some people who are afraid of death: they fear they shall not go to it: but when God takes a little child there,

it is because He loves him. It is a land, as Mrs. Barbauld says, where the roses are without thorns, where the flowers are not mixed with brambles—”

“I have seen the flowers,” interrupted William, rising in his earnestness. “They are ten times brighter than our flowers are here.”

“Seen the flowers! The flowers we shall see in heaven!” she echoed.

“I have seen a picture of them. We went to Lynneborough to see Martin’s pictures of the Last Judgment. I don’t mean Dr. Martin,” said William, interrupting himself.

“I know.”

“There were three large pictures. One was called the ‘Plains of Heaven,’ and I liked that best; and so we all did. Oh, you should have seen it! Did you ever see them, Madame Vine?”

“No. I have heard of them.”

“There was a river, you know, and boats, beautiful gondolas they looked, taking the redeemed to the shores of heaven. They were shadowy figures in white robes, myriads and myriads of them, for they reached all up in the air to the holy city: it seemed to be in the clouds, coming down from God. The flowers grew on the banks of the river, pink and blue, and violet; all colours they were, but so bright and beautiful; brighter than our flowers are.”

“Who took you to see the pictures?”

“Papa. He took me and Lucy: and Mrs. Hare went with us, and Barbara — she was not our mamma then. But, madame”—dropping his voice—“what do you think Lucy asked papa?”

“What did she ask him?”



“She asked whether mamma was amongst that crowd in the white robes; whether she was gone up to heaven? Our mamma that was, you know: Lady Isabel. We were in front of the picture at the time, and lots of people heard what she said.”

Lady Isabel dropped her face upon her hands. “What did your papa answer?” she breathed.

“I don’t know. Nothing, I think: he was talking to Barbara. But it was very stupid of Lucy, because Wilson has told her over and over again that she must never talk of Lady Isabel to papa. Miss Manning has told her so too. When we got home, and Wilson heard of it, she said Lucy deserved a good shaking.”

“Why must Lady Isabel not be talked of to him?” A moment after the question had left her lips, she wondered what possessed her to give utterance to it.

“I’ll tell you,” said William, in a whisper. “She ran away from papa. Lucy talks nonsense about her having been kidnapped, but she knows nothing. I do; though they don’t think it, perhaps.”

“She may be among the redeemed some time, William, and you with her.”

He fell back on the sofa pillow with a weary sigh, and lay in silence. Lady Isabel shaded her face and remained in silence also. Soon she was aroused from it: William was in a fit of loud, sobbing tears.

“Oh, I don’t want to die! I don’t want to die! Why should I go, and leave papa and Lucy?”

She hung over him; she clasped her arms round him; her tears, her sobs, mingled with his. She whispered to him sweet and soothing words; she placed him so that he might sob out his grief upon her bosom: and in a little while the paroxysm had passed.

“Hark!” exclaimed William. “What’s that?”

A sound of talking and laughter in the hall. Mr. Carlyle, Lord Mount Severn, and his son were leaving the dining-room. They had some committee appointment that evening at West Lynne, and were departing to keep it. As the hall door closed upon them, Barbara came into the grey parlour. Up rose Madame Vine, hastily assumed her spectacles, and took her seat soberly upon a chair.

“All in the dark! And your fire going out!” exclaimed Barbara, as she hastened to stir the latter and send it into a blaze. “Who is that on the sofa? William! you ought to be in bed.”

“Not yet, mamma. I don’t want to go yet.”

“But it is quite time that you should,” she returned, ringing the bell. “To sit up at night is not the way to make you strong.”

William was dismissed. And then she turned to Madame Vine and inquired what Dr. Martin had said.

“He said the lungs were undoubtedly affected; but, like all doctors, he would give no decisive opinion. I could see that he had formed one.”

Mrs. Carlyle looked at her. The firelight played upon her face, played especially upon the spectacles, and she moved her chair into the shade.

“Dr. Martin will see him again next week: he is coming to West Lynne. I am sure, by the tone of his voice, by his evasive manner, that he anticipates the worst, although he would not say so in words.”

“I will take William into West Lynne myself,” said Barbara. “The doctor will, of course, tell me. I came in to pay my debts,” she added, dismissing

the subject of the child, and holding out a five-pound note.

Lady Isabel mechanically stretched out her hand for it.

“Whilst we are upon the money topic,” resumed Barbara, in a gay tone, “will you allow me to intimate that both myself and Mr. Carlyle very much disapprove of your making presents to the children? I was calculating, at a rough guess, the cost of the toys and things you have bought for them, and I think it must amount to a very large portion of the salary you have received. Pray do not continue this, Madame Vine.”

“I have no one else to spend my money on: I love the children,” was madame’s answer, somewhat sharply given, as if she were jealous of the interference between her and the children, and would resent it.

“Nay, you have yourself. And if you do not require much outlay, you have, I should suppose, a reserve fund to which to put your money. Be so kind as take the hint, madame; otherwise I shall be compelled more peremptorily to forbid your generosity. It is very good of you, very kind; but if you do not think of yourself, we must, for you.”

“I will buy them less,” was the murmured answer. “I must give them a little token of love now and then.”

“That you are welcome to do; a ‘little token,’ once in a way: but not the costly toys you have been purchasing. Have you ever had any acquaintance with Sir Francis Levison?” continued Mrs. Carlyle, passing with abruptness from one topic to another.

An inward shiver, a burning cheek, a heart-pang of wild remorse, and a faint answer. "No."

"I fancied, from your manner when I was speaking of him the other day, that you knew him, or had known him. No compliment, you will say, to assume an acquaintanceship with such a man. He is a stranger to you, then?"

Another faint reply. "Yes."

Barbara paused. "Do you believe in fatality, Madame Vine?"

"Yes, I do," was the steady answer.

"I don't:" and yet the very question proved that she did not wholly disbelieve it. "No, I don't," added Barbara, stoutly, as she approached the sofa, vacated by William and sat down upon it, thus bringing herself opposite and near to Madame Vine. "Are you aware that it was Francis Levison who wrought the evil to this house?"

"The evil—" stammered Madame Vine.

"Yes, it was he," she resumed, taking the hesitating answer for an admission that the governess knew nothing, or but little, of past events. "It was he who took Lady Isabel from her home—though, perhaps, she was as willing to go, as he to take her: I do not know—"

"Oh no, no!" broke from the unguarded lips of Madame Vine. "At least—I mean—I should think not," she added, in confusion.

"We shall never know. And of what consequence is it? One thing is certain, *she went*: another thing, almost equally certain, is, she did not go against her will. Did you ever hear the details?"

"N—o." Her answer would have been Yes; but possibly the next question might have been, From whom did you hear them?

“He was staying at East Lynne. The man had been abroad; outlawed: dared not show his face in England, and Mr. Carlyle, in his generosity, invited him to East Lynne as a place of shelter where he would be safe from his creditors, while something was arranged. He was a connection of Lady Isabel’s. And they repaid Mr. Carlyle, he and she, by quitting East Lynne together.”

“Why did Mr. Carlyle give that invitation?” The words were uttered in a spirit of remorseful wailing: Mrs. Carlyle believed they were a question put; and she rose up haughtily against it.

“Why did he give the invitation! Did I hear you aright, Madame Vine? Did Mr. Carlyle know he was a reprobate? And, if he had known it, was not Lady Isabel his wife? Could he dream of danger for her? If it pleased Mr. Carlyle to fill East Lynne with bad men to-morrow, what would that be to me? — to my safety; to my well-being; to my love and allegiance to my husband? What were you thinking of, madame?”

Thinking of! She leaned her troubled head upon her hand. Mrs. Carlyle resumed.

“Sitting alone in the drawing-room just now, and thinking matters over, it did seem to me very like what people call a fatality. That man, I say, was the one who wrought the disgrace, the trouble, to Mr. Carlyle’s family; and it is he, I have every reason now to believe, who brought equal disgrace and trouble upon mine. Did you know?”—Mrs. Carlyle lowered her voice — “that I have a brother in exile — in shame?”

Lady Isabel did not dare to answer that she did know it. Who had there been, likely to inform



her, the strange governess, of the tale of Richard Hare?

“So the world calls it—shame,” pursued Barbara, growing excited. “And it is shame—but not as the world thinks it. The shame lies with another, who has thrust the suffering and shame upon Richard: and that other is Francis Levison. I will tell you the tale. It is worth the telling.”

She could only dispose herself to listen; but she wondered what Francis Levison had to do with Richard Hare.

“In the days long gone by, when I was little more than a child, Richard went after Afy Hallijohn. You have seen the cottage in the wood: she lived there with her father and Joyce. It was very foolish of him: but young men will be foolish. Many more went after her—or wanted to go after her. Among them, chief of them, more favoured even than Richard, was one called Thorn, by social position a gentleman. He was a stranger, and used to ride over in secret. A night of murder came; a dreadful murder: Hallijohn was shot down dead. Richard ran away; testimony was strong against him, and the coroner’s jury brought in a verdict of ‘Wilful Murder against Richard Hare the younger.’ We never supposed but what he was guilty—of the act, mind you; not of the intention: even mamma, who so loved him, believed he had done it; but she believed it was the result of accident, not design. Oh, the trouble that has been the lot of my poor mamma!” cried Barbara, clasping her hands. “And she had no one to sympathise with her, no one, no one! I, as I tell you, was little more than a child; and papa, who might have done it, took part



against Richard. The sorrow went on for three or four years, and there was no mitigation. At the end of that period Richard came for a few hours to West Lynne, came in secret, and we learnt for the first time that he was *not* guilty. The man who did the deed was Thorn; Richard was not even present. The next question was, how to find Thorn. Nobody knew anything about him: who he was, what he was; where he came from, where he went to: and thus more years passed on. Another Thorn came to West Lynne; an officer in her Majesty's service; and his appearance tallied with the description Richard had given. I assumed it to be the one; Mr. Carlyle assumed it; but, before anything could be done, or even thought of, Captain Thorn was gone again."

Barbara paused to take breath. Madame Vine sat, listless enough. What was this tale to her?

"Again, years went on. The period came of Francis Levison's sojourn at East Lynne. Whilst he was there, Captain Thorn arrived once more, on a visit to the Herberts. We then strove to find out points of his antecedents, Mr. Carlyle and I, and we became nearly convinced that he was the man. I had to come here often to see Mr. Carlyle, for mamma did not dare to stir in the affair, papa was so violent against Richard. Thus I often saw Francis Levison: but he was visible to no other visitor, being at East Lynne, *en cachette*. He intimated that he was afraid of encountering creditors: I now begin to doubt whether that was not a false plea: and I remember Mr. Carlyle said, at the time, that he had no creditors in or near West Lynne."

"Then, what was his motive for shunning society;

for never going out?" interrupted Lady Isabel. Too well she remembered that bygone time: Francis Levison had told her that the fear of his creditors kept him up so closely; though he had once said to her they were not in the immediate neighbourhood of East Lynne.

"He had a worse fear upon him than that of creditors," returned Mrs. Carlyle. "Singular to say, during this visit of Captain Thorn to the Herberts, we received an intimation from my brother that he was once more about to venture for a few hours to West Lynne. I brought the news to Mr. Carlyle; I had to see him and consult with him more frequently than ever: mamma was painfully restless and anxious, and Mr. Carlyle as eager as we were for the establishment of Richard's innocence, for Miss Carlyle and papa are related, consequently the disgrace may be said to reflect on the Carlyle name."

Back went Lady Isabel's memory and her bitter repentance. She remembered how jealously she had attributed these meetings between Mr. Carlyle and Barbara to another source. Oh, why had she suffered her mind to be so falsely and fatally perverted?

"Richard came. It was hastily arranged that he should go privately to Mr. Carlyle's office, after the clerks had left for the night, be concealed there, and have an opportunity given him of seeing Captain Thorn. There was no difficulty, for Mr. Carlyle was transacting some matter of business for the captain, and appointed him to be at the office at eight o'clock. A memorable night, that, to Mr. Carlyle, for it was the one of his wife's elopement."

Lady Isabel looked up with a start.

"It was, indeed. She, Lady Isabel, and Mr.

Carlyle, were engaged to a dinner party : and Mr. Carlyle had to give it up, otherwise he could not have served Richard. He is always considerate and kind, thinking of other's welfare ; never of his own gratification. Oh, it was an anxious night ! Papa was out. I waited at home with mamma, doing what I could to soothe her restless suspense : for there was hazard to Richard in his night walk through West Lynne to keep the appointment : and, when it was over, he was to come home for a short interview with mamma, who had not seen him for several years."

Barbara stopped, lost in thought. Not a word spoke Madame Vine. She still wondered what this affair, touching Richard Hare and Captain Thorn, could have to do with Francis Levison.

"I watched from the window, and saw them come in at the garden gate, Mr. Carlyle and Richard — between nine and ten o'clock I think it must have been. The first words they said to me were, that it was not the Captain Thorn spoken of by Richard. I felt a shock of disappointment, which was wicked enough of me, but I had been so sure he was the man ; and, to hear he was not, seemed to throw us further back than ever. Mr. Carlyle, on the contrary, was glad, for he had taken a liking for Captain Thorn. Well, Richard went in to mamma, and Mr. Carlyle was so kind as to accede to her request that he would remain and pace the garden with me. We were so afraid of papa's coming home : he was bitter against Richard, and would inevitably have delivered him up at once to justice. Had he come in, Mr. Carlyle was to keep him in the garden by the gate, whilst I ran in to give notice and conceal Richard in the

hall. Richard lingered; papa did not come; and I cannot tell how long we paced there: it was a lovely moonlight night."

That unhappy listener clasped her hands to pain. The matter-of-fact tone, the unconscious mention of common-placed trifles, proved that they had not been pacing about in disloyalty to her, or for their own gratification. *Why* had she not trusted her noble husband? why had she listened to that false man, as he pointed them out to her, walking there in the moonlight? Why had she given vent, in the chariot, to that burst of passionate tears, of angry reproach? why, oh why had she hastened to be revenged? But for seeing them together, she might not have done as she did.

"Richard came forth at last, and departed; to be again an exile. Mr. Carlyle also departed; and I remained at the gate, watching for papa. By-and-by Mr. Carlyle came back again: he had got nearly home when he remembered that he had left a parchment at our house. It seemed to be nothing but coming back, for, just after he had gone a second time, Richard returned in a state of excitement, stating that he had met Thorn—Thorn, the murderer, I mean, in Bean-lane. For a moment I doubted him, but not for long, and we ran after Mr. Carlyle. Richard described Thorn's appearance; his evening dress, his white hands, and his diamond ring; more particularly he described a peculiar motion of his hand as he threw back his hair. In that moment it flashed across me that Thorn must be Captain Levison; the description was exact. Many and many a time since, have I wondered that the thought did not strike Mr. Carlyle."

Lady Isabel sat with her mouth open, as if she could not take in the sense of the words: and when it did become clear to her, she utterly rejected it.

“Francis Levison a murderer! Oh no. Bad man as he is, he is not that.”

“Wait,” said Mrs. Carlyle. “I did not speak of this doubt — nay, this conviction — which had come to me: how could I mention to Mr. Carlyle the name of the man who did him that foul wrong? — and Richard has remained in exile, with the ban of guilt upon him. To-day, as I passed through West Lynne in the carriage, Francis Levison was haranguing the people. I saw that very same action — the throwing back of the hair with his white hand: I saw the self-same diamond ring; and my conviction, that he was the man, became more firmly seated than ever.”

“It is impossible,” murmured Lady Isabel.

“Wait, I say,” said Barbara. “When Mr. Carlyle came home this evening to dinner, I, for the first time, mentioned this to him. It was no news — the fact was not. This afternoon, during that same harangue, Francis Levison was recognised by two witnesses to be the man Thorn — the man who went after Afy Hallijohn. It is horrible.”

Lady Isabel sat, and looked at Mrs. Carlyle. Not yet did she believe it.

“Yes, it does appear to me as being perfectly horrible,” continued Mrs. Carlyle. “He murdered Hallijohn: he, that bad man; and my poor brother has suffered the odium. When Richard met him that night in Bean-lane, he was sneaking to West Lynne in search of the chaise that afterwards bore away him and his companion. Papa saw them drive away. Papa stayed out late; and, in return-



ing home, a chaise and four tore past, just as he was coming in at the gate. If that miserable Lady Isabel had but known with whom she was flying! A murderer! in addition to his other achievements! It is a mercy for her that she is no longer alive. What would her feelings be?"

What were they, then, as she sat there? A *murderer!* and she had —. In spite of her caution, of her strife for self-command, she turned of a deadly whiteness, and a low sharp cry of horror and despair burst from her lips.

Mrs. Carlyle was astonished. Why should her communication have produced this effect upon Madame Vine? A renewed suspicion, that she knew more of Francis Levison than she would acknowledge, stole over her.

"Madame Vine, what is he to you?" she asked, bending forward.

Madame Vine, doing fierce battle with herself, recovered her outward equanimity. "I beg your pardon, Mrs. Carlyle," she shivered: "I am apt to picture things too vividly. It is, as you say, so very horrible."

"Is he nothing to you? Do you know him?"

"He is nothing to me; less than nothing. As to knowing him—I saw him yesterday when they put him into the pond. A man like that! I should shudder to meet him."

"Ay, indeed," said Barbara, reassured. "You will understand, Madame Vine, that this history has been given you in confidence. I look upon you as one of ourselves."

There was no answer. Madame Vine sat on, with her white face. It wore altogether a ghastly look.



“It tells like a fable out of a romance,” resumed Mrs. Carlyle. “Well for him if the romance be not ended with the gibbet. Fancy what it would be—for him, Sir Francis Levison, to be hanged for murder!”

“Barbara, my dearest!”

The voice was Mr. Carlyle’s, and she flew off on the wings of love. It appeared that the gentlemen had not yet departed, and now thought they would take coffee first.

Flew off to her idolised husband, leaving her, who had once been the idolised, to her loneliness. She sank down on the sofa; she threw her arms up in her heart-sickness; she thought she should faint; she prayed to die. It *was* horrible, as Barbara had called it. For that man, with the red stain upon his hand and soul, she had flung away Archibald Carlyle.

If ever retribution came home to woman, it came home in that hour to Lady Isabel.

## CHAPTER XI.

MR. CARLYLE INVITED TO SOME PATÉ DE FOIE  
GRAS.

A SIGHING, moaning wind swept round the domains of East Lynne. Bending the tall poplar-trees in the distance, swaying the oak and elms nearer, rustling the fine old chesnuts in the park: a melancholy, sweeping, fitful wind. The weather had changed, gathering clouds seemed to be threatening rain: so, at least, deemed one wayfarer, who was journeying on a solitary road, that Saturday night.

He was on foot. A man in the garb of a sailor, with black curling ringlets of hair, and black curling whiskers: a prodigious pair of whiskers, hiding his neck above his blue, turned collar, hiding partially his face. The glazed hat, brought low upon the brows, concealed it still more; and he wore a loose, rough pea-jacket, and wide rough trowsers, hitched up with a belt. Bearing steadily on, he struck into Bean-lane, a by-way already mentioned in this history, and from thence, passing through a small, unfrequented gate, he found himself in the grounds of East Lynne.

“Let’s see,” mused he, as he closed the gate behind him, and slipped its bolt. “The covered walk? That must be near the acacia-trees. Then I must wind round to the right. I wonder if either of them will be there, waiting for me?”

Yes. Pacing the covered walk in her bonnet and mantle, as if taking an evening stroll — had any one encountered her, which was very unlikely, seeing that it was the most retired spot in the grounds—was Mrs. Carlyle.

“Oh, Richard! my poor brother!”

Locked in a yearning embrace, emotion overpowered both. Barbara sobbed like a child. A little while, and then he put her from him, to look at her.

“So, Barbara, you are a wife now!”

“Oh, the happiest wife! Richard, sometimes I ask myself what I have done, that God should have showered down blessings so great upon me. But for the sad trouble when I think of you, my life would be as one long summer’s day. I have the sweetest baby; he is now nearly a year old — I shall have another soon, God willing. And Archibald — oh, I am so happy!”

She broke suddenly off with the name “Archibald:” not even to Richard could she speak of her intense love for her husband.

“How is it at the Grove?” he asked.

“Quite well; quite as usual. Mamma has been in better health lately. She does not know of this visit, but—”

“I must see her,” interrupted Richard. “I did not see her last time, you remember.”

“All in good time to talk of that. How are you getting on in Liverpool? What are you doing?”

“Don’t inquire too closely, Barbara. I have no regular work, but I get a job at the docks, now and then, and rub on. It is seasonable help, that, which comes to me from you. Is it from you, or Carlyle?”

Barbara laughed. “How are we to distinguish?

His money is mine now, and mine is his. We have not separate purses, Richard; we send it to you jointly."

"Sometimes I have fancied it came from my mother."

Barabra shook her head. "We have never allowed mamma to know that you left London, or that we hold an address where we can write to you. It would not have done."

"Why have you summoned me here, Barbara? What has turned up?"

"Thorn has — I think. You would know him again, Richard?"

"Know him!" passionately echoed Richard Hare.

"Were you aware that a contest for the membership is now going on at West Lynne?"

"I saw it in the newspapers. Carlyle against Sir Francis Levison. I say, Barbara, how could he think of coming here, to oppose Carlyle?"

"I don't know," said Barbara. "I wonder that he should come here for other reasons also. First of all, Richard, tell me how you came to know Sir Francis Levison. You said you knew him, and that you had seen him with Thorn."

"So I do know him," answered Richard. "And I saw him with Thorn twice."

"Know him by sight only, I presume. Let me hear how you came to know him."

"He was pointed out to me. I saw Thorn walking arm-in-arm with a gentleman, and I showed them to the waterman at the cab-stand hard by. 'Do you know that fellow?' I asked him, indicating Thorn, for I wanted to come at who he really is. 'I don't know that one,' the old chap answered, 'but the one

with him is Levison the baronet. They are often together; a couple of swells, both.' And a couple of swells they looked."

"And that was how you got to know Levison?"

"That was it," said Richard Hare.

"Then, Richard, you and the waterman made a mistake between you. He pointed out the wrong, or you did not look at the right. Thorn is Sir Francis Levison."

Richard stared at her with all his eyes. "Nonsense, Barbara!"

"He is. I have suspected it ever since the night you saw him in Bean-lane. The action you described, of his pushing back his hair, his white hands, his sparkling diamond ring, could only apply to one person; Francis Levison. On Thursday I drove by the Raven when he was addressing the people, and I noticed the self-same action. In the impulse of the moment I wrote off for you, that you might come and set the doubt at rest. I need not have done so: for when Mr. Carlyle returned home that evening and I acquainted him with what I had done, he told me that Thorn and Francis Levison are one and the same. Otway Bethel recognised him that same afternoon; and so did Ebenezer James."

"They would both know him," cried Richard eagerly. "James I am positive would, for he was skulking down to Hallijohn's often then, and saw Thorn a dozen times. Otway Bethel must have seen him also—though he protested he had not. Barbara!"

The name was uttered in affright, and Richard plunged amidst the trees, for somebody was in sight. A tall, dark form, advancing from the end of the

walk. Barbara smiled; it was only Mr. Carlyle; and Richard emerged again.

“Fears still, Richard!” Mr. Carlyle exclaimed, as he shook Richard cordially by the hand. “So! you have changed your travelling costume!”

“I couldn’t venture here again in the old suit; it had been seen, you said,” returned Richard. “I bought this rig-out yesterday, second-hand. Two pounds for the lot: I think they shaved me.”

“Ringlets and all?” laughed Mr. Carlyle.

“It’s the old hair, oiled and curled,” cried Dick. “The barber charged a shilling for doing it, and cut my hair into the bargain. I told him not to spare grease, for I liked the curls to shine: sailors always do. Mr. Carlyle, Barbara says that Levison and that brute Thorn have turned out to be the same.”

“They have, Richard; as it appears. Nevertheless, it may be as well for you to take a private view of Levison, before anything is done—as you once did of the other Thorn. It would not do to make a stir, and then discover that there was a mistake—that he was not Thorn.”

“When can I see him?” asked Richard eagerly.

“It must be contrived, somehow. Were you to hang about the doors of the Raven—this evening—you’d be sure to get the opportunity, for he is always passing in and out. No one will know you; or think of you either: their heads are turned with the election.”

“I shall look odd to people’s eyes. You don’t see many sailors in West Lynne.”

“Not odd at all. We have a Russian bear here at present; and you’ll be nobody, beside him.”

“A Russian bear!” repeated Richard, while Barbara laughed.



“Mr. Otway Bethel has returned in what is popularly supposed to be a bear’s hide; hence the new name he is greeted with. Will it turn out, Richard, that he had anything to do with the murder?”

Richard shook his head. “It was not possible, Mr. Carlyle: I have said so all along. But, about Levison? If I find him to be the man Thorn—what steps can then be taken?”

“That’s the difficulty,” said Mr. Carlyle.

“Who will set it agoing? Who will move in it?”

“You must, Richard.”

“I?” uttered Richard Hare, in consternation, “I move in it?”

“You, yourself. Who else is there? I have been thinking it well over.”

“Will you not take it upon yourself, Mr. Carlyle?”

“No. Being Levison,” was the quiet answer.

“Curse him!” impetuously retorted Richard. “But why should you scruple, Mr. Carlyle? Most men, wronged as you have been, would leap at the opportunity for revenge.”

“For the crime perpetrated upon Hallijohn, I would pursue him to the scaffold. For my own wrong, no. But, the remaining negative, has cost me something. Many a time, since this appearance of his at West Lynne, have I been obliged to exercise violent control upon myself, or I should have horse-whipped him within an ace of his life.”

“If you horsewhipped him to death he would only meet his deserts.”

“I leave him to a Higher retribution: to One who says ‘Vengeance is mine.’ I believe him to be guilty of the murder: but, if the lifting of my finger would

send him to his disgraceful death, I would tie down my hands, rather than lift it. For I could not, in my own mind, separate the man from my injury. Though I might ostensibly pursue him as the destroyer of Hallijohn, to me he would appear ever as the destroyer of another; and the world, always charitable, would congratulate Mr. Carlyle upon gratifying his revenge. I stir in it not, Richard."

"Couldn't Barbara?" pleaded Richard.

Barbara was standing with her arm entwined within her husband's, and Mr. Carlyle looked down at her as he answered.

"Barbara is my wife." It was a sufficient answer.

"Then the thing's again at an end," said Richard, gloomily, "and I must give up hope of ever being cleared."

"By no means," said Mr. Carlyle. "The one who ought to act in this, is your father, Richard: but we know he will not. Your mother cannot: she has neither health nor energy for it; and if she had a full supply of both, she would not dare to brave her husband and use them in the cause. My hands are tied: Barbara's equally so, as part of me. There only remains yourself."

"And what can I do?" wailed poor Dick. "If your hands are tied I am sure my whole body is; hands, and legs, and *neck*. It's in jeopardy, that is, every hour."

"Your acting in this affair need not put it any the more in jeopardy. You must stay in the neighbourhood for a few days —"

"I dare not," interposed Richard, in a fright. "Stay in the neighbourhood for a few days! No; that I never may."

“Listen, Richard. You must put away these timorous fears; or else you must make up your mind to remain under the ban for good: and, remember, your mother’s happiness is at stake equally with yours — I could almost say her life. Do you suppose I would advise you for danger? You used to say there was some place, a mile or two from this, where you could sojourn in safety.”

“And so there is. But I always feel safer when I get away from it.”

“There your quarters must be, for two or three days, at any rate. I have turned matters over in my own mind, and will tell you what I think should be done, so far as the preliminary step goes.”

“Only the preliminary step! There must be a pretty many to follow it, sir, if it’s to come to anything. Well, what is it?”

“Apply to Ball and Treadman; and get them to take it up.”

They were now slowly pacing the covered walk, Barbara on her husband’s arm; Richard by the side of Mr. Carlyle. Dick stopped when he heard the last words.

“I don’t understand you, Mr. Carlyle. You might as well advise me to go before the bench of magistrates at once. Ball and Treadman would walk me off there as soon as I showed myself.”

“Nothing of the sort, Richard. I do not tell you to go openly to their office, as another client would. What I would advise, is this: make a friend of Mr. Ball; he can be a good man and true, if he chooses: tell the whole story to him in a private place and interview, and ask him whether he will carry it through. If he is as fully impressed with the con-

viction that you are innocent and the other guilty, as the facts appear to warrant, he will undertake it. Treadman need know nothing of the affair at first; and when Ball puts things in motion, he need not know where you are to be found."

"I don't dislike Ball," mused Richard: "and if he would only give his word to be true, I know he would be. The difficulty will be, who is to get the promise from him?"

"I will," said Mr. Carlyle. "I will so far pave the way for you. That done, my interference is over."

"How will he go about it, think you — if he does take it up?"

"That is his affair. I know how I should."

"How sir?"

"You cannot expect me to say, Richard. I might as well act for you."

"I know. You'd go at it slap dash, and arrest Levison off-hand, on the charge."

A smile parted Mr. Carlyle's lips, for Dick had just guessed it.

A thought flashed across Richard's mind; a thought which rose up on end even his false hair. "Mr. Carlyle!" he uttered, in an accent of horror, "if Ball should take it up in that way, against Levison, he must apply to the bench for a warrant!"

"Well?" quietly returned Mr. Carlyle.

"And they'd send and clap me into prison! You know the warrant is always out against me."

"You would never make a conjuror, Richard. I don't pretend to say, or guess, what Ball's proceedings may be. But, in applying to the bench for a warrant against Levison — should that form part of them — is there any necessity for him to bring you in? — to say,

‘Gentlemen, Richard Hare is within reach, ready to be taken?’ Your fears run away with your common sense, Richard.”

“Ah, well; if you had lived with the cord round your neck this many a year, not knowing, any one hour, but it might get tied the next, you would lose your common sense too at times,” humbly sighed poor Richard. “What’s to be my first move, sir?”

“Your first move, Richard, must be to go to this place of concealment, which you know of, and remain quiet there until Monday. On Monday, at dusk, be here again. Meanwhile, I will see Ball. By the way, though, before speaking to Ball, I must hear from yourself that Thorn and Levison are one.”

“I’ll go down to the Raven at once,” eagerly cried Richard. “I’ll come back here, into this walk, as soon as I have obtained sight of him.” With the last words, he turned, and was speeding off, when Barbara caught him.

“You will be so tired, Richard!”

“Tired!” echoed Richard Hare. “A hundred miles on foot would not tire me if Thorn was at the end of them, waiting to be identified. I may not be back for two or three hours, but I will come; and wait here till you come out to me.”

“You must be hungry and thirsty,” returned Barbara, the tears in her eyes. “How I wish we dare have you in, and shelter you. But I can manage to bring some refreshment out here.”

“I don’t require it, Barbara. I left the train at the station before West Lynne, and dropped into a roadside public-house, as I walked, and got a good supper. Let me go, dear; I am all in a fever.”

Richard departed, reached that part of West Lynne

where the Raven was situated, and was so far favoured by fortune that he had not long to wait. Scarcely had he taken up his lounge outside, when two gentlemen came from it, arm-in-arm. Being the headquarters of one of the candidates, the idlers of the place thought they could not do better than make it their head-quarters also, and the road and pavement were never free from loitering starers and gossipers. Richard Hare, his hat well over his eyes, and his black ringlets made the most of, only added one to the rest.

Two gentlemen came forth arm-in-arm. The loiterers raised a feeble shout of "Levison for ever!" Richard did not join in the shout, but his pulses were beating, and his heart leaped up within him. The one was Thorn; the other the gentleman he had seen with Thorn in London, pointed out to him — as he had believed — as Sir Francis Levison.

"Which of those two is Levison?" he inquired of a man, near whom he stood.

"Don't you know! Him with the hat off, bowing his thanks to us, is Levison."

No need to inquire further. It was the Thorn of Richard's memory. His ungloved hand, raised to his hat, was white as ever; more sparkling than ever, as it flashed in the gas-light, was the diamond ring. By the hand and ring alone, Richard could have sworn to the man, had it been needful.

"Who is the other one?" he continued.

"Some gent as come down from London with him. His name's Drake. Be you yellow, sailor? or be you scarlet-and-purple?"

"I am neither. I am only a stranger, passing through the town."



“On the tramp?”

“Tramp! — no.” And Richard moved away, to make the best of his progress to East Lynne, and report to Mr. Carlyle.

Now it happened, on that windy night, that Lady Isabel, her mind disordered, her brow fevered with its weight of care, stole out into the grounds, after the children had left her for the night; courting the boisterous gusts, courting any discomfort she might meet. As if they could, even for a moment, cool the fire within! To the solitude of this very covered walk bent she her steps; and, not long had she paced it, when she descried some man advancing, in the garb of a sailor. Not caring to be seen, she turned short off amidst the trees, intending to emerge again when he had passed. She wondered who he was, and what brought him there.

But he did not pass. He lingered in the walk, keeping her a prisoner. A minute more, and she saw him joined by Mrs. Carlyle. They met with a loving embrace.

Embrace a strange man! Mrs. Carlyle! All the blood in Lady Isabel's body rushed to her brain. Was she, his second wife, false to him? — more shamelessly false than even herself had been, inasmuch as she had the grace to quit him and East Lynne before, as the servant girls say when they change their sweethearts, “taking up” with another. The positive conviction that such was the case seized firm hold upon her fancy: her thoughts were in a tumult, her mind was a chaos. Was there any small corner of rejoicing in her heart that it was so? And yet — what was it to her? It could not alter by one iota her own position: it could not restore to her the love she had forfeited.

Coupled lovingly together, they were now sauntering up the walk, the sailor's arm thrown round the waist of Mrs. Carlyle. "Oh! the shameless woman!" Ay; she could be bitter enough upon graceless doings when enacted by another.

But, what was her astonishment when she saw Mr. Carlyle advance, and that it caused not the slightest change in their gracelessness, for the sailor's arm was not withdrawn. Two or three minutes they stood, the three, talking together in a group. Then, good nights were exchanged, the sailor left them, and Mr. Carlyle, his own arm lovingly pressed where the other's had been, withdrew with his wife. The truth—that it was Barbara's brother—flashed to the mind of Lady Isabel.

"Was I mad?" she cried, with a hollow laugh. "*She* false to him! No, no: that fate was reserved for me alone."

She followed them to the house; she glanced in at the windows of the drawing-room. Lights and fire were in the room, but the curtains and windows were not closed for the night, for it was through those windows that Mr. Carlyle and his wife had passed in and out, on their visits to the covered walk. There they were, alone in their happiness, and she stopped to glance in upon it. Lord Mount Severn had departed for London, to be down again early in the week. The tea was on the table, but Barbara had not begun to make it. She sat on the sofa by the fire, her face, with its ever-loving gaze upon it, turned up to her husband's. He stood near, was talking with apparent earnestness, and looking down at Barbara. Another moment, and a smile crossed his lips, the same sweet smile so often bent upon *her*

in the bygone days. Yes, they were together in their unclouded happiness ; and she — she turned away towards her own lonely sitting-room, sick and faint at heart.

Ball and Treadman — as the brass plate on their office-doors intimated—were conveyancers and attorneys-at-law. Mr. Treadman, who attended chiefly to the conveyancing, lived at the office with his family ; Mr. Ball, a bachelor, lived away ; Lawyer Ball, West Lynne styled him. Not a young bachelor ; midway, he may have been, between forty and fifty. A short, stout man, with a keen face and green eyes. He took up any practice that was brought to him, dirty odds and ends that Mr. Carlyle would not have touched with his toe : but, as that gentleman had remarked, he could be honest and true upon occasions, and there was no doubt that he would be so to Richard Hare. To his house, on Monday morning early, so as to catch him before he went out, proceeded Mr. Carlyle. A high respect for Mr. Carlyle had Lawyer Ball, as he had had for his father before him : many a good turn had the Carlyles done him, if only helping him and his partner to clients, whom they were too fastidious to take up. But the two, Mr. Carlyle and Lawyer Ball, did not rank alike, though their profession was the same : Lawyer Ball knew that they did not, and was content to feel humble. The one was a received gentleman ; the other was a country attorney.

Laywer Ball was at breakfast when Mr. Carlyle was shown in.

“ Halloa, Carlyle ! You are here betimes.”

“ Sit still : don't disturb yourself. Don't ring : I have breakfasted.”

“The most delicious pâté de foie,” urged Lawyer Ball, who was a regular gourmand. “I get ’em direct from Strasburg.”

Mr. Carlyle resisted the offered dainty with a smile. “I have come on business,” said he; “not to feast. Before I enter upon it, you will give me your word, Ball, that my communication shall be held sacred, in the event of your not consenting to pursue it further.”

“Certainly I will. What business is it? Some that offends the delicacy of the Carlyle office?” he added, with a laugh. “A would-be client, whom you turn over to me, in your exclusiveness?”

“It is a client for whom I cannot act. But not from the motives you assume. It concerns that affair of Hallijohn’s,” Mr. Carlyle continued, bending forward and somewhat dropping his voice. “The murder.”

Lawyer Ball, who had just taken in a delicious *bonne bouchée* of the foie gras, bolted it whole in his surprise. “Why! that was enacted ages and ages ago! it is past and done with,” he exclaimed.

“Not done with,” said Mr. Carlyle. “Circumstances have come to light which tend to indicate that Richard Hare was innocent: that it was another who committed the murder.”

“In conjunction with him?” interrupted the attorney.

“No: alone. Richard Hare had nothing whatever to do with it. He was not present at the time.”

“Do you believe that?” asked Lawyer Ball.

“I have believed it for years.”

“Then who did commit that murder?”

“Richard accuses one of the name of Thorn. Se-

veral years back, I had a meeting with Richard Hare, and he disclosed certain facts to me, which, if correct, could not fail to prove that he was innocent. Since that period, this impression has been gradually confirmed, by little and by little, trifle upon trifle; and I would now stake my life upon his innocence. I should long ago have moved in the matter, hit or miss, could I have lighted upon Thorn, but he was not to be found, nor any clue to him, and we now know that this name Thorn was an assumed one."

"Is he to be found?"

"He is found. He is at West Lynne. Mark you, I don't accuse him: I do not offer an opinion upon his guilt: I only state my belief in Richard's innocence: it may have been another who did it, neither Richard nor Thorn. It was my firm intention to take Richard's cause up the instant I saw my way clearly in it: and now that that time has come, I am debarred from doing so."

"What debars you?" asked Lawyer Ball.

"Hence I come to you," continued Mr. Carlyle, disregarding the question. "I come on the part of Richard Hare. I have seen him lately, and conversed with him. I gave him my reasons for not personally acting, advised him to apply to you, and promised to come here and open the matter. Will you see Richard, in good faith, and hear his story?—giving the understanding that he shall depart in secret and unmolested, as he came, if you do not decide to undertake the business."

"I'll give it with all the pleasure in life," freely returned the attorney. "I'm sure I don't want to harm poor Dick Hare. And if he can convince me of his innocence, I'll do my best to establish it."



“Of his own tale you must be the judge. I do not wish to bias you. I have stated my belief in his innocence, but I repeat that I give no opinion, myself, as to who else may be guilty. Hear his account, and then take up the affair, or not, as you may think fit. He would not come to you without your previous promise to hold him harmless; to be his friend, in short, for the time being: when I bear this promise to him from you, my part is done.”

“I give it you in all honour, Carlyle. Tell Dick he has nothing to fear from me. Quite the contrary; for if I can befriend him I shall be glad to do it, and I won't spare trouble. What can possibly be your objection to act for him?”

“My objection applies not to Richard: I would willingly appear for him; but I will not take proceedings against the man he accuses. If that man is to be denounced and brought before justice, I will hold neither act nor part in it.”

The words aroused the curiosity of Lawyer Ball, and he began to turn over all persons, likely and unlikely, in his mind: never, according to usage, giving a suspicion to the right one. “I cannot fathom you, Carlyle.”

“You will do that better, possibly, when Richard shall have made his disclosure.”

“It's—it's—never his own father that he accuses? Justice Hare?”

“Your wits must be wool-gathering, Ball.”

“Well, so they must, to give utterance to so preposterous a notion,” acquiesced the attorney, pushing back his chair, and throwing his breakfast napkin on the carpet. “But I don't know a soul you could object to go against, except the justice. What's



anybody else, in West Lynne, to you, in comparison with restoring Dick Hare to his fair fame? I give it up."

"So do I for the present," said Mr. Carlyle, as he rose. "And now, about the ways and means for your meeting this poor fellow? Where can you see him?"

"Is he at West Lynne?"

"No. But I can get a message conveyed to him, and he could come."

"When?"

"To-night, if you liked."

"Then let him come here, to this house. He will be perfectly safe."

"So be it. My part is now over," concluded Mr. Carlyle. And with a few more preliminary words, he departed. Lawyer Ball looked after him.

"It's a queer business. One would think Dick accuses some old flame of Carlyle's: some demoiselle or dame he daren't go against."

## CHAPTER XII.

## AN APPLICATION TO THE BENCH.

ON Monday evening the interview between Lawyer Ball and Richard Hare took place. With some difficulty would the lawyer believe his tale: not as to its broad details; he saw that he might give credit to them: but as to the accusation against Sir Francis Levison. Richard persisted: mentioning every minute particular he could think of: his meeting him the night of the elopement in Bean-lane; his meetings with him again in London, and Sir Francis's evident fear of him; and the previous Saturday night's recognition at the door of the Raven. Not forgetting to tell of the anonymous letter received by Justice Hare, the morning that Richard was in hiding at Mr. Carlyle's. There was no doubt in the world it had been sent by Francis Levison to frighten Mr. Hare into despatching him out of West Lynne, had Richard taken refuge in his father's house. None had more cause to keep Dick from falling into the hands of justice than Francis Levison.

"I believe what you say, I believe all you say, Mr. Richard, touching Thorn," debated the attorney, "but it's next to impossible to take in so astounding a fact, as that he is Sir Francis Levison."

"You can satisfy yourself of the fact from other

lips than mine," said Richard. "Otway Bethel could testify to it if he would: though I doubt his willingness. But there's Ebenezer James."

"What does he know about it?" asked the attorney, in surprise. "Ebenezer James is in our office at present."

"He saw Thorn often enough in those days, and has, I hear, recognised him as Levison. You had better inquire of him. Should you object to take cause against Levison?"

"Not a bit of it. Let me be assured that I am upon safe grounds, as to the identity of the man, and I'll proceed in it forthwith. Levison is an out-and-out scoundrel, *as* Levison, and deserves hanging. I will send for James at once, and hear what he says," he concluded after a pause of consideration.

Richard Hare started wildly up. "Not while I am here: he must not see me. For Heaven's sake, consider the peril to me, Mr. Ball!"

"Pooh, pooh!" laughed the attorney. "Do you suppose I have but this one reception-room? We don't let cats into cages where canary-birds are kept."

Ebenezer James returned with the messenger despatched after him. "You'll be sure to find him at the singing saloon," Mr. Ball had said; and there the gentleman was found.

"Is it any copying, sir, wanted to be done in a hurry?" cried James, as he came in.

"No," replied the attorney. "I wish a question or two answered; that's all. Did you ever know Sir Francis Levison to go by any name but his own?"

"Yes, sir, he has gone by the name of Thorn."

A pause. "When was this?"

"It was the autumn when Hallijohn was killed.

Thorn used to be prowling about there in an evening: in the wood and at the cottage, I mean."

"What did he prowl for?"

Ebenezer James laughed. "For the same reason that several more did. I, for one. He was sweet upon Afy Hallijohn."

"Where was he living at the time? I never remember him at West Lynne."

"He was not at West Lynne, sir. On the contrary, he seemed to take precious good care that West Lynne and he kept separate. A splendid horse he rode, thorough-bred, and he used to come galloping into the wood at dusk, get over his chat with Miss Afy, mount, and gallop away again."

"Where to? Where did he come from?"

From somewhere near Swainson: a ten miles' ride, Afy used to say he had. Now that he has appeared here in his own plumage, of course I can put two and two together, and not be at much fault for the exact spot."

"And where's that?" asked the lawyer.

"Levison Park," said Mr. Ebenezer. "There's little doubt he was stopping at his uncle's; and you know that is close to Swainson."

Lawyer Ball thought things were becoming clearer—or darker, whichever you may please to call it. He paused again, and then put a question impressively.

"James, have you any doubt whatever, or shadow of doubt, that Sir Francis Levison is the same man you knew as Thorn?"

"Sir, have I any doubt that you are Mr. Ball, or that I am Eb. James?" retorted Mr. Ebenezer. "I am as certain of that man's identity as I am of ours."

“Are you ready to swear to the fact in a court of justice?”

“Ready and willing; in any court in the world. To-morrow, if I am called upon.”

“Very well. You may go back to your singing club now. Keep a silent tongue in your head.”

“All close, sir,” answered Mr. Ebenezer James.

Far into the middle of the night sat lawyer Ball and Richard Hare, the former chiefly occupied in taking notes of Richard’s statement. “It’s half a crotchet, this objection of Carlyle’s to interfere with Levison!” said Richard, suddenly, in the midst of some desultory conversation. “Don’t you think so, Mr. Ball?”

The lawyer pursed up his lips. “Um—a delicate point. Carlyle was always fastidiously honourable. *I* should go at him, thunder and fury, in his place; but I and Carlyle are different.”

The following day, Tuesday, Mr. Ball was much occupied in putting, to use nearly Ebenezer James’s words, that and that together. Later in the day, he took a journey to Levison Park, ferreted out some information, and came home again. In the evening of that same day, Richard departed for Liverpool; he was done with for the present: Mr. and Mrs. Carlyle being, as before, alone cognisant of his address.

Wednesday morning witnessed the return of the Earl of Mount Severn. Lord Vane came also. The latter ought to have gone back to Eton, but he had teased and prayed to be allowed to “see the fun out,” meaning the election. “And that devil’s discomfiture when he finds himself beaten,” he surreptitiously added, behind his father’s back, who was a great stickler for the boy’s always being “gentlemanlike.” So the earl had yielded. They arrived, as before, about breakfast-

time, having travelled at night. Subsequently they and Mr. Carlyle walked into West Lynne together.

West Lynne was alive and astir. The election was to come off that week, and people made it their business to be in a bustle over it, collectively and individually. Mr. Carlyle's committee sat at the Buck's Head, and the traffic in and out was enough to wear the stones away. The bench of justices were remarkably warm over it, neglecting the judicial business, and showing themselves at the Buck's Head windows in purple-and-scarlet streamers.

"I will be with you in ten minutes," said Mr. Carlyle, withdrawing his arm from Lord Mount Severn's, as they approached his office, "but I must go in and read my letters."

So the earl went on to the Buck's Head, and Lord Vane took a foot canter down to the Raven, to reconnoitre it outside. He was uncommonly fond of planting himself where Sir Francis Levison's eyes were sure to fall upon him; which eyes were immediately dropped, while the young gentleman's would be fixed in an audacious stare. Being Lord Vane—or, it may be more correct to say, being the Earl of Mount Severn's son, and under control—he was debarred from dancing and jeering after the yellow candidate, as the unwashed gentry of his own age indulged in, but his tongue and his feet itched to do it.

Mr. Carlyle took his seat in his private room, opened his letters, sorted them, marked on the back of some what was to be the purport of their answers, and then called in Mr. Dill. Mr. Carlyle put the letters in his hand, gave some rapid instructions, and rose.

"You are in a hurry, Mr. Archibald."

"They want me at the Buck's Head. Why?"



“A curious incident occurred to me last evening, sir. I overheard a dispute between Levison and Otway Bethel.”

“Indeed,” carelessly replied Mr. Carlyle, who was busy at the time, looking for something in the deep drawer of his desk.

“And what I heard would go far to hang Levison, if not Bethel. As sure as we are here, Mr. Archibald, they hold the secret of Hallijohn’s murder. It appears that Levison—”

“Stop,” interposed Mr. Carlyle. “I would prefer not to hear this. Levison may have murdered him, but it is no affair of mine: neither shall I make it such.”

Old Dill felt checkmated. “Meanwhile, Richard Hare suffers, Mr. Archibald,” he observed in a remonstrating tone.

“I am aware he does.”

“Is it right that the innocent should suffer for the guilty?”

“No. Very wrong. But the case is all too common.”

“If some one would take up Richard Hare’s cause now, he might be proved innocent,” added the old man, with a wistful look at Mr. Carlyle.

“It is being taken up, Dill.”

A pause and a glad look. “That’s the best news I have had for many a day, sir. But my evidence will be necessary to the case. Levison—”

“I am not taking up the case. You must carry your news elsewhere. It is no affair of mine, I say.”

“Then who is taking it up?” echoed Mr. Dill, in astonishment.

“Ball. He has had a meeting with Richard, and is now acting for him.”

Mr. Dill's eyes sparkled. "Is he going to prosecute, Mr. Archibald?"

"I tell you I know nothing. I will know nothing."

"Ah well! I can understand. But I shall go on to their office at once, Mr. Archibald, and inform them of what I overheard," said old Dill, in vehement decision.

"That is not my affair, either," laughed Mr. Carlyle; "it is yours. But remember—if you do go—it is Ball, not Treadman."

Waiting only to give certain orders to the head clerk, Mr. Dill proceeded to the office of Ball and Treadman. A full hour was he closeted there with the senior partner.

Not until three o'clock that afternoon did the justices take their seats on the bench. Like renegade school-boys, they had been playing truant, conjugating the verb *s'amuser*, instead of *travailler*, and now scuffled in to their duties at the tenth hour. It was scarcely to be called coming in, either, for there were but two of them, one slinking in after the other, with conscious faces of neglect: Justice Herbert and Squire Pinner.

Two important cases were disposed of, both arising out of the present rollicking state of West Lynne. Two ladies, one declaring for the purple-and-scarlet, the other for the yellow, had disputed in a public-house over the merits of the respective candidates, winding it up with a pewter-pot fight. The second case was that of a knot of boys, who had carried Sir Francis Levison (in straw) through the town, and then burnt him on a convenient grass-plot. To the exceeding terror of the grass-plot's owners, and destruction of certain linen of theirs, which, lying out there to dry, got burnt. The two ladies were condemned to a

week's imprisonment; and the boys were ordered the treat of a private whipping.

Scarcely had the latter case been disposed of, and the boys removed, all howling, when Lawyer Ball bustled in and craved a secret hearing. His application was of the last importance, he premised, but, that the ends of justice might not be defeated, it was necessary that their worships should entertain it in private; he therefore craved the bench to accord it to him.

The bench consulted, looked wise, and — possibly possessing some latent curiosity themselves upon the point — graciously acceded. They adjourned to a private room, and it was half-past four before they came out of it. Very long faces, scared and grim, wore their worships, as if Lawyer Ball's communication had both perplexed and confounded them.

## CHAPTER XIII.

## THE WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN.

“THIS is the afternoon we are to meet Dr. Martin at papa’s office,” William Carlyle had exclaimed that same day at dinner. “Do we walk in, Madame Vine?”

“I do not know, William. Mrs. Carlyle is going to take you.”

“No, she is not. You are to take me.”

A flush passed over Lady Isabel’s face at the bare thought: though she did not believe it. *She* go to Mr. Carlyle’s office! “Mrs. Carlyle told me herself that she should take you,” was her reply.

“All I know is, that mamma said this morning you would take me in to West Lynne to-day,” persisted William.

The discussion was interrupted by the appearance of Mrs. Carlyle: interrupted and decided also. “Madame Vine,” she said, “you will be ready at three o’clock to go in with William.”

Lady Isabel’s heart beat. “I understood you to say that you should go with him yourself Madam.”

“I know I did. I intended to do so. But I heard this morning that some friends from a distance are coming this afternoon to call upon me. Therefore I shall not go out.”

How she, Lady Isabel, wished that she dared say also, "I shall not go out, either." But that might not be. Well? she must go through with it, as she had to go through with the rest.

William rode his pony into West Lynne, the groom attending to take it back again. He was to walk home with Madame Vine: who walked both ways.

"Mr. Carlyle was not in, when they arrived at the office. The boy went boldly on to the private room, leaving Madame Vine to follow him. Mr. Dill came in.

"Well, Master William! Have you come here to give instructions in a lawsuit, or to file a bill in Chancery?" laughed he. "Take a seat, pray ma'am."

"I have come here to wait for Dr. Martin. He's coming to see me. I say, Mr. Dill, where's papa gone?"

"How should I know?" said Mr. Dill, pleasantly. "But now, what do you want with Dr. Martin? I am sure you must be getting better — with that rosy colour!"

"I wish I could get better!" responded the boy. "It's so nasty, having that cod-liver oil to take! Mamma was coming in with me, but she can't now."

"How is your mamma, Master William?"

"Oh, she's very well. What a shouting there was, down by the police station! It frightened my pony, and I had to hold him in, and give him a little taste of whip. They were kicking a yellow rosette about."

"Ah. There'll be no peace till this election's over." responded old Dill. "I wish it was: and the fellow clear of the town."

"Do you mean that Levison?" asked William,

who of course took his tone of politics from those around him.

“Yes, I do. The extraordinary thing is,” he continued speaking to himself and not to his auditors, “what could have possessed the fool to venture here.”

A hot glow illumined the face of Lady Isabel. What possessed “the fool” to do many things that he had done? A fool, in the extreme sense of the term, he verily and indeed was.

“Of course he could not expect to stand against my papa!” oracularly spoke William.

“He’ll never stand against any good man,” warmly returned old Dill. “No: God would never suffer it.”

“Do you mean for the election?” quoth William.

“No, my dear. I was not thinking of elections just then.”

A clerk appeared, showing in a stranger: a client. The clerk might have deemed that Mr. Carlyle was in his room. Old Dill took the client out again, into his own little private sanctum but not before; the governess had been honoured with a curious stare.

She was dressed as she ever was, in black silk. Sometimes her dresses were rich, sometimes plain and quiet; but the material was invariably the same: black silk. As in doors, the make of the upper part was the same—the loose jacket. The one she wore to-day was a handsome robe with embossed flounces; a mantle to match. And there was the large straw bonnet, with its hiding veil. The old blue spectacles were home again, and on. Lady Isabel wished herself anywhere else: she did not like that strange eyes should look upon her.



Presently Mr. Carlyle appeared. He was talking to Mr. Dill, who followed him.

“Oh—are you here, Madame Vine! I left word that you were to go in to Miss Carlyle’s. Did I not leave word, Dill?”

“Not with me, sir.”

“I forgot it then. I meant to do so. What is the time?” He looked at his watch. Ten minutes to four. “Did the doctor say at what hour he should call?” Mr. Carlyle added to Madame Vine.

“Not precisely. I gathered that it would not be very early in the afternoon.”

They went into Miss Carlyle’s, Lady Isabel and William. That lady was out. Not expected in till dinner-time, the man said. William took up a comfortable position on the sofa, and, remaining quiet, dropped asleep.

How slowly the minutes seemed to flit past! how still the house seemed to be! You may have noticed that, yourselves, when waiting long for anything. Lady Isabel sat on, listening to the silence; mechanically watching the passers-by through the Venetian blind; glancing at the child’s white face—white now; wishing the physician would come. It struck half-past five.

“Here he is?” she thought. An entrance at the hall door: and now advancing footsteps. Not physician’s footsteps. Her heart would not have fluttered at them.

“Dr. Martin is late,” observed Mr. Carlyle, as he came in. “I fear your patience will be tired, Madame Vine.”

“It is of no consequence, sir,” she replied, in that indistinct, whispered tone, above which her voice was scarcely, if ever, raised.

“How pale he looks!” involuntarily exclaimed Mr. Carlyle, glancing from Madame Vine to the boy. “And this inclination to sleep! Is it good, I wonder?”

“I thought that Mrs. Carlyle would come in with him,” said Madame, at a loss for something to say.

“Mrs. Carlyle is expecting friends. And I do not know that she would have come, had she not been. She has not felt very well the last day or two, and I could not allow her to be fatigued, in her present state of health.”

A sharp pang. The time had been when it was she—*she*—whom he would not allow fatigue to touch. Oh! to be his, once more; his, with the past blotted out.

“Here he is!” exclaimed Mr. Carlyle with alacrity, as he went into the hall. She supposed he alluded to the physician; supposed he had seen him pass the window. Their entrance together woke up William.

“Well,” said the doctor, who was a little man with a bald head, “and how fares it with my young patient? Bon jour, madame.”

“Bon jour, monsieur,” responded she. She wished everybody would address her in French, and take her for French: there seemed less chance of recognition. She would have to speak in good plain English, however, if she must carry on a conversation with the doctor. Beyond a familiar phrase or two, he was something like Justice Hare—Nong parley Fronsay, me!

“And how does the cod-liver oil get on?” asked the doctor of William, as he drew him to the light.

“It is nicer now than it used to be, eh?”

“No,” said William, “it’s nastier than ever.”

Dr. Martin looked at the boy: felt his pulse, his

skin, listened to his breathing. "There," said he, presently, "you may sit down again and have your nap out."

"I wish I might have something to drink: I am very thirsty. May I ring for some water, papa?"

"Go and find your aunt's maid, and ask her for some," said Mr. Carlyle.

"Ask her for milk," called out Dr. Martin. "Not water."

Away went William. Mr. Carlyle was leaning against the side of the window; Dr. Martin folded his arms before it: Lady Isabel stood near the latter. The broad, full light was cast upon all, but the thick veil hid Lady Isabel's face. It was not often she could be caught without that veil, for she seemed to wear her bonnet at all sorts of seasonable and unseasonable times.

"What is your opinion, doctor?" asked Mr. Carlyle.

"Well," began the doctor, in a *very* professional tone, "the boy is certainly delicate. But—"

"Stay, Dr. Martin," was the interruption, spoken in a low impressive voice, "you will deal candidly with me. I must know the truth, without disguise. Tell it me freely."

Dr. Martin paused. "The truth is not always palatable, Mr. Carlyle."

"True. But, for that very reason, all the more necessary. Let me hear the worst. And the child has no mother, you know, to be shocked with it."

"I fear that it will be the worst."

"Death?"

"Ay. The seeds of consumption must have been

inherent in him. They are showing themselves all too plainly.”

What Mr. Carlyle felt was not suffered to appear: his feelings were entirely under his own control. That he was tenderly and sincerely attached to his children, there was no doubt. He remained quite still, his eyes shaded by their drooping lids. A few minutes, and he broke the silence.

“How can consumption have come to *him*? It is not in the family: on my side, or—or on his mother’s.”

“Pardon me,” said the doctor. “The child’s grandmother died of consumption; the Countess of Mount Severn.”

“They did not call it consumption,” said Mr. Carlyle.

“I don’t care what they called it. It was consumption. Very slow and lingering; mild, too; I grant you that.”

“Is there *no* hope for the child?”

Dr. Martin looked at him. “You bade me give you the truth.”

“Nothing else! nothing but the truth,” returned Mr. Carlyle, his tone one of mingled pain and command.

“Then there is none: no hope whatever. The lungs are extensively diseased.”

“And how long—”

“That I cannot say,” interrupted the doctor, divining what the next question was to be, “He may linger on for months; for a year, it may even be; or, a very short period may see the termination. Don’t worry him with any more lessons and stuff of learning: he’ll never want it.”

The doctor cast his eyes upon the governess as he spoke; the injunction concerning her as much as it did Mr. Carlyle. And the doctor started, for he thought she was fainting; her face had become so ghastly white: he could see it through her veil.

“You are ill, madame! you are ill! Trouve malade! don’t you?”

She opened her lips to speak; her trembling lips, that would not obey her. Dr. Martin, in his concern, pulled off the blue spectacles. She caught them from him with one hand, sat down on the nearest chair, and hid her face with the other.

Mr. Carlyle, scarcely understanding the scuffle, came forward. “Are you ill, Madame Vine?”

She was putting on her spectacles under her veil, her face whiter than ever. “Pray do not interrupt your conversation to pay attention to me! I thank you; I thank you both. I am subject to—slight spasms, and they make me look ill for the moment. It has passed now.”

The doctor turned from her: Mr. Carlyle resumed his place by the window. “What should be the treatment?” asked the latter.

“Almost anything you please—that the boy himself likes. Let him play, or rest; ride, or walk; eat and drink, or let it alone: it cannot make much difference.”

“Doctor! You yield to it, as a last hope, very lightly.”

Dr. Martin shook his head. “I speak as I *know*. You insisted on having my true opinion.”

“A warmer climate?” suggested Mr. Carlyle, eagerly, the idea crossing his mind.

“It might prolong the end for a very little while:

a few weeks, perhaps: avert it, it could not. And who could take him? You could not go; and he has no mother. No: I should not advise it."

"I wish you would see Wainwright—with reference to William."

"I have seen him. I met him this afternoon, by chance, and told him my opinion. How is Mrs. Carlyle?"

"Pretty well. She is not in robust health, you are aware, just now."

Dr. Martin smiled. "These things will happen. Mrs. Carlyle has a thoroughly good constitution: a far stronger one than—than—"

"Than what?" said Mr. Carlyle, wondering why he hesitated.

"You must grant me pardon. I may as well finish, now I have begun; but I was not thinking, when I spoke. She is stronger than was Lady Isabel. I must be off to catch the six train."

"You will come over from time to time to East Lynne, to see William?"

"If you wish it. It may be a satisfaction, perhaps. Bon jour, madame."

Lady Isabel bowed to him as he left the room with Mr. Carlyle. "How fond that French governess of yours is of the boy!" the doctor whispered, as they crossed the hall. "I detected it when she brought him to Lynneborough. And you saw her just now! that emotion was all because I said he could not live. Good-bye."

Mr. Carlyle grasped his hand. "Doctor, I wish you could save him!" he passionately uttered.

"Ah, Carlyle! if we humble mites of human doctors could but keep those whom it is the Great



Physician's good pleasure to take, how we should be run after! There's hidden mercy, remember, in the darkest cloud. Farewell, my friend."

Mr. Carlyle returned to the room. He approached Lady Isabel, looking down upon her as she sat: not that he could see much of her face. "These are grievous tidings. But you were more prepared for them, I fancy, than I was."

She started suddenly up, approached the window, and looked out; as if she saw somebody passing whom she would gaze at. All of emotion was stirred up within her; her temples throbbed, her throat beat, her breath became hysterical. Could she bear thus to hold confidential converse with him, over the state of their child? She pulled off her gloves for coolness to her burning hands, she wiped the moisture from her pale forehead, she struggled for calmness. What excuse could she offer to Mr. Carlyle?

"I love the boy so very much, sir," she said, half turning round. "And the doctor's fiat, too plainly pronounced, has given me pain; pain to agitation."

Again Mr. Carlyle approached her, following close up to where she stood. "You are very kind, thus to feel an interest in my child."

She did not answer.

"Do not acquaint Mrs. Carlyle," he resumed. "I would prefer to tell her myself. She must not be suddenly grieved or alarmed just now."

"Why should she be either grieved or alarmed?"

She is not his mother." Passionately, fiercely, resentfully were the words spoken, as if she would cast contempt to Barbara. But recollection returned to her before they had all left her lips, and the conclud-

ing sentence was wonderfully toned down. Mr. Carlyle raised his eyelids, and the tones of his voice rang haughtily on her ear.

“You speak hastily, madame.”

The reproof eat into her heart, and she remembered who she was; remembered it with shame and humiliation. She, the governess! Mr. Carlyle must have deemed her worse than mad, so to speak of his wife. He was moving from her, when she suddenly turned to him, a yearning petition on her lips.

“It appeared—if I understood aright—that there might be a difficulty about William’s going to a warmer climate, no one, suitable, being at hand to take him. Sir! let me do it. Confide him to my charge.”

“He is not to go. You heard what Dr. Martin said—that it could not materially prolong his life.”

“Only for a few weeks,” she said. “But are not those of value?”

“That it *might*. Where would be the use? They would be weeks of isolation from his family. No, Madame Vine. If my boy is to leave me, I must have him with me to the last.”

William’s head appeared, pushed in at the door to reconnoitre. “He’s gone, isn’t he? I would not come back while he was here, for fear he should give me some cod-liver oil now.”

Mr. Carlyle sat down and lifted William on his knees, his forehead pressed lovingly against the boy’s silky hair. “My darling child, the cod-liver oil is to do you good, you know; to make you strong.”

“But I don’t think it *does* make me strong, papa. Does Dr. Martin say I shall die?”

“Who told you anything about dying?”

“Oh—some of them talk of it.”

“We must see what we can do towards curing you, instead of letting you die,” responded Mr. Carlyle, almost at a loss what answer to make, and suppressing the emotion of his own aching heart. “But, whether we live or die, we are in the hands of God: you know that, William: and, whatever God wills is always for the best.”

“Yes, I know that, papa.”

Mr. Carlyle rose and lifted the boy towards Madame Vine. “Take care of him, madame,” he said, and passed into the hall.

“Here, papa, papa! I want you,” cried William, breaking from Madame Vine’s hand and running after him. “Let me walk home with you? Are you going to walk?”

How could he find in his heart to deny anything to the child then? “Very well,” he said. “Stay here till I come for you.”

“We are going home with papa,” proclaimed William to Madame Vine.

Madame Vine did not relish the news. But there was no help for it. In a very short time Mr. Carlyle appeared, and they set off: he holding William’s hand; Madame Vine walking alone, on the other side the child.

“Where’s William Vane, papa?” asked the boy.

“He has gone on with Lord Mount Severn.”

Scarcely had the words been spoken, when some one came bolting out of the post-office, and met them face to face: almost ran against them, in fact, creating some hinderance. The man looked confused, and slunk off into the gutter. And you will not wonder that he did, when you hear that it was Francis Levi-

son. William, child-like, turned his head to gaze at the intruder.

“I would not be an ugly, bad man, like him, for the world,” quoth he, as he turned it back again. “Would you, papa?”

Mr. Carlyle did not answer, and she cast an involuntary glance upon him from her white face. His was impassive: save that a curl of ineffable scorn was upon his lips.

At Mr. Justice Hare’s gate they encountered that gentleman, who appeared to be standing there to give himself an airing. William caught sight of Mrs. Hare seated on the garden bench, outside the window, and ran to kiss her. All children loved Mrs. Hare. The justice was looking—not pale; that would not be a term half strong enough; but yellow. The curls of his best wig were limp, and all his pomposity appeared to have gone out of him.

“I say, Carlyle, what on earth is this?” cried he, in a tone that, for him, was wonderfully subdued and meek. “I was not on the bench this afternoon, but Pinner has been telling me of—of—an application that was made to them in private. It’s not true, you know; it can’t be; it’s too far-fetched a tale. What do you know about it?”

“Nothing,” said Mr. Carlyle. “I have been privy to no application.”

“It seems they want to make out now that Dick never murdered Hallijohn,” proceeded the justice, in a half whisper, glancing round as if to be sure that there were no eavesdroppers amidst the trees.

“Oh!” said Mr. Carlyle.

“But that Levison did. *Levison!*”

Mr. Carlyle made no reply, save by a gesture: his

face more impassive than before. Not so another face beside him.

“But it *can't* be, you know. It can't, I say.”

“So far as Richard's innocence goes, of that I have long been convinced,” spoke Mr. Carlyle.

“And that Levison's guilty?” returned the justice, opening his eyes in puzzled wonderment.

“I give no opinion upon that point,” was the cold rejoinder.

“It's impossible, I say. Dick can't be innocent. You may as well tell me the world's turned upside down.”

“It is sometimes, I think. That Richard was not the guilty man will be proved yet, justice, in the broad face of day.”

“If—if—that other did do it, I should think you'd take the warrant out of the hands of the police, and capture him yourself.”

“I would not touch him with a pair of tongs,” spoke Mr. Carlyle, his lip curling again. “If the man goes to his punishment, he goes; but I do not help him on his road thither.”

“*Can* Dick be innocent?” mused the justice, returning to the thought which so troubled his mind. “Then why has he kept away? Why did he not come back and say so?”

“That you might deliver him up, justice? You know you took an oath to do it.”

The justice looked remarkably humble.

“Oh, but, Carlyle,” impulsively said he, the thought occurring to him, “what an awful revenge this would have been for you on—somebody—had she lived. How her false step would have come home to her now!”

“False steps come home to most people,” responded Mr. Carlyle, as he took William by the hand, who then ran up. And, lifting his hat to Mrs. Hare in the distance, he walked on.

She, Lady Isabel, walked on too, by the side of the child, as before, walked on with a shivering frame, and a heart sick unto death. The justice looked after them, his mind preoccupied. He was in a maze of bewilderment. Richard innocent! Richard, whom he had striven to pursue to a shameful end! And that other the guilty one? The world *was* turning upside down.



## CHAPTER XIV.

MISS CARLYLE IN FULL DRESS. AFY ALSO.

MERRILY rose West Lynne on the Thursday morning; merrily rang out the bells, clashing and chiming. The street was alive with people; the windows were crowded with heads; something unusual was astir. It was the day of nomination of the two candidates, and everybody took the opportunity to make a holiday.

Ten o'clock was the time named; but, before that hour struck, West Lynne was crammed. The county people had come in, thick and three-fold; rich and poor; people of note and people of none; voters and non-voters: all eager to mix themselves up in the day's proceedings. You see, the notorious fact of Sir Francis Levison's having come forward to oppose Mr. Carlyle, caused greater interest to attach to this election than is usual even in small country places—and that need not be. Barbara drove in to West Lynne, in her carriage; the two children with her, and the governess. The governess had wished to remain at home. Barbara would not hear of it; almost felt inclined to resent it as a slight: besides, if she took no interest in Mr. Carlyle, she must go to take care of Lucy: she, Barbara, would be too much occupied to look after children. So Madame Vine,

perforce, stepped into the barouche and sat opposite to Mrs. Carlyle, her thick veil shading her features, and their pallor contrasting with the blue spectacles.

They alighted at the residence of Miss Carlyle. Quite a gathering was already there. Lady and Miss Dobede, the Herberts, Mrs. Hare, and many others; for the house was in a good spot for seeing the fun: and all people were eager to testify their respect for Mr. Carlyle. Miss Carlyle was in great grandeur; a brocaded dress, and a scarlet-and-purple bow in front of it, the size of a pumpkin. It was about the only occasion, in all Miss Carlyle's life, that she had deemed it necessary to attire herself magnificently. Barbara wore no bow, but she exhibited a splendid bouquet of scarlet and purple flowers. Mr. Carlyle had himself given it to her that morning.

Mr. Carlyle saw them all at the windows of the large upper drawing-room, and came in; he was then on his way to the Town-hall. Shaking hands, laughter, hearty and hasty good wishes; and he quitted the room again. Barbara stole after him for a sweeter farewell.

“God bless and prosper you, Archibald, my dearest!”

The business of the day began. Mr. Carlyle was proposed by Sir John Dobede, and seconded by Mr. Herbert. Lord Mount Severn, than whom not a busier man was there, would willingly have been proposer and seconder too, but he had no local influence in the place. Sir Francis Levison was proposed also by two gentlemen of standing. The show of hands was declared to be in favour of Mr. Carlyle. It was; about twenty to one. Upon which the baronet's friends demanded a poll.

Then all was bustle, and scuffle, and confusion. Everybody tearing away to the hustings, which had been fixed in a convenient spot, the Town-hall not affording the accommodation necessary for a poll. Candidates, and proposers and seconders, and gentlemen, and officers, and mob, hustling and jostling each other. Mr. Carlyle was linked arm-in-arm with Sir John Dobede; Sir John's arm was within Lord Mount Severn's—but, as to order, it was impossible to observe any. To gain the place, they had to pass the house of Miss Carlyle. Young Vane, who was in the thick of the crowd—of course—cast his eyes up to its lined windows, took off his hat and waved it. “Carlyle and honour for ever!” shouted out he.

The ladies laughed and nodded, and shook their handkerchiefs, and displayed their scarlet-and-purple colours. The crowd took up the shout, till the very air echoed with it. “Carlyle and honour for ever!” Barbara's tears were falling; but she smiled through them at one pair of loving eyes which sought out hers.

“A galaxy of beauty!” whispered Mr. Drake, in the ear of Sir Francis. “How the women rally round him! I tell you what, Levison: you and the government were stupid, to go on with the contest: and I said so, days ago. You have no more chance against Carlyle, than that bit of straw in the air has against the wind. You ought to have withdrawn in time.”

“Like a coward!” angrily retorted Sir Francis. “No. I'll go on with it to the last.”

“How lovely his wife is!” resumed Mr. Drake, his admiring eyes cast up at Barbara. “I say, Levison, was the first one as charming?”

Sir Francis looked perfectly savage: the allusion did not please him. But, ere another word could be spoken, some one in the garb of a policeman, who had wound his way through the crowd, laid his hand on the baronet.

“ Sir Francis Levison, you are my prisoner.”

Nothing worse than *debt* occurred at the moment to the mind of Sir Francis. But that was quite enough, and he turned purple with rage.

“ Your hands off, vermin! How dare you?”

A quick movement, a slight click, a hustle from the wondering crowd more immediately around, and the handcuffs were on. Utter amazement alone prevented Mr. Drake from knocking down the policeman. A dozen vituperating tongues assailed him.

“ I’m sorry to do it in this public place and manner,” said the officer, partly to Sir Francis, partly to the gentlemen around: “ but I couldn’t come across him last night, do as I would. And the warrant has been in my hands since five o’clock yesterday afternoon. Sir Francis Levison, I arrest you for the wilful murder of George Hallijohn.”

The crowd fell back; the crowd was paralysed with consternation; the word was passed from one extreme of it to the other, back, and across again, and the excitement grew high. The ladies, looking from Miss Carlyle’s windows, saw what had happened, though they could not divine the cause. Some of them turned pale at the sight of the handcuffs, and Mary Pinner, an exciteable girl, screamed.

Pale? What was their gentle paleness, compared with the frightfully livid hue that disfigured the features of Francis Levison? His agitation was pitiable to witness, his face a terror to look upon: once or

twice he gasped as if in an agony; and then his eyes happened to fall on Otway Bethel, who stood near. Shorn of its adornments—which might not be thought adornments on paper—the following was the sentence that burst involuntarily from his lips:

“You hound! It is you who have done this!”

“No! by—” Whether Mr. Otway Bethel was about to swear by Jupiter, or Juno, never was decided, the sentence being cut ignominiously short at the above two words. Another policeman, in the summary manner exercised towards Sir Francis, had clapped a pair of handcuffs upon *him*.

“Mr. Otway Bethel, I arrest you as an accomplice in the murder of George Hallijohn.”

You may be sure, the whole assembly was arrested too—figuratively; and stood with eager gaze and open ears. Colonel Bethel, quitting the scarlet-and-purple ranks, flashed into those of the yellows. He knew his nephew was graceless enough; but—to see him with a pair of handcuffs on!

“What does all this mean?” he authoritatively demanded of the officers.

“It’s no fault of ours, colonel; we have but executed the warrant,” answered one of them. “The magistrates issued it yesterday against these two gentlemen, on suspicion of their being concerned in the murder of Hallijohn.”

“In conjunction with Richard Hare?” cried the astounded colonel, gazing from one to the other, prisoners and officers, in scared bewilderment.

“It’s alleged now, that Richard Hare didn’t have nothing to do with it,” returned the man. “It’s said he is innocent. I’m sure *I* don’t know.”

“I swear that *I* am innocent,” passionately uttered Otway Bethel.

“Well, sir, you have only got to prove it,” civilly rejoined the policeman.

Miss Carlyle and Lady Dobede leaned from the window; their curiosity too excited to remain silent longer. Mrs. Hare was standing by their side. “What is the matter?” both asked of the upturned faces immediately beneath.

“Them two, the fine member, as wanted to be, and young Bethel, be arrested for murder,” spoke a man’s clear voice in answer. “The tale runs as they murdered Hallijohn, and then laid it on the shoulders of young Dick Hare; who didn’t do it, after all.”

A faint wailing cry of startled pain, and Barbara flew to Mrs. Hare, from whom it proceeded. “Oh, mamma, my dear mamma, take comfort! Do not suffer this to agitate you to illness. Richard *is* innocent, and it will surely be so proved. Archibald,” she added, beckoning to her husband, in her alarm, “come if you can, and say a word of assurance to mamma.”

It was impossible that Mr. Carlyle could hear the words: but he could see that his wife was agitated, and wanted him. “I will be back with you in a few moments,” he said to his friends, as he began to elbow his way through the crowd: which made way, when they saw who the elbower was.

Into another room, away from the gay visitors, they got Mrs. Hare: and Mr. Carlyle locked the door to keep them out, unconsciously taking out the key. Only himself and his wife were with her; except Madame Vine, who had been despatched by somebody with a bottle of smelling salts. Barbara knelt at her mamma’s feet; Mr. Carlyle leaned over her, her hands



sympathisingly held in his. Madame Vine would have escaped, but the key was gone.

“Oh, Archibald, tell me the truth! *You* will not deceive me,” she gasped, in earnest entreaty, the cold dew gathering on her pale, gentle face. “Is the time come to prove my boy’s innocence?”

“It is.”

“Is it possible that it can be that false, bad man who is guilty?”

“From my soul I believe him to be,” replied Mr. Carlyle, glancing round to make sure that none could hear the assertion, save those present. “But what I say to you and Barbara, I would not say to the world. Whatever be the man’s guilt, I am not his Nemesis. Dear Mrs. Hare, take courage; take comfort: happier days are coming round.”

Mrs. Hare was weeping silently. Barbara rose, and laid her mamma’s head lovingly upon her bosom.

“Take care of her, my darling,” Mr. Carlyle whispered to his wife. “Don’t leave her for a moment: and don’t let that chattering crew in, from the next room. I beg your pardon, madame.”

His hand had touched Madame Vine’s neck, in turning round; that is, had touched the jacket that encased it. He unlocked the door and regained the street: while Madame Vine sat down, with her beating and rebellious heart.

Amidst the shouts, the jeers, and the escort of the mob, Sir Francis Levison and Otway Bethel were lodged in the station-house, preparatory to their examination before the magistrates. Never, sure, was so mortifying an interruption known. So thought Sir Francis’s party. And they deemed it well, after some consultation amongst themselves, to withdraw

his name as a candidate for the membership. That he never had a shadow of chance from the first, most of them knew.

But there's an incident yet, to tell of the election-day. You have seen Miss Carlyle in her glory, her brocaded silk, standing on end with richness, her displayed colours, her pride in her noble brother! But could she have divined who and what was right above her head, at an upper window, I know not what the consequences would have been.

No less than that "brazen huzzy," Afy Hallijohn! Smuggled in by Miss Carlyle's servants, there she was, in full dress too. A green-and-white-checked sarcenet, flounced up to the waist, over a crinoline extending from here to yonder; a fancy bonnet, worn on the plait of her hair behind, with a wreath and a veil; delicate white gloves, and a swinging handkerchief of lace, redolent of musk. It was well for Miss Corny's peace that she remained in ignorance of that daring act. There stood Afy, bold as a sunflower, exhibiting herself and her splendour to the admiring eyes of the mob below, gentle and simple.

"He is a handsome man, after all," quoth she to Miss Carlyle's maids, when Sir Francis Levison arrived opposite the house.

"But such a horrid creature!" was the response. "And to think that he should come here to oppose Mr. Archibald!"

"What's that?" cried Afy. "What are they stopping for? There are some policemen there! Oh," shrieked Afy, "if they haven't put handcuffs on him! Whatever has he done? What can he have been up to?"

"Where? Who? What?" cried the servants,

bewildered with the crowd. "Put 'ancuffs on which?"

"Sir Francis Levison. Hush! What is it they say?"

Listening; looking; turning from white to red, from red to white, Afy stood. But she could make nothing of it: she could not divine the cause of the commotion. The man's answer to Miss Carlyle and Lady Dobede, clear though it was, did not quite reach her ears. "What did he say?" she cried.

"Good Heavens!" cried one of the maids, whose hearing had been quicker than Afy's. "He says they are arrested for the wilful murder of Hal — of your father, Miss Afy. Sir Francis Levison and Otway Bethel."

"*What?*" shrieked Afy, her eyes starting.

"Levison was the man who did it, he says," continued the servant, bending her ear to listen. "And young Richard Hare, he says, has been innocent all along."

Afy slowly gathered in the sense of the words; she gasped twice, as if her breath had gone; and then, with a stagger and a shiver, fell heavily to the ground. Afy Hallijohn was in a fainting fit.

## CHAPTER XV.

## MR. JIFFIN.

AFY HALLIJOHN, recovered from her fainting fit, had to be smuggled out of Miss Carlyle's, as she had been smuggled in. She was of an elastic nature, and the shock, or the surprise, or the heat — or whatever it might have been — being over, Afy was herself again. She minced along, in all her vanity, on her return to Mrs. Latimer's: her laced handkerchief flourishing from one hand, and her flounces jauntily raised with the other, to the display of her worked petticoat, and her kid boots, the heels a mile high. Let Afy alone for following the fashion, however preposterous it might be.

Not very far removed from the residence of Miss Carlyle was a shop, in the cheese and ham and butter line. A very respectable shop, too, and kept by a very respectable man. A young man of a mild countenance, who had purchased the good-will of the business; and came down from London to take possession. His predecessor had amassed enough to retire, and people foretold that Mr. Jiffin would do the same. To say that Miss Carlyle dealt at the shop, will be sufficient to proclaim the good quality of the articles kept in it.

When Afy arrived opposite the shop, Mr. Jiffin

was standing at the door ; his shopman, inside, being at some urgent employment over the contents of a butter-cask. Afy stopped. Mr. Jiffin admired her uncommonly, and she, always ready for anything in that way, had already enjoyed several passing flirtations with him.

“ Good day, Miss Hallijohn,” cried he, warmly, tucking up his white apron and pushing it round to the back of his waist, in the best manner he could, as he held out his hand to her. For Afy had once hinted in terms of disparagement at that very apron.

“ Oh — how are you, Jiffin ? ” cried Afy, loftily, pretending not to have seen him standing there. And she condescended to put the tips of her white gloves into the offered hand, as she coquetted with her handkerchief, her veil, and her ringlets. I thought you would have shut up your shop to-day, Mr. Jiffin, and taken holiday.”

“ Business must be attended to,” responded Mr. Jiffin, quite lost in the contemplation of Afy’s numerous attractions, unusually conspicuous, as they were. “ Had I known that you were abroad, Miss Hallijohn, and enjoying holiday, perhaps I might have taken one, too, in the hope of coming across you some where or other.”

His words were bonâ fide as his admiration ; Afy saw that. “ And he’s as simple as a calf,” thought she.

“ The greatest pleasure I have in life, Miss Hallijohn, is to see you go by the shop window,” continued Mr. Jiffin. “ I’m sure it’s like as if the sun itself passed.”

“ Dear me ! ” bridled Afy, with a simper, “ I don’t know any good *that* can do you. You might have

seen me go by an hour or two ago — if you had possessed eyes. I was on my way to Miss Carlyle's," she continued, with the air of one who proclaims the fact of a morning call upon a duchess.

"Where *could* my eyes have been?" ejaculated Mr. Jiffin, in an agony of regret. "In some of them precious butter-tubs, I shouldn't wonder! We have had a bad lot in, Miss Hallijohn, and I am going to return them."

"Oh," said Afy, conspicuously resenting the remark, "I don't know anything about that sort of thing. Butter-tubs are beneath me."

"Of course, of course, Miss Hallijohn," deprecated poor Jiffin. "They are very profitable, though, to those who understand the trade."

"What *is* all that shouting?" cried Afy, alluding to a tremendous noise in the distance, which had continued for some little time.

"It's the voters cheering Mr. Carlyle. I suppose you know that he's elected, Miss Hallijohn?"

"No, I don't."

"The other was withdrawn by his friends, so they made a short work of it; and Mr. Carlyle is our member. God bless him! there's not many like *him*."

"Are all these customers? Dear me, you'll have enough to do to attend to them; your man can't do it all; so I won't stay talking any longer."

With a gracious flourish of her flounces, and wave of the handkerchief, Afy sailed off. And Mr. Jiffin, when he could withdraw his fascinated eyes from following her, turned into his shop, to assist in serving four or five servant-girls, who had entered it.



“It wouldn’t be such a bad catch, after all,” soliloquised Afy, as she and her crinoline swayed along. “Of course I’d never put my nose inside the shop—unless it was to order things, like another customer. There is a private entrance, thank goodness! And they say he has got the room over the shop beautifully fitted up as a drawing-room, with a plate-glass cheffonier, and Brussels carpet, and rosewood chairs and sofa, and all the rest of it. The parlour, too, behind the shop, is comfortable, and I’d take care it was well furnished, if it isn’t already. I’d make him buy a piano for the drawing-room: it looks stylish, even if one doesn’t play upon it. And I’d keep two servants, cook and housemaid: ’t isn’t I that would marry, to be waited upon by a black tinker of a maid-of-all-work. Jiffin is such a soft, he’d agree to anything. I’m sure he’d let me turn the house into a theatre if I liked, so that I left him the shop free for his business. He is welcome to that: the shop shall be his department, and the rest of the house mine. What’s the good of a husband, except to work for you? They are only a worry, looking at them in any other light. I wonder how many bedrooms there are? If there’s none in the house of a good size, I’ll have two rooms knocked into one. I never could sleep in a closet of a place. And I’ll have a handsome bed with damask moreen hangings, one of those new Arabians, and a large mahogany wardrobe with wings, and a handsome glass and toilette, and a cheval-glass—besides the other necessary furniture. I’m not sure that I won’t have a little iron bed put up for him, in a corner. Separate beds are quite the fashion now, amongst the nobility. I’ll see. Yes; take it for all in all, it wouldn’t be so

bad a catch. The worst is the name. Jiffin. Joe Jiffin! How could I ever bear to be called Mrs. Joe Jiffin? Not but—Goodness me! what do you want?”

The interruption to Afy's aerial castle was caused by Mr. Ebenezer James. That gentleman, who had been walking with quick steps to overtake her, gave her frounces a twitch behind, to let her know somebody had come up.

“How are you, Afy? I was going after you to Mrs. Latimer's, not knowing but you had returned home. I saw you this morning at Miss Corny's windows.”

“Now I don't want any of your sauce, Ebenezer James. Afy-ing me! The other day, when you were on with your nonsense, I said you should keep your distance. You told Mr. Jiffin that I was an old sweetheart of yours. I heard of it!”

“So you were,” laughed Mr. Ebenezer.

“I never was,” flashed Afy. “I was the company of your betters in those days: and if there had been no betters in the case, I should have scorned *you*. Why! you have been a strolling player!”

“And what have you been?” returned Mr. Ebenezer, a quiet tone of meaning running through his good-humoured laughter.

Afy's cheeks flushed scarlet, and she raised her hand with a quick, menacing gesture. But that they were in the public street, Mr. Ebenezer might have found his ears boxed. Afy dropped her hand again, and made a dead stand-still.

“If you think any vile, false insinuations, that you may concoct, will injure me, you are mistaken, Ebenezer James. I am too much respected in the place. So, don't you try it on.”

“Why, Afy, what has put you out? I don’t want to injure you. Couldn’t do it, if I tried, as you say,” he added, with another quiet laugh. “I have been in too many scrapes myself, to let my tongue bring other folks into one.”

“There, that’s enough. Just take yourself off. It’s not over reputable to have you at one’s side in public.”

“Well, I will relieve you of my company, if you’ll let me deliver my commission. Though, as to ‘reputable’—however, I won’t put you out further. You are wanted at the justice-room at three o’clock this afternoon. And don’t fail, please.”

“Wanted at the justice-room!” retorted Afy. “I! What for?”

“And must not fail, as I say,” repeated Mr. Ebenezer. “You saw Levison taken up; your old flame—”

Afy stamped her foot in indignant interruption. “Take care what you say, Ebenezer James! Flame! He? I’ll have you up for defamation of character.”

“Don’t be a goose, Afy. It’s of no use riding the high horse with me. You know where I saw you; and saw him. People here said you were with Dick Hare: I could have told them better: but I did not. It was no affair of mine, that I should proclaim it, neither is it now. Levison, *alias* Thorn, is taken up for your father’s murder, and you are wanted to give evidence.”

A change came over Miss Afy. Her lofty looks changed to an aspect particularly cowed and humble, not to say of terror. “I know nothing of the murder!” she stammered, striving to brave it out still, in words and tone. “And I will not attend.”

“You must, Afy,” he answered, putting a piece of paper in her hand, “There! that’s your subpoena. Ball thought you would not come without one.”

“I will never give evidence against Levison,” she uttered, tearing the subpoena to pieces, and scattering them in the street. “I swear I won’t. There, for you! Will I help to hang an innocent man, when it was Dick Hare who was the guilty one? No! I’ll walk myself off a hundred miles away first, and stop in hiding till it’s over. I shan’t forget this turn that you have chosen to play me, Ebenezer James.”

“I chosen! Why, do you suppose I have had anything to do with it? Don’t take up that notion, Afy. Mr. Ball put that subpoena in my hand, and told me to serve it. He might have given it to the other clerk, just as he gave it to me: it was all chance. If I could do you a good turn, I’d do it: not a bad one.”

Afy strode on at railway speed, waving him off. “Mind you don’t fail, Afy,” he said, as he prepared to return.

“Fail,” answered she, with flashing eyes. “I shall fail giving evidence, if you mean that. They don’t get me up to their justice-room. Neither by force nor stratagem.”

Ebenezer James looked after her as she tore along. “What a spirit that Afy has got, when it’s put up!” quoth he. “She’ll be off out of reach unless she’s stopped. She’s a great simpleton! nothing particular need come out about her and Thorn: unless she lets it out herself, in her tantrums. Here comes Ball, I declare! I must tell him.”

On went Afy, and gained Mrs. Latimer’s. That lady, suffering from indisposition, was confined to the

house. Afy, divesting herself of certain little odds and ends of her finery, made her way into Mrs. Latimer's presence.

"Oh, ma'am, such heart-rending news as I have had!" began she. "A relation of mine is dying, and wants to see me. I ought to be away by the next train."

"Dear me!" cried Mrs. Latimer, after a pause of dismay. "But how can I do without you, Afy?"

"It's a dying request, ma'am," pleaded Afy, covering her eyes with her handkerchief—not the lace one—as if in the depth of woe. "Of course I wouldn't ask you, under any other circumstances, suffering as you are!"

"Where does your relation live?" asked Mrs. Latimer. "How long shall you be away?"

Afy mentioned the first town that came uppermost, and "hoped" she might be back to-morrow.

"What relation is it?" continued Mrs. Latimer. "I thought you had no relatives; except Joyce, and your aunt, Mrs. Kane."

"This is another aunt," cried Afy, softly. "I have never mentioned her, not being friends. Differences divided us. Of course that makes me all the more anxious to obey her request."

An uncommon good hand at an impromptu tale was Afy. And Mrs. Latimer consented to her demand. Afy flew up-stairs, attired herself once more, put up one or two things in a small leather bag, placed some money in her purse, and left the house.

Sauntering idly on the pavement on the sunny side of the street, was a policeman. He crossed over to Afy, with whom he had a slight acquaintance.



“ Good day, Miss Hallijohn. A fine day, is it not?”

“ Fine enough,” returned Afy, provoked at being hindered. “ I can’t talk to you now, for I am in a hurry.”

The faster she walked, the faster he walked, keeping at her side. Afy’s pace increased to a run. His increased to a run too.

“ Why are you in such haste?” asked he.

“ Well, it’s nothing to you. And I’m sure I don’t want you to dance attendance upon me just now. There’s a time for all things. I’ll have some chatter with you another day.”

“ One would think you were hurrying to catch a train.”

“ So I am — if you must have your curiosity satisfied. I am going out on a little pleasure excursion, Mr. Inquisitive.”

“ For long?”

“ U — m. Home to-morrow, perhaps. Is it true that Mr. Carlyle’s elected?”

“ Oh, yes. Don’t go up that way, please.”

“ Not up this way!” repeated Afy. “ It’s the nearest road to the station. It cuts off all that corner.”

The officer laid his hand upon her gently. Afy thought he was venturing it in sport — as if deeming her too charming to be parted with.

“ What do you mean by your nonsense? I tell you I have not time for it now. Take your hand off me,” she added, angrily — for the hand was clasping her closer.

“ I am sorry to hurt a lady’s feelings, especially yours, miss: but I daren’t take it off, and I daren’t part with you. My instructions are to take you on



at once to the witness-room. Your evidence is wanted this afternoon."

If you ever saw a ghost more livid than ghosts in ordinary, you may picture to your mind the appearance of Afy Hallijohn just then. She did not faint, as she had done once before, that day, but she looked as if she should die. One sharp cry, instantly suppressed, for Afy did retain some presence of mind, and remembered that she was in the public road; one sharp tussle for liberty, and she resigned herself, perforce, to her fate.

"I have no evidence to give," she said, in a calmer tone. "I know nothing of the facts."

"I'm sure *I* don't know anything of them," returned the man. "I don't know why you are wanted. When instructions are given us, miss, we can't ask what they mean. I was bid to watch that you didn't go off out of the town, and to bring you on to the witness-room, if you attempted it, and I have tried to do it as politely as possible."

"You don't imagine I am going to walk through West Lynne with your hand upon me."

"I'll take it off, Miss Hallijohn, if you'll give a promise not to bolt. You see, 'twould come to nothing, if you did; for I should be up with you in a couple of yards—besides, it would be drawing folks' attention on you. You couldn't hope to outrun me, or to be a match for me in strength."

"I will go quietly," said Afy. "Take it off."

She kept her word. Afy was no simpleton, and knew that she *was* no match for him. She had fallen into the hands of the Philistines, and must make the best of it. So they walked through the street as if they were but taking a quiet stroll; he gallantly

bearing the leather bag. Miss Carlyle's shocked eyes happened to fall upon them as they passed her window: she wondered where could be the eyes of the man's inspector.

Afy was lodged in the witness-room; a small room with a skylight at the top. She passed her time pretty agreeably, considering all things: partly in concocting a tale to tell to Mrs. Latimer; partly in deliberating how much she might admit before the justices, without compromising herself. But, in using the word "compromising," you must not suppose it refers to the murder. Afy was as innocent of that as you or I: she firmly believed in Levison's innocence, and in the guilt of Richard Hare. Still, Afy was aware that her doings at that period would not shine out clearly in the full light of day, or in the gossip of West Lynne.

## CHAPTER XVI.

## THE JUSTICE-ROOM.

THE magistrates took their seats on the bench. The bench would not hold them : all, in the Commission of the Peace, flocked in. Any other day, they would not have been at West Lynne. As to the room, the wonder was, how it ever got emptied again, so densely was it packed. Sir Francis Levison's friends were there in a body. They did not believe a word of the accusation : a scandalous affair, cried they, got up probably by some of the scarlet-and-purple party. Lord Mount Severn, who chose to be present, had a place assigned him on the bench ; Lord Vane got the best place he could fight for amidst the crowd. Mr. Justice Hare sat as chairman, unusually stern, unbending, and grim. No favour would he show ; but no unfairness : had it been to save his son from hanging, he would not adjudge guilt to Francis Levison against his conscience. Colonel Bethel was likewise on the bench ; stern also.

In that primitive place—primitive in what related to the justice-room and the justices—things were not conducted with the regularity of the law. The law there was often a dead letter. No very grave cases were decided there : they went to Lynneborough ; a month at the treadmill, or a week's imprisonment, or a bout of whipping for juveniles, were pretty nearly

the harshest sentences pronounced. In this examination, as in others, evidence was advanced that was inadmissible—at least that would have been inadmissible in a more orthodox court; hearsay testimony, and irregularities of that nature. Mr. Rubiny watched the case on behalf of Sir Francis Levison.

Mr. Ball opened the proceedings; giving the account which had been imparted to him by Richard Hare: but not mentioning Richard as his informant. He was questioned as to whence he obtained his information, but replied that it was not convenient at present to disclose the source. The stumbling-block to the magistrates appeared to be, the identifying Levison with Thorn. Ebenezer James came forward to prove it.

“What do you know of the prisoner, Sir Francis Levison?” questioned Justice Herbert.

“Not much,” responded Mr. Ebenezer. “I used to know him as Captain Thorn.”

“*Captain Thorn?*”

“Afy Hallijohn called him captain; but I understood he was but a lieutenant.”

“From whom did you understand that?”

“From Afy. She was the only person I heard speak of him.”

“And you say you were in the habit of seeing him?—in the place mentioned, the Abbey Wood?”

“I saw him there repeatedly: also at Hallijohn’s cottage.”

“Did you speak with him—as Thorn?”

“Two or three times. I addressed him as Thorn, and he answered to the name. I had no suspicion but what it was his name. Otway Bethel”—casting his eyes on Mr. Otway, who stood in his shaggy attire

—“also knew him as Thorn; and so, I make no doubt, did Locksley, for he was always in the wood.”

“Anybody else?”

“Poor Hallijohn himself knew him as Thorn. He said to Afy one day, in my presence, that he would not have that confounded dandy, Thorn, coming there.”

“Were those the words he used?”

“They were. ‘That confounded dandy, Thorn.’ I remember Afy’s reply: it was rather insolent. She said Thorn was as free to come there as anybody else; and she would not be found fault with, as though she was not fit to take care of herself.”

“That is nothing to the purpose. Were any others acquainted with this Thorn?”

“I should imagine the elder sister, Joyce, was. And the one who knew him best of all, was young Richard Hare.”

*Old* Richard Hare, from his place on the bench, frowned menacingly at an imaginary Richard.

“What took Thorn into the wood so often?”

“He was courting Afy.”

“With an intention of marrying her?”

“Well—no,” cried Mr. Ebenezer, with a twist of the mouth; “I should not suppose he entertained any intention of that sort. He used to come over from Swainson, or its neighbourhood; riding a splendid horse.”

“Whom did you suppose him to be?”

“I supposed him to be moving in the upper ranks of life. There was no doubt of it. His dress, his manners, his tone, all proclaimed it. He appeared to wish to shun observation, and evidently did not care to be seen. He rarely arrived until twilight.”

“Did you see him there on the night of Halli-john’s murder?”

“No. I was not there myself that evening, so could not have seen him.”

“Did a suspicion cross your mind at any time that he may have been guilty of the murder?”

“Never. Richard Hare was accused of it, and it never occurred to me to suppose he had not done it.”

“Pray how many years is this ago?” sharply interrupted Mr. Rubiny, perceiving that the witness was done with.

“Let’s see?” responded Mr. Ebenezer. “I can’t be sure as to a year, without reckoning up. A dozen, if not more.”

“And you mean to say that you can swear to Sir Francis Levison being that man—with all those years intervening?”

“I swear that he is the same man. I am as positive of his identity as I am of my own.”

“Without having seen him from that time to this!” derisively returned the lawyer. “Nonsense, witness!”

“I did not say that,” returned Mr. Ebenezer.

The court pricked up its ears. “Have you seen him between then and now?” asked one of them.

“Once.”

“Where, and when?”

“It was in London. About eighteen months after the period of the murder.”

“What communication had you with him?”

“None at all. I only saw him. Quite by chance.”

“And whom did you suppose him to be then? Thorn? — or Levison?”

“Thorn, certainly. I never dreamt of his being



Levison, until he appeared here now, to oppose Mr. Carlyle."

A wild savage curse shot through Sir Francis's heart as he heard the words. What demon *had* possessed him to venture his neck into the lion's den? There had been a strong, hidden power holding him back from it, independent of his dislike to face Mr. Carlyle: how could he have been so mad as to disregard it? How?

"You may have been mistaken, witness, as to the identity of the man you saw in London. It may not have been the Thorn you had known here."

Mr. Ebenezer James smiled a peculiar smile. "I was not mistaken," he said, his tone sounding remarkably significant. "I am upon my oath."

"Call Aphrodite Hallijohn."

The lady appeared; supported by her friend the policeman. And Mr. Ebenezer James was desired by Mr. Ball to leave the court while she gave her evidence. Doubtless he had his reasons.

"What is your name?"

"Afy," replied she, looking daggers at everybody, and sedulously keeping her back turned upon Francis Levison and Otway Bethel.

"Your name in full, if you please. You were not christened 'Afy?'"

"Aphrodite Hallijohn. You all know my name as well as I do. Where's the use of asking useless questions?"

"Swear the witness," said Mr. Justice Hare. The first word he had uttered.

"I won't be sworn," said Afy.

"You must be sworn," said Mr. Justice Herbert.

"But I say I wont," repeated Afy.

“Then we must commit you to prison for contempt of court.”

There was no mercy in his tone, and Afy turned white. Sir John Dobede interposed.

“Young woman, had *you* a hand in the murder of your father?”

“I!” returned Afy, struggling with passion, temper, and excitement. “How dare you ask me so unnatural a question, sir? He was the kindest father!” she added, battling with her tears. “I loved him dearly. I would have saved his life with mine.”

“And yet you refuse to give evidence that may assist in bringing his destroyer to justice!”

“No; I don’t refuse on that score. I should like his destroyer to be hanged, and I’d go to see it. But, who knows what other questions you may be asking me — about things that concern neither you nor anybody else? That’s why I object.”

“We have only to deal with what bears upon the murder. The questions, put to you, will relate to that.”

Afy considered. “Well, you may swear me, then,” she said. Little notion had she of the broad gauge those questions would run upon. And she was sworn accordingly. Very unwillingly yet. For Afy, who would have told lies by the bushel *unsworn*, did look upon an oath as a serious matter, and felt herself compelled to speak the truth when examined under it.

“How did you become acquainted with a gentleman you often saw in those days — Captain Thorn?”

“There!” uttered the dismayed Afy. “You are beginning already. *He* had nothing to do with it. He did not do the murder.”

“You have sworn to answer the questions put,” was the uncompromising rejoinder. “How did you become acquainted with Captain Thorn?”

“I met him at Swainson,” doggedly answered Afy. “I went over there one day, just for a spree, and I met him at a pastrycook’s.”

“And he fell in love with your pretty face?” said Lawyer Ball, taking up the examination.

In the incense to her vanity, Afy nearly forgot her scruples. “Yes, he did,” she answered, casting a smile of general fascination round upon the court.

“And got out of you where you lived; and entered upon his courting; riding over nearly every evening to see you?”

“Well,” acknowledged Afy, “there was no harm in it.”

“Oh, certainly not,” acquiesced the lawyer, in a pleasant, free tone, to put the witness at her ease. “Rather, good, I should say: I wish I had had the like luck. Did you know him at that time by the name of Levison?”

“No. He said he was Captain Thorn, and I thought he was.”

“Did you know where he lived?”

“No. He never said that. I thought he was stopping temporarily at Swainson.”

“And—dear me! what a sweet bonnet that is you have on!”

Afy—whose egregious vanity was her besetting sin, who possessed enough of it for any ten pretty women going—cast a glance out of the corners of her eyes at the admired bonnet, and became Mr. Ball’s entirely.

“And how long was it, after your first meeting with him, before you discovered his real name?”

“Not for a long time. Several months.”

“Subsequent to the murder, I presume?”

“Oh, yes.”

Mr. Ball's eyes gave a twinkle, and the unconscious Afy surreptitiously smoothed, with one finger, the glossy parting of her hair.

“Besides Captain Thorn, what gentlemen were in the wood, the night of the murder?”

“Richard Hare was there. Otway Bethel and Locksley also. Those were all I saw—until the crowd came.”

“Were Locksley and Mr. Otway Bethel martyrs to your charms—as the other two were?”

“No indeed,” was the witness's answer, with an indignant toss of the head. “A couple of poaching fellows, like them! They had better have tried it on!”

“Which of the two, Hare or Thorn, was inside the cottage with you that evening?”

Afy came out of her vanity and hesitated. She was beginning to wonder where the questions would get to.

“You are upon your oath, witness!” thundered Mr. Justice Hare. “If it was my—if it was Richard Hare who was with you, say so. But there must be no equivocation here.”

Afy was startled. “It was Thorn,” she answered to Mr. Ball.

“And where was Richard Hare?”

“I don't know. He came down, but I sent him away: I would not admit him. I dare say he lingered in the wood.”

“Did he leave a gun with you?”

“Yes. It was one he had promised to lend my father. I put it down just inside the door: he told me it was loaded.”

“How long after this, was it, before your father interrupted you?”

“He didn’t interrupt us at all,” returned Afy. “I never saw my father until I saw him dead.”

“Were you not in the cottage all the time?”

“No. We went out for a stroll at the back. Captain Thorn wished me good bye there, and I stayed out.”

“Did you hear the gun go off?”

“I heard a shot, as I was sitting on the stump of a tree, and thinking. But I attached no importance to it, never supposing it was in the cottage.”

“What was it that Captain Thorn had to get from the cottage, after he quitted you? What had he left there?”

Now, this was a random shaft. Lawyer Ball, a keen man, who had well weighed all points in the tale imparted to him by Richard Hare, as well as other points, had made his own deductions, and spoke accordingly. Afy was taken in.

“He had left his hat there; nothing else. It was a warm evening, and he had gone out without it.”

“He told you, I believe, sufficient to convince you of the guilt of Richard Hare?” Another shaft thrown at random.

“I did not want convincing. I knew it without. Everybody else knew it.”

“To be sure,” equably returned Lawyer Ball. “Did Captain Thorn *see* it done?—did he tell you that?”

“He had got his hat and was away down the wood

some little distance, when he heard voices in dispute in the cottage, and recognized one of them to be that of my father. The shot followed close upon it, and he guessed some mischief had been done: though he did not suspect its extent."

"Thorn told you this! When?"

"The same night; much later."

"How came you to see him?"

Afy hesitated. But she was sternly told to answer the question.

"A boy came up to the cottage and called me out, and said a strange gentleman wanted to see me in the wood, and had given him sixpence to come for me. I went, and found Captain Thorn. He asked what the commotion was about, and I told him Richard Hare had killed my father. He said that now I spoke of him, he could recognise Richard Hare's as having been the other voice in the dispute."

"What boy was that?—the one who came for you?"

"It was Mother Whiteman's little son."

"And Captain Thorn then gave you this version of the tragedy?"

"It was the right version," resentfully spoke Afy.

"How do you know that?"

"Oh, because I am sure it was. Who else would kill him, but Richard Hare? It is a scandalous shame, you wanting to put it upon Thorn."

"Look at the prisoner, Sir Francis Levison. Is it he whom you knew as Thorn?"

"Yes. But that does not make him guilty of the murder."

"Of course it does not," complacently assented Lawyer Ball. "How long did you remain with Cap-



tain Thorn in London? Upon that little visit, you know."

Afy stared like anybody moonstruck.

"When you quitted this place after the tragedy it was to join Captain Thorn in London. How long, I ask, did you remain with him?" Entirely a random shaft, this.

"Who says I was with him? Who says I went after him?" flashed Afy, with scarlet cheeks.

"I do," replied Lawyer Ball, taking notes of her confusion. "Come; it's over and done with; it's of no use to deny it now. We all go upon visits to friends sometimes."

"I never heard anything so bold!" cried Afy. "Where will you tell me I went next?"

"You are upon your oath, woman!" again interposed Justice Hare, and a trembling, as of agitation, might be detected in his voice, in spite of its ringing severity. "Were you with the prisoner, Levison, or were you with Richard Hare?"

"I with Richard Hare!" cried Afy, agitated in her turn, and shaking like an aspen-leaf, partly with discomfiture, partly with an unknown dread. "How dare that cruel falsehood be brought up again, to my face? I never saw Richard Hare after the night of the murder. I swear it. I swear that I have never seen him since. Visit *him*! I'd sooner visit Calcraft the hangman."

There was truth in the words; in the tone. The chairman let fall the hand which had been raised to his face, holding on his eye-glasses; and a sort of self-condemning fear arose, confusing his brain. His son, proved innocent of one part, *might* be proved innocent of the other, and then — how would his

own harsh conduct show out? West Lynne, in its charity, the justice, in his, had cast more odium to Richard with regard to his after-conduct touching this girl, than it had on the score of the murder.

“Come,” said Lawyer Ball, in a coaxing tone, “let us be pleasant. Of course you were not with Richard Hare; West Lynne is always ill-natured; you were only on a visit to Captain Thorn, as — as any other young lady might be?”

Afy hung her head, cowed down to abject meekness.

“Answer the question,” came forth the chairman’s voice again. “*Were* you with Thorn?”

“Yes.” Though the answer was feeble enough.

Mr. Ball coughed an insinuating cough. “Did you remain with him — say, two or three years?”

“Not three.”

“A little over two, perhaps?”

“There was no harm in it,” shrieked Afy, with a catching sob of temper. “If I chose to live in London, and he chose to make a morning call upon me now and then, as an old friend, what’s that to anybody? Where was the harm, I ask?”

“Certainly — where was the harm? *I* am not insinuating any,” returned Lawyer Ball, with a wink of the eye furthest from the witness and the bench. “And, during the time that — that he was making these little morning calls upon you, did you know him to be Levison?”

“Yes. I knew him to be Captain Levison then.”

“Did he ever tell you why he had assumed the name of Thorn?”

“Only for a whim, he said. The day he spoke to me in the pastrycook’s shop at Swainson, something came over him, in the spur of the moment, not to give his right name, so he gave the first that came

into his head. He never thought to retain it; or that other people would hear of him by it."

"I dare say not," said Lawyer Ball, drily. "Well, Miss Afy, I believe that is all, for the present. I want Ebenezer James in again," he whispered to an officer of the justice-room, as the witness retired.

Ebenezer James reappeared and took Afy's place. "You informed their worships just now that you had met Thorn in London, some eighteen months subsequent to the murder," began Lawyer Ball, launching another of his shafts. "This must have been during Afy Hallijohn's sojourn with him. Did you also see *her*?"

Mr. Ebenezer opened his eyes. He knew nothing of the evidence just given by Afy, and wondered how on earth it had come out — that she had been with Thorn at all. He had never betrayed it. "Afy?" stammered he.

"Yes, Afy," sharply returned the lawyer. "Their worships know that, when she left West Lynne, it was to join Thorn, not Richard Hare — though the latter has borne the credit of it. I ask you, did you see her? for she was then still connected with him."

"Well — yes; I did," replied Mr. Ebenezer, his own scruples removed, but wondering still how it had been discovered; unless Afy had — as he had half prophesied she would — let it out in her "tantrums." "In fact, it was Afy whom I first saw."

"State the circumstances."

"I was up Paddington way one afternoon, and saw a lady going into a house. It was Afy Hallijohn. She lived there, I found — had the drawing-room apartments. She invited me to stay tea with her, and I did."

“Did you see Captain Levison there?”

“I saw Thorn — as I thought him to be. Afy told me I must be away by eight o’clock, for she was expecting a friend, who sometimes came to sit with her for an hour’s chat. But, in talking over old times — not that I could tell her much about West Lynne, for I had left it almost as long as she had — the time slipped on, past the hour. When Afy found that out, she hurried me off, and I had barely got outside the gate when a cab drove up, and Thorn alighted from it, and let himself in with a latch-key. That is all I know.”

“When you knew that the scandal of Afy’s absence rested on Richard Hare, why could you not have said this, and cleared him, on your return to West Lynne?”

“It was no affair of mine that I should make it public. Afy asked me not to say I had seen her, and I promised her I would not. As to Richard Hare—a little extra scandal on his back was nothing; while there remained on it the worse scandal of the murder.”

“Stop a bit,” interposed Mr. Rubiny, as the witness was about to retire. “You speak of the time being eight o’clock in the evening, sir. Was it dark?”

“Yes.”

“Then how could you be certain it was Thorn, who got out of the cab and entered?”

“I am quite certain. There was a gas-lamp right at the spot, and I saw him as well as I should have seen him in daylight. I knew his voice, too; could have sworn to it anywhere: and I could almost have sworn to him by his splendid diamond ring. It flashed in the lamplight.”

“ His voice ! Did he speak to you ? ”

“ No. But he spoke to the cabman. There was a half dispute between them. The man said Thorn had not paid him enough : that he had not allowed for the having kept him waiting twenty minutes on the road. Thorn swore at him a bit, and then flung him an extra shilling.”

The next witness was a man who had been groom to the late Sir Peter Levison. He testified that the prisoner, Francis Levison, had been on a visit to his master late in the summer and part of the autumn, the year that Hallijohn was killed. That he frequently rode out in the direction of West Lynne, especially towards evening, would be away three or four hours, and come home with the horse in a foam. Also that he picked up two letters at different times, which Mr. Levison had carelessly let fall from his pocket, and returned them to him. Both the notes were addressed “ Captain Thorn.” But they had not been through the post, for there was no further superscription on them ; and the writing looked like a lady’s. He remembered quite well hearing of the murder of Hallijohn, the witness added, in answer to a question ; it made a great stir throughout the country. It was just at that same time that Mr. Levison concluded his visit, and returned to London.

“ A *wonderful* memory ! ” Mr. Rubiny sarcastically remarked.

The witness, a quiet, respectable man, replied that he *had* a good memory : but the circumstances had impressed upon it particularly the fact that Mr. Levison’s departure followed close upon the murder of Hallijohn.

“ What circumstances ? ” demanded the bench.



“One day, when Sir Peter was round at the stables, gentlemen, he was urging his nephew to prolong his visit, and asked what sudden freak was taking him off. Mr. Levison replied that unexpected business called him to London. While they were talking, the coachman came up, all in a heat, telling that Hallijohn of West Lynne had been murdered by young Mr. Hare. I remember Sir Peter said he could not believe it; and that it must have been an accident, not murder.”

“Is this all?”

“There was more said. Mr. Levison, in a shame-faced sort of manner, asked his uncle, would he let him have five or ten pounds? Sir Peter seemed angry, and asked, what had he done with the fifty-pound note he had made him a present of, only the previous morning? Mr. Levison replied that he had sent that away in a letter to a brother officer, to whom he was in debt. Sir Peter refused to believe it, and said he was more likely to have squandered it upon some disgraceful folly. Mr. Levison denied that he had: but he looked confused: indeed, his manner altogether was confused that morning.”

“Did he get the five or ten pounds?”

“I don’t know, gentlemen. I dare say he did, for my master was as persuadable as a woman, though he’d fly out a bit sometimes at first. Mr. Levison departed for London that same night.”

The last witness called was Mr. Dill. On the previous Tuesday evening, he had been returning home from spending an hour at Mr. Beauchamp’s, when, in the field opposite to Mr. Justice Hare’s, he suddenly heard a commotion. It arose from the meeting of Sir Francis Levison and Otway Bethel. The



former appeared to have been enjoying a solitary moonlight ramble: and the latter to have encountered him, unexpectedly. Words ensued. Bethel accused Sir Francis of "shirking" him; Sir Francis answered angrily — that he knew nothing of him, and nothing he wanted to know.

"You were glad enough to know something of me the night of Hallijohn's murder," retorted Bethel to this. "Do you remember that I could hang you? One little word from me, and you would stand in Dick Hare's place."

"You fool!" passionately cried Sir Francis. "You could not hang me without putting your own head in the noose. Had you not your hush-money? Are you wanting to do me out of more?"

"A cursed paltry note of fifty pounds!" foamed Otway Bethel, "which, many a time since, I have wished my fingers had been blown off before they touched. I never should have touched it, but that I was altogether overwhelmed with the moment's confusion. I have not been able to look Mrs. Hare in the face since — knowing I hold the secret that would save her son from the hangman."

"And put yourself in his place," sneered Sir Francis.

"No. Put you."

"That's as it might be. But, if I went to the hangman, you would go with me. There would be no excuse or escape for you. You know it."

The warfare continued longer, but this was the cream of it. Mr. Dill heard the whole, and repeated it now to the magistrates. Mr. Rubiny protested that it was "inadmissible;" "hearsay evidence;" "contrary to law:" but the bench oracularly put

Mr. Rubiny down, and told him they did not require any stranger to come there and teach them their business.

Colonel Bethel had leaned forward at the conclusion of Mr. Dill's evidence, dismay on his face, agitation in his voice. "Are you sure that you made no mistake?—that the other in this interview was Otway Bethel?"

Mr. Dill sadly shook his head. "Am I one to swear to a wrong man, colonel? I wish I had not heard it—save that it may be the means of clearing Richard Hare."

Sir Francis Levison had braved out the proceedings with a haughty, cavalier air, his delicate hands and his diamond ring remarkably conspicuous. Was that stone the real thing, or a false one substituted for the real? Hard up as he had long been for money, the suspicion might arise. A derisive smile crossed his features at parts of the evidence, as much as to say, You may convict me as to Mademoiselle Afy; but you cannot, as to the murder. When, however, Mr. Dill's testimony was given, what a change was there! His mood tamed down to what looked like abject fear.

"Of course your worships will take bail for Sir Francis," said Mr. Rubiny, at the close of the proceedings.

Bail! The bench looked at one another.

"Your worships will not refuse it—a gentleman in Sir Francis Levison's position!"

The bench thought they had never had so insolent an application made to them. Bail for him!—on this charge! No; not if the lord chancellor himself came down to offer it.

Mr. Otway Bethel, conscious, probably, that nobody would offer bail for him, not even the colonel, did not ask the bench to take it. So the two were fully committed to take their trial for the "Wilful murder, otherwise the killing and slaying, of George Hallijohn."

And that vain, ill-starred Afy? What of her? Well, Afy had again retired to the witness-room after giving evidence, and there she remained till the close agreeably occupied in mental debate. What would they make out from her admissions regarding her sojourn in London and the morning calls? How would that precious West Lynne construe it? She did not much care; she should brave it out, and assail them with towering indignation, did any dare to cast a stone at her.

Such was her final decision, arrived at just as the proceedings terminated. Afy was right glad to remain where she was till some of the bustle had gone.

"How has it ended?" asked she of Mr. Ball, who, being a bachelor, was ever regarded with much graciousness by Afy, for she kept her eyes open to contingencies; although Mr. 'Joe Jiffin was held as a reserve.

"They are both committed for wilful murder. Off to Lynneborough in an hour."

Afy's choler rose. "What a shame! To commit two innocent men upon such a charge!"

"I can tell you what, Miss Afy, the sooner you disabuse your mind of that prejudice the better. Levison has been as good as proved guilty to-day: but, if proof were wanting, he and Bethel have criminated each other. 'When rogues fall out, honest men get their own.' Not that I can quite

fathom Bethel's share in the exploit: though I can pretty well guess at it. And, in proving themselves guilty, they have proved the innocence of Richard Hare."

Afy's face was changing to whiteness; her confident air to one of dread; her vanity to humiliation.

"It — can't — be — true!" she gasped.

"It's true enough. The part you have hitherto ascribed to Thorn, was enacted by Richard Hare. He heard the shot from his place in the wood, and saw Thorn run, ghastly, trembling, horrified, from his wicked work. Believe me, it was Thorn who killed your father."

Afy grew cold as she listened. That one awful moment, when conviction, that his words were true, forced itself upon her, was enough to sober her for a whole lifetime. *Thorn!* Her sight failed; her head reeled; her very heart turned to sickness. One struggling cry of pain; and, for the second time that day, Afy Hallijohn fell forward in a fainting fit.

Shouts, hisses, execrations, yells! The prisoners were being brought forth to be conveyed to Lynneborough. A whole posse of constables was necessary to protect them against the outbreak of the mob, which outbreak was not directed against Otway Bethel, but against Sir Francis Levison. Cowering, like the guilty culprit that he was, he shivered, and hid his white face, wondering whether it would be a repetition of Justice Hare's green pond, or the tearing him asunder piece-meal; and cursing the earth because it did not open and let him in!

## CHAPTER XVII.

## FIRE.

MISS LUCY was *en pénitence*. She had been guilty of some childish fault that day at Aunt Cornelia's, which, coming to the knowledge of Mrs. Carlyle after their return home, the young lady was ordered to the nursery for the rest of the day, to be regaled upon bread and water.

Barbara was in her pleasant dressing-room. There was to be a dinner party at East Lynne that evening, and she had just finished dressing. Very lovely she looked in her dinner-dress, with purple and scarlet flowers, just plucked from the conservatory, in her hair, and a bouquet of scarlet and purple flowers in her bosom. She glanced at her watch somewhat anxiously, for the gentlemen had not made their appearance. Half-past six! and they were to dine at seven.

Madame Vine tapped at the door. Her errand was to beg grace for Lucy, who had been promised half an hour in the drawing-room, when the ladies entered it from the dessert-table, and was now in an agony of grief at the disappointment. Would Mrs. Carlyle pardon her and allow her to be dressed?

"You are too lenient to that child, madame," said Barbara. "I don't think you ever would punish her

at all. But when she commits faults, they must be corrected."

"She is very sorry for her fault; she promises not to be rude again. She is crying as if she would cry her heart out."

"Not for her ill-behaviour, but because she is afraid of missing the drawing-room to-night," cried Barbara.

"Do pray restore her to favour," pleaded madame.

"I shall see. Just look, Madame Vine! I broke this, a minute or two ago. Is it not a pity?"

Barbara held in her hand a beautiful toilette ornament, set in gold. One of the petals had come off.

Madame Vine examined it. "I have some cement up-stairs that would join it," she exclaimed. "I could do it in two minutes."

"Oh, I wish you would," was Barbara's delighted response. "Do bring the cement here and join it now. Shall I bribe you?" she added, laughing. "You make this all right, and then you shall bear back grace to Lucy—for I perceive that is what your heart is set upon."

Madame Vine went, and returned with her cement. Barbara watched her, as she took the pieces in her hand, to see how the one must fit on to the other.

"This has been broken once before, Joyce tells me," Barbara said. "But it must have been imperceptibly joined, for I have looked in vain for the damage. Mr. Carlyle bought it for his first wife when they were in London after their marriage. She broke it. You will never do it, Madame Vine, if your hand shakes like that. What is the matter?"

A great deal was the matter. First, the ominous words had been upon her tongue. "It was broken



here, where the stem joins the flower :” but she recollected herself in time. Next, came up the past vision of the place and hour when the accident occurred. Her sleeve had swept it off the table ; Mr. Carlyle was in the room, this very room, and he had soothed her sorrow, her almost childish sorrow, with kisses sweet. Ah me ! poor thing ! I think our hands would have shaken as hers did. The ornament and the kisses were Barbara’s now.

“ I ran quickly up the stairs and back again,” was the explanation she offered to Mrs. Carlyle for her shaking hands.

At that moment Mr. Carlyle and their guests were heard to return, and to ascend to their respective apartments, Lord Vane’s gleeful voice echoing through the house. Mr. Carlyle came into his wife’s dressing-room, and Madame Vine would have made a precipitate retreat.

“ No, no,” said Barbara, “ finish it now you have begun. Mr. Carlyle will be going to his own room. Look at the misfortune I have had, Archibald ! I have broken this.”

Mr. Carlyle glanced carelessly at the trinket, and at Madame Vine’s white fingers. He crossed to the door of his dressing-room and opened it, then held out his hand in silence for Barbara to approach, and drew her in with him. Madame Vine went on with her work.

Presently Barbara returned : and approached the table, where stood Madame Vine, while she drew on her gloves. Her eyelashes were wet.

“ I could not help shedding a few tears for joy,” said Barbara, perceiving that Madame Vine observed the signs. “ Mr. Carlyle has been telling me that

my brother's innocence is now all but patent to the world. Lord Mount Severn was present at the proceedings, and says they have criminated each other. Papa sat in his place as chairman: I wonder that he liked to do so!"

Lower bent the head of Madame Vine over her employment. "Has anything been proved against them?" she asked, in her usual soft tone, almost a whisper.

"There is not the least doubt of the guilt of Levison, but Otway Bethel's share in the affair is a puzzle yet," replied Mrs. Carlyle. "Both are committed for trial. Oh, that man, that man, how his sins come out!" she continued, in excitement.

Madame Vine glanced up through her spectacles.

"Would you believe," continued Barbara, dropping her voice, "that while West Lynne, and I fear we ourselves, gave that miserable Afy credit for having gone away with Richard, she was, all the time, with Levison? Ball the lawyer got her to confess to it to-day. I am unacquainted with the details: Mr. Carlyle would not give them to me. He said the bare fact was quite enough."

Mr. Carlyle was right.

"Out it all seems to come, little by little! one wickedness after another!" resumed Barbara. "I do not like Mr. Carlyle to hear it. Of course there is no help for it; but he must feel it terribly; as must Lord Mount Severn. She *was* his wife, you know, and the children are hers: and to think that she—I mean he must feel it *for her*," went on Barbara after her sudden pause, and there was some hauteur in her tone, lest she should be misunderstood. "Mr. Carlyle is one of the very few men,

so entirely noble, whom the sort of disgrace, reflected from Lady Isabel's conduct, cannot touch."

The carriage of the first guest. Barbara ran across the room, and rattled at Mr. Carlyle's door. "Archibald! do you hear?"

Back came the laughing answer. "I shan't keep them long. But they may surely accord a few minutes' grace to a man who has just been converted into an M.P."

Barbara descended to the drawing-room. Leaving that unhappy lady to the cement and the broken pieces, and to battle as she best could with her breaking heart. Nothing but stabs; nothing but stabs! Was her punishment ever to end? No. The step she had taken in coming back to East Lynne precluded that.

The guests arrived. All, save Mr. and Mrs. Hare. Barbara received a note from her mamma instead. The justice did not not feel well enough to join them.

I should think he did not. If retribution came home sharply to Lady Isabel, it was coming home in some degree to him. Richard, his own unoffending son—unoffending in every sense of the term, until that escapade of falling in love with Afy—had been treated with unnatural harshness. West Lynne and the public would not fail to remember it—and the justice was remarkably alive to West Lynne and the public's opinion. The affection for Richard, which the justice had been pressing down and keeping under, and turning into all possible channels of hate, was now returning in unpleasant force. Unpleasant, in so far that it did savage war with his conscience.

"I—I—might have hunted him to death, you know, Anne," said the justice, sitting in his chair,

and wiping his brows, and eating humble pie for perhaps the first time in his life.

“But it is over now, Richard dear,” said gentle loving Mrs. Hare, the happy tears coursing down her cheeks.

“But I *might* — had he made his appearance here. In fact I should.”

“Do not grieve, Richard; it will not recall the past. In a little time we may have him home again with us; and then we can both make it up to him.”

“And how are we to get him here? He may be dead. Who knows where he is? He may be dead, I say.”

“No he is not. We shall get him when the time comes. Mr. Carlyle knows where he is; has known a long while, he told me to-day: even sees him sometimes. A true friend to us all, Richard, is Archibald Carlyle.”

“Ay. That jade, Barbara, is in luck. I shouldn’t be surprised but what she knows too; if he does. A good girl, a good girl, though she puts up at times for saucy independence.”

Mrs. Hare could scarcely make her husband out, his tone and manner were so thoroughly changed from what she had ever known them.

“But I can’t believe it’s true yet, Anne. I can’t indeed. If he is innocent, why couldn’t he have been cleared before? It is so many years ago, you know! Do you think he is innocent?”

“Dear Richard, I know he is,” she answered, with a happy smile. “I have been sure of it a long, long while. And so has Mr. Carlyle.”

“Well, that’s something. Carlyle’s judgment is. Is his room aired — and all that?”

“Whose room?” echoed Mrs. Hare.

“Poor Dick’s.”

“My dear, you forget,” she returned, in wonderment. “He cannot come home yet; not until after the assizes. The others must be proved guilty, and he innocent, before he can come home.”

“True, true,” said Mr. Justice Hare.

A pleasant party, it was, at East Lynne: and twelve o’clock struck before the carriage of the last guest drove away. It might have been one to two hours after that, and the house was steeped in moonlight and quietness, everybody being a-bed and asleep, when a loud, alarming summons at the hall bell echoed through the stillness.

The first to put her head out at a window, was Wilson. “Is it fire?” shrieked she, in the most excessive state of terror conceivable. Wilson had a natural dread of fire; some people possess this dread more than others; and had oftentimes aroused the house to a commotion by declaring she smelt it. “Is it fire?” shrieked Wilson.

“YES,” was shouted at the very top of a man’s voice, who stepped from between the entrance pillars to answer.

Wilson waited for no more. Clutching at the baby with one hand—a fine young gentleman now of near twelve months’ old, promising fair to be as great a source of trouble to Wilson and the nursery as was his brother Archibald, whom he greatly resembled—and at Archie with the other, out she flew to the corridor, screeching “Fire! fire! fire!” in every accent of horror. Into William’s room, and dragging him out of bed; into Lucy’s, and dragging her; banging open the door of Madame Vine, and the shrieks, Fire! fire!



fire! never ceasing; Wilson, with the four children, burst unceremoniously into the sleeping apartment of Mr. and Mrs. Carlyle. By this time, the children, terrified out of their senses, not at Wilson's cry of alarm, but at the summary propelling down stairs, set up a shrieking too. Madame Vine, believing that half of the house at least was in flames, was the next to appear, throwing on a shawl she had caught up: and then came Joyce.

"Fire! fire! fire!" shouted Wilson; "we're all a-being burnt up together."

Poor Mrs. Carlyle, thus wildly aroused from sleep, sprang out of bed and into the corridor in her night-dress. Everybody else was in a night-dress: when folks are flying for dear life, they don't stop to look for their dress-coats, and best blonde caps. Out came Mr. Carlyle, who had hastily assumed his pantaloons.

He cast a rapid glance down to the hell, and saw that the stairs were perfectly free for escape: therefore the hurry was not so violent. Every soul around him was shrieking in concert, making the confusion and din terrific. The bright moonlight streamed in at the corridor windows, but there was no other light.

"Where is the fire?" he exclaimed. "I don't smell any. Who first gave the alarm?"

The bell answered him. The hall bell, which rang out ten times louder and longer than before. He opened one of the windows and leaned from it. "Who's there?" Madame Vine caught up Archie.

"It's me, sir," responded a voice, which he at once recognised to be that of one of Mr. Hare's men-servants. "Master have been took in a fit, sir, and mistress sent me for you and Miss Barbara. You must



please make haste, sir, if you want to see him alive." Miss Barbara! It was more familiar to Jasper, in a moment of excitement, than the new name.

"You, Jasper! Is the house on fire? This house?"

"Well, I don't know, sir. I can hear a dreadful deal of screeching in it."

Mr. Carlyle closed the window. He began to suspect that the danger lay in fear alone. "Who told you there was fire?" he demanded of Wilson.

"That man ringing at the door," sobbed Wilson. "Thank goodness, I have saved the children."

Mr. Carlyle felt somewhat exasperated at the mistake. His wife was trembling from head to foot; and he knew that she was not in a condition to be alarmed, necessarily or unnecessarily. She clung to him in terror, asking if they *could* escape.

"My darling, be calm! There is no fire. It is a stupid mistake. You may all go back to bed and sleep in peace," he added to the rest. "And the next time that you alarm the house in the night, Wilson, have the goodness to make yourself sure, first of all, that there's cause for it."

Barbara, frightened still, bewildered and uncertain, escaped to the window, and threw it open. But Mr. Carlyle was nearly as quick as she: he caught her to him with one hand, and drew the window down with the other. To have these tidings told to her abruptly, would be worse than all. By this time, some of the servants had descended the other staircase, with a light (being in various stages of costume), and, hastening to open the hall-door, Jasper entered. The man had probably waited to help put out the "fire." Barbara caught sight of him ere Mr. Car-

lyle could prevent it, and grew sick with fear, believing some ill had happened to her mother.

Drawing her inside their chamber, he broke the news to her soothingly and tenderly, making light of it. She burst into tears. "You are not deceiving me, Archibald? Papa is not dead?"

"Dead!" cheerily echoed Mr. Carlyle, in the same tone he might have used had Barbara wondered whether the justice was taking a night airing for pleasure in a balloon. "Wilson has indeed frightened you, love. Dress yourself, and we will go and see him."

At that moment, Barbara recollected William. Strange that she should be the first to do so; before Lady Isabel, before Mr. Carlyle. She ran out again to the corridor, where the boy stood shivering. "He may have caught his death!" she uttered, snatching him up in her arms. "Oh, Wilson! what have you done? His night-gown is damp and cold."

Unfit as she was for the burden, she bore him to her own bed. Wilson was not at leisure to attend to reproaches just then. She was engaged in a wordy war with Jasper, leaning over the balustrades to carry it on.

"I never told you there was a fire!" indignantly denied Jasper.

"You did. I opened the nursery window, and called out 'Is it fire?' and you answered 'Yes.'"

"You called out 'Is it Jasper?'" What else should I say but 'Yes,' to that? Fire! Where was the fire likely to be? In the park?"

"Wilson, take the children back to bed," authoritatively said Mr. Carlyle, as he advanced to look down into the hall. "John, are you there? the close car-

riage instantly. Be quick. Madame Vine, pray don't continue to hold that heavy boy. Joyce, cannot you relieve madame?"

In crossing back to his room, Mr. Carlyle had brushed past madame, and noticed that she appeared to be shaking, as if with the weight of Archibald. In reality, she was still alarmed, not understanding yet the cause of the commotion. Joyce, who comprehended it as little, and had stood with her arms round Lucy, advanced to take Archibald; and Mr. Carlyle disappeared. Barbara had taken off her own night-dress then, and put it upon William in place of his own, had struck a light, and was busily dressing herself.

"Just feel his night-gown, Archibald! Wilson—"

A shrill cry of awful terror interrupted the words, and Mr. Carlyle made but one bound out again. Barbara followed: the least she thought, was, that Wilson had dropped the baby into the hall.

That was not the catastrophe. Wilson, with the baby and Lucy, had already disappeared up the staircase, and Madame Vine was disappearing. Archibald lay on the soft carpet of the corridor, where madame had stood; for Joyce, in the act of taking him, had let him slip to the ground, let him fall, from sheer terror. She held on by the balustrades, her face ghastly, her mouth open, her eyes fixed in horror; altogether an object to look upon. Archie gathered himself on to his sturdy legs, and stood staring.

"Why, Joyce! what is the matter with *you*?" cried Mr. Carlyle. "You look as if you had seen a spectre."

"Oh, master!" she wailed, "I *have* seen one."

“Are you all going deranged together?” retorted he, wondering what had come to the house. “Seen a spectre? Joyce!”

Joyce fell on her knees, as if unable to support herself, and crossed her shaking hands upon her chest. Had she seen ten spectres, she could not have betrayed more dire distress. She was a sensible and faithful servant, one not given to flights of fancy, and Mr. Carlyle gazed at her in very amazement.

“Joyce, what is this?” he asked, bending down and speaking kindly.

“Oh, my dear master! Heaven have mercy upon us all!” was the inexplicable answer.

“Joyce, I ask you, what is this?”

She made no reply. She rose up, shaking; and taking Archie’s hand, slowly proceeded towards the upper stairs, low moans breaking from her, and the boy’s naked feet pattering on the carpet.

“What can ail her?” whispered Barbara, following Joyce with her eyes. “What did she mean, about a spectre?”

“She must have been reading a ghost-book,” said Mr. Carlyle. “Wilson’s folly has turned the house topsy-turvy. Make haste, Barbara.”

## CHAPTER XVIII.

## THREE MONTHS LONGER.

SPRING waned. Summer came, and would soon be waning too, for the hot days of July were now in. What had the months brought forth, since the election of Mr. Carlyle in April? Be you very sure they had not been without their events.

Mr. Justice Hare's illness had turned out to be a stroke of paralysis. People cannot act with unnatural harshness towards a child, and then discover they have been in the wrong, with impunity. Thus it proved with Justice Hare. He was recovering, but would never again be the man he had been. The fright, when Jasper had gone to tell of his illness at East Lynne, and was mistaken for fire, had done nobody any damage, save William and Joyce. William had caught a cold, which brought increased malady to the lungs; and Joyce seemed to have caught *fear*. She went about, more like one in a dream than awake, would be buried in a reverie for an hour at a time, and, if suddenly spoken to, would start and shiver.

Mr. Carlyle and his wife departed for London, immediately that Mr. Hare was pronounced out of danger; which was in about a week from the time of his seizure. William accompanied them: partly for

the benefit of London advice, partly because Mr. Carlyle would not be parted from him. Joyce went, in attendance, with some of the other servants.

They found London ringing with the news of Sir Francis Levison's arrest. London could not understand it: and the most wild and improbable tales were in circulation. The season was at its height; the excitement in proportion; it was more than a nine day's wonder. On the very evening of their arrival, a lady, young and beautiful, was shown into the presence of Mr. and Mrs. Carlyle. She had declined to give her name, but there arose to Mr. Carlyle's memory, when he looked on her, one whom he had seen in earlier days, as a friend of his first wife: Blanche Challoner. It was not Blanche, however.

The stranger looked keenly at Mr. Carlyle. He was standing with his hat in his hand, on the point of going out. "Will you pardon this intrusion?" she asked. "I have come to you, as one human being, in need, comes to crave help of another. I am Lady Levison."

Barbara's face flushed. Mr. Carlyle courteously invited the stranger to a chair, and remained standing himself. She sat for a moment, and then rose evidently in an excess of agitation.

"Yes, I am Lady Levison. Forced to call that man husband. That he has been a wicked man, I have long known; but now, I hear he is a criminal. I hear it, I say, but I can get the truth from none. I went to Lord Mount Severn; he declined to give me particulars. I heard that Mr. Carlyle would be in town as to-day; and I resolved to come and ask them of him."



She delivered the sentences in a jerking, abrupt tone, betraying her inward emotion. Mr. Carlyle made no immediate reply.

“You and I have both been deeply wronged by him, Mr. Carlyle. But I brought my wrong upon myself: you did not. My sister Blanche, whom he had cruelly treated — and, if I speak of it, I only speak of what is known to the world — warned me against him. Mrs. Levison, his grandmother, that ancient lady, who must now be bordering upon ninety, warned me also. The night before my wedding-day, she came on purpose to tell me that if I married Francis Levison I should rue it for life: there was yet time to retract, she said. Yes; there was time; but there was no *will*. I would not listen to either: I was led away by vanity, by folly, by something worse — the triumph over my own sister. Poor Blanche! And I have a child,” she continued, dropping her voice; “a boy who inherits his father’s name. Mr. Carlyle” — bending forward and clasping her hands, while her face looked like one carved from stone — “will they *condemn* him?”

“Nothing, as yet, is positively proved against him,” replied Mr. Carlyle compassionately.

“If I could but get a divorce!” she cried passionately, apparently losing all self-control. “I might have got one, over and over again, since we married; but there would have been the *exposé* and the scandal. If I could but change my child’s name! Tell me — does any chance of redress remain for me?”

There was none: and Mr. Carlyle did not attempt to speak of any. He said a few kind words of sympathy, and prepared to go out. She moved, and stood in his way.

“You will not leave until you have given me the particulars! I pray you, do not! I came trustingly to you, hoping to know them.”

“I have to keep an important engagement,” he answered; “and, even if it were not so, I should decline to tell them to you; on my own account, as well as on yours. Lay not discourtesy to my charge, Lady Levison: but if I were to speak of the man, even to you, his name would blister my lips.”

“In every word of hate, spoken by you, I should sympathise; every contemptuous expression of scorn, cast upon him from your heart, I would re-echo.”

Barbara was shocked. “He is your husband after all,” she whispered.

“My husband!” burst out Lady Levison passionately. “Yes, there is the wrong he has done me! Why—knowing what he was, and what he had done—why did he delude me into becoming his wife? You ought to feel pity for me, Mrs. Carlyle, and you do feel it, for you are a wife and a mother. How dare these bad men marry!” she cried incoherently. “Were his other sins not hindrance enough, but with crime also on his conscience he must come with his bold face to woo me with lies! He has done me deep, irremediable wrong, and he has entailed upon his child an inheritance of shame which can never be thrown off.”

Barbara was half frightened at her vehemence: but Barbara might be thankful that she could not understand it. All Lady Levison’s native gentleness, all her reticence of feeling, as a wife and a gentlewoman, had been goaded out of her. The process had been going on for some time, this last revelation was the crowning point, and Alice, Lady Levison, turned

round upon the world in her helpless resentment, as vehemently as any poor charwoman might have done. There are certain wrongs which bring out human nature in the high and the low alike. "Still, he is your husband," was all Barbara could, with deprecation, again plead.

"He made himself my husband by deceit, and I will throw him off in the face of day," returned Lady Levison. "There is no moral obligation why I should not. He has worked ill and ruin, ill and ruin upon me and my child; and the world shall not think that I have borne my share in it. How was it you kept your hands off him, when he reappeared, to brave you, in West Lynne?" she added, in a changed tone, turning to Mr. Carlyle.

"I cannot tell. It was a marvel oftentimes to myself."

He quitted the room as he spoke, adding a few kind-spoken words about leaving her with Mrs. Carlyle. When they were alone, Barbara yielded to Lady Levison's request, and gave her the outline of the dark tale. Its outline only: generously suppressing Afy's name beyond the evening of the fatal event. Lady Levison listened without interruption.

"Do you and Mr. Carlyle believe him to have been guilty?"

"Yes."

"Was his first wife, Isabel Vane, mad?" she presently asked.

"Mad?" echoed Barbara, in surprise.

"When she quitted him for the other. It could have been nothing less than madness. I could understand a woman's flying from Francis Levison

for love of Mr. Carlyle; but, now that I have seen your husband, I cannot understand the reverse."

And, without another word, Alice Levison quitted the room as abruptly as she had entered it.

Barbara's stay in London was little more than three weeks, for it was necessary she should be safe at home again.

Mr. Carlyle, however, remained in town till the session was nearly over, though he made hurried visits down to East Lynne. In July, he returned home for good. There was another baby at East Lynne then, a lovely little lady—pretty as Barbara herself had been at a month old.

But William was rapidly fading away. The London physician had confirmed Dr. Martin's opinion; and it was evident to all that the end could not be long in coming.

Somebody else was fading—Lady Isabel. The cross had been too heavy, and she was sinking under its weight. Can you wonder at it? It might have been different had she yielded to its weight; striven to *bear* it in patience and in silence, after the manner she had carved out for herself. But she did not. She rebelled against it: and it was costing her her life. The hourly and daily excitement, arising from the false position in which she had placed herself by returning to East Lynne, calmed down with the departure of Mr. and Mrs. Carlyle for town. Then the reaction set in. The incessant irritation on the mind, the feelings, and the nerves was gone; but in its place had settled the no less dangerous apathy, the dull quiet of despair. It was the excitement which had kept her up: and, that over, she began to sink with alarming rapidity. There appeared to be

no ostensible disease, but she was wasting away day by day; as her mother had done. Her fading was observed by none; and she still discharged her duties as Lucy's governess: though she snatched portions of her time to spend with William. Was she conscious of her own decay? Partially so: and, had anybody inquired what her malady was, would have answered, A broken heart.

An intensely hot day it was, under the July sun. Afy Hallijohn was sailing up the street in its beams, finer and vainer than ever. Afy had not shone out particularly clear in the eyes of West Lynne, after that examination. Besides the little episode, touching the London visit, Afy stood convicted, if not of perjury, of something very like it. It is true, that when the coroner's inquest on her father took place, she was not sworn to the truth of her evidence; and Richard Hare was mistaken, in believing that she was. She had then asserted that nobody was at the cottage that night but Richard Hare, for she would not mention Thorn's name. Not that she had the remotest suspicion that he had anything to do with the tragedy; we must give her her due there: she did fully believe Richard Hare was guilty. Afy on that point but spoke as she believed. But when she was put upon her oath before the magistrates, she was compelled to convict herself of falsehood in other matters.

All this told badly at West Lynne, and Afy in public opinion became as graceless as ever. She stoutly stood up for herself: to listen to her you would have believed her a heroine immaculate; and some were convinced and espoused her cause. Not so Mrs. Latimer. Her faith was shaken. She discharged



Afy, according her, however, the favour of a month's warning, which took off the chief stigma of the disgrace. Amongst her warmest advocates was Mr. Joe Jiffin. Somewhat dubious when the startling news came out, he suffered himself to be wholly talked over by Afy. She made her tale thoroughly good to him, and, in the ardour of the moment, Mr. Jiffin laid himself, his hand, and his cheesemongery at Afy's feet. Had a veritable saint come forth out of the world of spirits to testify against Afy, Mr. Jiffin would have turned a deaf ear from that time forth.

Who so proud now as Afy?—who so scornfully triumphant over West Lynne? She went into respectable lodgings, and began making her preparations, in the shape of fine bonnets and gowns. Handsome lodgings, and positively within sight of the windows of Miss Carlyle. Here Afy was the lady, and here Mr. Joe Jiffin was permitted the favour of an occasional evening visit, some female friend or other, of Afy's, being always present to play propriety. Indeed, you might have thought she had just emerged from a convent of nuns, so over-scrupulous was she. "Wretches!" ejaculated Mr. Jiffin, apostrophising West Lynne and its malicious gossipers, "she's as particular and innocent as an angel."

Afy was sailing up the street in the July sun. She surveyed the house of Mr. Joe Jiffin with satisfaction as she passed it, for it was being embellished outside and in, to receive her; while packages of new furniture were arriving by every train. She threw out hints, and the enraptured bridegroom-elect acted upon them. He saw her from his shop, and came rushing out.



“They are getting on so well, Miss Afy! It will all be finished this week. The drawing-room paper is hung, and looks beautiful. The gold border is exquisite. Would you like to step up-stairs with me and look at it?”

“Oh dear!” responded the shocked Afy. “Go up stairs with you, Mr. Jiffin! Has not West Lynne been ill-natured enough already? You don’t understand these things.”

“I’m afraid I don’t,” meekly responded the poor little man. “I’m sure I beg your pardon, Miss Afy. I meant no offence.”

“I wish *to goodness*,” resumed Afy, with emphasis, “you’d leave off those white badges of aprons!”

Mr. Jiffin coughed in perplexity. It was a sore and difficult point. “I’d do almost anything you asked me, Miss Afy; you know I would: but only think how I should grease my — my — lower garments!”

Afy gave a shriek, and turned her modest cheeks the other way.

“Not to speak of my waistcoats,” went on Mr. Jiffin, all in dire confusion; “but they’d come in for a touch of it. There’s the work with the tubs of butter, and the cutting up of the bacon and hams, and the dirt off the cheeses, and the splashings from the pickled pork barrels: it’s all greasy together. Besides the squashing of an egg now and then, which nobody can help. I assure you, Miss Afy, if I were to discard my aprons, I might put on a new pair of — articles — every week, and not be decent in front then.”

Afy groaned. Whether at the delicacy of the sub-

ject, or at the wholesale destruction hinted at, Mr. Jiffin did not know.

“You go to Lynneborough by the early train to-morrow, don’t you, Miss Afy?” asked he, by way of changing the topic.

“Everybody knows that,” said Afy. “A good many of us go. The trial comes on at nine, so of course it’s necessary to be there early. Have you heard the rumour, about Richard Hare?”

“No,” replied Mr. Jiffin. “What rumour is it?”

“It is circulating through West Lynne. They say he is to be tried also.”

“Is he found?” cried Mr. Jiffin in surprise.

“I don’t know anything about it, myself. It has been said lately that he was dead, you know. As to which is guilty, he or Levison, I don’t think it much matters,” pursued Afy, with a lofty toss of the head, and a severe countenance. “My opinion always was that they were a couple of bad ones, two I wouldn’t have touched with a long pole.”

Afy sailed away, her crinoline sweeping each side of the wide pavement. If she purposed sporting that crinoline in the crowded assize court to-morrow, it would inevitably come to grief. A few steps farther, she encountered Mr. Carlyle.

“So, Afy? You are really going to be married at last!”

“Jiffin fancies so, sir. I am not sure yet but what I shall change my mind. Jiffin thinks there’s nobody like me: if I could eat gold and silver, he’d provide it; and he’s as fond as fond can be. But then, you know, sir, he’s half soft.”

“Soft, as to you, perhaps,” laughed Mr. Carlyle. “I consider him a very civil, respectable man, Afy”

“And then, I never did think to marry a shop-

keeper," grumbled Afy. "I looked a little higher than that. Only fancy, sir, having a husband who wears a white apron tied round him!"

"Terrible!" responded Mr. Carlyle, with a grave face.

"Not but what it will be a tolerable settlement," rejoined Afy, veering round a point. "He is having his house done up in style; and I shall keep two good servants, and do nothing, myself, but dress, and subscribe to the library. He makes plenty of money."

"A very tolerable settlement, I should say," returned Mr. Carlyle: and Afy's face fell before the glance of his eye, merry though it was. "Take care you don't spend all his money for him, Afy."

"I'll take care of that," nodded Afy, significantly. "Sir," she somewhat abruptly added, "what is it that's the matter with Joyce?"

"I do not know," said Mr. Carlyle, becoming serious. "There does appear to be something the matter with her, for she is much changed."

"I never saw anybody so changed in my life," exclaimed Afy. "I told her, the other day, that she was just like one who had got some dreadful secret upon the mind."

"It is really more like that than anything else," observed Mr. Carlyle.

"But she's one of the close ones, is Joyce," continued Afy. "No fear that she'll give out a clue, if it does not suit her to do so. She told me, in answer, to mind my own business, and not to take absurd fancies in my head. How is the baby, sir? And Mrs. Carlyle?"

"All well. Good day, Afy."

## CHAPTER XIX.

## THE TRIAL.

SPACIOUS courts were the assize courts of Lynneborough. And it was well they were so; otherwise more people had been disappointed, and numbers were, of hearing the noted trial of Sir Francis Levison for the murder of George Hallijohn.

The circumstances attending the case caused it to bear for the public an unparalleled interest. The rank of the accused, and his antecedents, more especially that particular, local antecedent touching the Lady Isabel Carlyle; the verdict still out against Richard Hare; the length of time which had elapsed; the part played in it by Afy; the intense curiosity as to the part taken in it by Otway Bethel; the speculation as to what had been the exact details, and the doubt of a conviction; all contributed to fan the curiosity of the public. People came from far and near to be present. Friends of Mr. Carlyle, friends of the Hares, friends of the Challoner family, friends of the prisoner; besides the general public. Colonel Bethel, and Mr. Justice Hare, had conspicuous seats.

At a few minutes past nine the judge took his place on the bench. But not before a rumour had gone through the court; a rumour that seemed to shake it to its centre, and which people stretched out their necks to hear. Otway Bethel had turned

Queen's evidence, and was to be admitted as witness for the crown.

Thin, haggard, pale, looked Francis Levison as he was placed in the dock. His incarceration had not in any way contributed to his personal advantages: and there was an ever-recurring expression of dread upon his countenance, not pleasant to look upon. He was dressed in black, and his diamond ring shone conspicuous still on his white hand, now whiter than ever. The most eminent counsel were engaged on both sides.

The testimony of the witnesses, already given, need not be recapitulated. The identification of the prisoner with the man Thorn was fully established. Ebenezer James proved that. Afy proved it; and also that he, Thorn, was at the cottage that night. Sir Peter Levison's groom was likewise re-examined. But still there wanted other testimony. Afy was made to reassert that Thorn had to go to the cottage for his hat, after leaving her: but that proved nothing: and the conversation, or quarrel, overheard by Mr. Dill, was not again put forward. If this was all the evidence, people opined that the case for the prosecution would break down.

"Call Richard Hare," said the counsel for the prosecution.

Those present, who knew Mr. Justice Hare, looked up at him; wondering why he did not stir, in answer to his name; wondering at the pallid hue which overspread his face. Not *he*, but another man came forward; a fair, placid young man, with blue eyes, fair hair, and a pleasant countenance. It was Richard Hare the younger. He had resumed his original position in life, so far as attire went, and in that, at

least, was a gentleman again: in speech also. With his working dress, Richard had thrown off his working manners.

A strange hubbub arose in court. Richard Hare the exile! the reported dead! the man whose life was still in jeopardy! The spectators rose with one accord to get a better view; they stood on tiptoe; they pushed forth their necks; they strained their eyesight: and, amidst all the noisy hum, the groan, bursting from Justice Hare, was unnoticed. Whilst order was called for, and the judge threatened to clear the court, two officers moved quietly up and stood behind the witness. Richard Hare was in custody; though he might know it not. The witness was sworn.

“What is your name?”

“Richard Hare.”

“Son of Mr. Justice Hare, I believe; of the Grove, West Lynne?”

“His only son.”

“The same against whom a verdict of wilful murder is out?” interposed the judge.

“The same, my lord,” replied Richard Hare, who appeared, strange as it may seem, to have cast away all his old fearfulness.

“Then, witness, let me warn you that you are not obliged to answer any question that might tend to criminate yourself.”

“My lord,” answered Richard Hare, with some emotion, “I wish to answer any and every question put to me. I have but one hope: that the full truth of all pertaining to that fatal evening may be made manifest this day.”



“Look round at the prisoner,” said the examining counsel. “Do you know him?”

“I know him now as Sir Francis Levison. Up to April last, I believed his name to be Thorn.”

“State what occurred on the evening of the murder—so far as your knowledge goes.”

“I had an appointment that evening with Afy Hallijohn, and went down to their cottage to keep it—”

“A moment,” interrupted the counsel. “Was your visit that evening made in secret?”

“Partially so. My father and mother were displeased at my intimacy with Afy Hallijohn: therefore, I did not care that they should be cognisant of my visits there. I am ashamed to confess that I told my father a lie over it that very evening. He saw me leave the dinner-table to go out with my gun, and inquired where I was off to. I answered, that I was going out with young Beauchamp.”

“When, in point of fact, you were not?”

“No. I took my gun, for I had promised to lend it to Hallijohn, while his own was being repaired. When I reached the cottage, Afy refused to admit me: she was busy, she said. I felt sure she had Thorn with her. She had, more than once before, refused to admit me when I had gone there by her own appointment; and I always found that Thorn’s presence in the cottage was the obstacle.”

“I suppose you and Thorn were jealous of each other?”

“I was jealous of him: I freely admit it. I don’t know whether he was of me.”

“May I inquire what was the nature of your friendship for Miss Afy Hallijohn?”

“ I loved her with an honourable love : as I might have loved any young lady in my own station of life. I would not have married her in opposition to my father and mother : but I told Afy that if she was content to wait for me, until I was my own master, I would then make her my wife.”

“ You had no views towards her of a different nature ? ”

“ None. I cared for her too much for that. And I respected her father. Afy’s mother had been a lady, too ; although she had married Hallijohn, who was but clerk to Mr. Carlyle. No : I never had a thought of wrong towards Afy.”

“ Now relate the occurrences of the evening.”

“ Afy would not admit me, and we had a few words over it. But at length I went away ; first giving her the gun and telling her it was loaded. She lodged it against the wall, just inside the door, and I went into the wood and waited, determined to see whether, or not, Thorn was with her, for she had denied that he was. Locksley saw me there, and asked why I was hiding. I did not answer ; but I went farther off, quite out of view of the cottage. Some time afterwards, less than half an hour, I heard a shot in the direction of the cottage. Somebody was having a late shot at the partridges, I thought. Just then, I saw Otway Bethel emerge from the trees not far from me, and run towards the cottage. My lord,” added Richard Hare, looking at the judge, “ that was the shot that killed Hallijohn.”

“ Could the shot,” asked the counsel, “ have been fired by Otway Bethel ? ”

“ It could not. It was much farther off. Bethel

disappeared: and, in another minute, there came one, flying down the path leading from the cottage. It was Thorn: in a state of intense terror. His face was livid, his eyes staring, and he panted and shook like one in the ague. Past me he tore, on down the path, and I afterwards heard the sound of his horse galloping away. It had been tied in the wood."

"Did you follow him?"

"No. I wondered what had happened to put him in that state: but I made haste to the cottage, intending to reproach Afy with her duplicity. I leaped up the two steps, and fell over the prostrate body of Hallijohn. He was lying dead, within the door. My gun, just discharged, was flung on the floor, its contents in Hallijohn's side."

You might have heard a pin drop in court, so intense was the interest.

"There appeared to be no one in the cottage, upstairs or down. I called to Afy, but she did not answer. I caught up the gun, and was running from the cottage, when Locksley came out of the wood, and looked at me. I grew confused; fearful; and I threw the gun back again, and made off."

"What were your motives for acting in that way?"

"A panic had come over me; and in that moment I must have lost the use of my reason, otherwise I never should have acted as I did. Thoughts, especially of fear, pass through our minds with astonishing swiftness, and I feared lest the crime should be fastened upon me. It was fear made me snatch up my gun, lest it should be found near the body; it was fear made me throw it back again when Locksley

appeared in view; a fear, from which all judgment, all reason, had departed. But for my own conduct, the charge never would have been laid to me."

"Go on."

"In my flight, I came upon Bethel. I knew that if he had gone towards the cottage after the shot was fired, he must have encountered Thorn, flying from it. He denied that he had: he said he had only gone along the path for a few paces, and had then plunged into the wood again. I believed him; and departed."

"Departed from West Lynne?"

"That night I did. It was a foolish, fatal step, the result of cowardice. I found the charge was laid to me, and I thought I would absent myself for a day or two, to see how things turned out. Next, came the inquest and the verdict against me; and I left for good."

"This is the truth, so far as you are cognisant of it?"

"I swear that it is the truth and the whole truth, so far as I am cognisant of it," replied Richard Hare, with emotion. "I could not assert it more solemnly, were I before God."

He was subjected to a rigid cross-examination, but his testimony was not shaken in the least. Perhaps not one present, but was impressed with its truth.

Afy Hallijohn was recalled, and questioned as to Richard's presence at her father's house that night. It tallied with the account given by Richard; but it had to be drawn from her.

"Why did you decline to receive Richard Hare into the cottage, after appointing him to come?"

"Because I chose," returned Afy.

"Tell the jury why you chose."

“Well—I had got a friend with me. It was Captain Thorn,” she added, feeling that she should only be questioned on the point, so might as well acknowledge it. “I did not admit Richard Hare, for I fancied they might get up a quarrel, if they were together.”

“For what purpose did Richard Hare bring down his gun? Do you know?”

“It was to lend to my father. My father’s gun had something the matter with it and was at the smith’s. I had heard him, the previous day, ask Mr. Richard to lend him one of his, and Mr. Richard said he would bring one. As he did.”

“You lodged the gun against the wall. Safely?”

“Quite safely.”

“Was it touched by you after placing it there? Or by the prisoner?”

“I did not touch it. Neither did he, that I saw. It was the same gun which was afterwards found near my father, and had been discharged.”

The next witness called was Otway Bethel. He held share also in the curiosity of the public: but not in an equal degree with Afy: still less with Richard Hare. The substance of his testimony was as follows:

“On the evening that Hallijohn was killed, I was in Abbey Wood, and I saw Richard Hare come down the path with a gun, as if he had come from his own home.”

“Did Richard Hare see you?”

“No: he could not see me: I was right in the thicket. He went to the cottage door, and was about to enter, when Afy Hallijohn came hastily out of it, pulling the door-to, behind her, and holding it in her hand, as if afraid he would go in. Some colloquy ensued, but I was too far off to hear it, and then she

took the gun from him and went in-doors. Some time after that, I saw Richard Hare amid the trees at a distance, farther off the cottage than, than I was, and apparently watching the path. I was wondering what he was up to, hiding there, when I heard a shot fired; close as it seemed, to the cottage, and—”

“Stop a bit, witness. Could that shot have been fired by Richard Hare?”

“It could not. He was a quarter of a mile, nearly, away from it. I was much nearer the cottage than he.”

“Go on.”

“I could not imagine what that shot meant, or who could have fired it. Not that I suspected mischief: and I knew that poachers did not congregate so near Hallijohn’s cottage. I set off to reconnoitre, and as I turned the corner, which brought the house within my view, I saw Captain Thorn—as he was called—come leaping out of it. His face was white with terror, his breath was gone—in short, I never saw any living man betray so much agitation. I caught his arm as he would have passed me. ‘What have you been about?’ I asked. ‘Was it you, who fired?’ He—”

“Stay. Why did you suspect him?”

“From his state of excitement; from the terror he was in. That some ill had happened, I felt sure—and so would you, had you seen him as I did. My arresting him increased his agitation: he tried to throw me off, but I am a strong man: and I suppose he thought it best to temporise. ‘Keep dark upon it, Bethel,’ he said, ‘I will make it worth your while. The thing was not premeditated: it was done in the heat of passion. What business had the fellow to abuse me? I have done no harm to the girl.’ As he thus spoke,



he took out a pocket-book with the hand that was at liberty ; I held the other—”

“ As the prisoner thus spoke, you mean ? ”

“ The prisoner. He took a bank-note from his pocket-book, and thrust it into my hands. It was a note for 50*l.* ‘ What’s done can’t be undone, Bethel,’ he said, ‘ and your saying that you saw me here can serve no good turn. Shall it be silence ? ’ I took the note, and answered that it should be silence. I had not the least idea that anybody was killed.”

“ What did you suppose had happened, then ? ”

“ I could not suppose ; I could not think ; it all passed in the haste and confusion of a moment, and no definite ideas occurred to me. Thorn flew on, down the path, and I stood looking after him. The next was, I heard footsteps, and I slipped within the trees. They were those of Richard Hare, who took the path to the cottage. Presently he returned, little less agitated than Thorn had been. I had gone into an open space then, and he accosted me, asking if I had seen ‘ that hound ’ fly from the cottage ? ‘ What hound ? ’ I asked him. ‘ That fine fellow, that Thorn, who comes after Afy,’ he answered, but I stoutly denied that I had seen any one. Richard Hare continued his way, and I afterwards found that Hallijohn was killed.”

“ And so, you took a bribe to conceal one of the foulest crimes that ever man committed, Mr. Otway Bethel ? ”

“ I took the money : and am ashamed to confess to it. But it was done without reflection. I swear that had I known what crime it was intended to hush up, I never would have touched it. I was hard up for funds, and the amount tempted me. When I dis-

covered what had really happened and that Richard Hare was accused, I was thunder-struck at my own deed; many a hundred times, since, have I cursed the money; and the fate of Richard has been as a heavy weight upon my conscience."

"You might have lifted the weight by confessing."

"To what end? It was too late. Thorn had disappeared. I never heard of him, or saw him, until he came to West Lynne this last spring, as Sir Francis Levison, to oppose Mr. Carlyle. Richard Hare had also disappeared; had never been seen or heard of; and most people supposed he was dead. To what end then, should I confess? Perhaps only to be suspected myself. Besides, I had taken the money upon a certain understanding, and it was only fair that I should keep to it."

If Richard Hare was subjected to a severe cross-examination, a far more severe one awaited Otway Bethel. The judge spoke to him only once, his tone ringing with reproach.

"It appears then, witness, that you have retained within you, all these years, the proofs of Richard Hare's innocence?"

"I can only acknowledge it with contrition, my lord."

"What did you know of Thorn in those days?" asked the counsel.

"Nothing; save that he frequented the Abbey Wood, his object being Afy Hallijohn. I had never exchanged a word with him until this night; but I knew his name, Thorn—at least the one he went by. And by his addressing me as Bethel, it appeared that he knew mine."

The case for the prosecution closed. An able and

ingenious speech was made for the defence, the learned counsel who offered it contending that there was still no proof of Sir Francis Levison having been the guilty man. Neither was there any proof that the catastrophe was not the result of pure accident. A loaded gun, standing against the wall in a small room, was not a safe weapon; and he called upon the jury not rashly to convict in the uncertainty, but to give the prisoner the benefit of the doubt. He should call no witnesses, he observed not even as to character. Character! for Sir Francis Levison! The court burst into a grin: the only sober face in it being that of the judge.

The judge summed up. Certainly not in the prisoner's favour; but—to use the expression of some amongst the audience—dead against him. Otway Bethel came in for a side shaft or two from his lordship; Richard Hare for sympathy. The jury retired about four o'clock, and the judge quitted the bench.

A very short time were they absent. Scarcely a quarter of an hour. His lordship returned into court, and the prisoner was again placed in the dock. He was the hue of marble, and, in his nervous agitation, kept incessantly throwing back his hair from his forehead—the action so often spoken of. Silence was proclaimed.

“How say you, gentlemen of the jury? Guilty or not guilty?”

“GUILTY.” It was a silence to be felt: and the prisoner gasped once or twice convulsively. “But,” added the foreman, we “wish to recommend him to mercy.”

“On what grounds?” inquired the judge.

“Because, my Lord, we believe that it was not a

crime planned by the prisoner beforehand; but arose out of the bad passions of the moment, and was so committed."

The judge paused: and drew something black from the receptacle of his pocket, buried deep in his robes.

"Prisoner at the bar! Have you anything to urge why the sentence of death should not be passed upon you."

The prisoner clutched the front of the dock. He threw up his head, as if shaking off the dread fear which had oppressed him, and the marble of his face changed to scarlet.

"Only this, my lord. The jury in giving their reason for recommending me to your lordship's mercy, have adopted the right view of the case, as it actually occurred. That the man, Hallijohn's, life was taken by me, it will be useless for me to deny, in the face of the evidence given this day. But it was not taken in malice. When I quitted the girl, Afy, and went to the cottage for my hat, I no more contemplated injuring mortal man, than I contemplate it at this moment. He was there; the father; and in the dispute that ensued, the catastrophe occurred. My lord, it was not wilful murder."

The prisoner ceased. And the judge, the black cap upon his head, crossed his hands one upon the other.

"Prisoner at the bar. You have been convicted, by clear and undoubted evidence, of the crime of wilful murder. The jury have pronounced you guilty; and in their verdict I entirely coincide. That you took the life of that ill-fated and unoffending man, there is no doubt; you have, yourself, confessed it. It was a foul, a barbarous, a wicked act. I care not for what

may have been the particular circumstances attending it: he may have provoked you by words, but no provocation of that nature could justify your drawing the gun upon him. Your counsel urged that you were a gentleman, a member of the British aristocracy, and therefore deserved consideration. I confess that I was very much surprised to hear such a doctrine fall from his lips. In my opinion, your position in life makes your crime the worse: and I have always maintained that when a man possessed of advantages falls into sin, he deserves less consideration than does one who is poor, simple, and uneducated. Certain portions of the evidence given to-day (and I do not now allude to the actual crime) tell very greatly against you. You were pursuing the daughter of this man with no honourable purpose—and in this point your conduct contrasts badly with that of Richard Hare—equally a gentleman with yourself. In this pursuit you killed her father; and, not content with that, you still pursued the girl—and pursued her to her ruin; basely deceiving her as to the actual facts, and laying the crime upon another. I cannot trust myself to speak further upon this point; nor is it necessary that I should: it is not to answer for that, that you stand before me. Uncalled, unprepared, and by you unpitied, you hurried that unfortunate man into eternity; and you must now expiate the crime with your own life. The jury have recommended you to mercy; and the recommendation will be forwarded in due course to the proper quarter: but you must be aware how frequently this clause is appended to a verdict, and how very rarely it is attended to, just cause being wanting. I can but enjoin you, and I do so most



earnestly, to pass the little time that probably remains to you on earth, in seeking repentance and forgiveness. You are best aware, yourself, what your past life has been: the world knows somewhat of it: but there is pardon above for the most guilty, when it is earnestly sought. It now only remains for me to pass upon you the dread sentence of the law. It is, that you, Francis Levison, be taken back to the place whence you came, and thence to the place of execution, and that you be there hanged by the neck until you are dead. And may the Lord God Almighty have mercy upon your immortal soul!"

“ Amen ! ”

The court was cleared. The day's excitement was over, and the next case was inquired for. Not quite over yet, however, the excitement, and the audience crowded in again. For the next case proved to be the arraignment of Richard Hare the younger. A formal proceeding merely, in pursuance of the verdict of the coroner's inquest. No evidence was offered against him, and the judge ordered him to be discharged. Richard, poor, ill-used, baited Richard, was a free man again.

Then ensued the scene of all scenes. Half, at least, of those present, were residents of, or from near West Lynne. They had known Richard Hare from infancy; they had admired the boy in his pretty childhood; they had liked him in his unoffending boyhood; but they had been none the less ready to cast their harsh stones at him, and to thunder down their denunciations when the time came. In proportion to their fierceness then, was their contrition now: Richard had



been innocent all the while; they had been more guilty than he.

An English mob, gentle or simple, never gets up its excitement by halves. Whether its demonstration be of a laudatory or a condemnatory nature, the steam is sure to be put on to bursting point. With one universal shout, with one bound, they rallied round Richard: they congratulated him, they overwhelmed him with good wishes, they expressed with shame their repentance, they said that the future should atone for the past. Had he possessed a hundred hands, they would have been shaken off. And when Richard extricated himself, and turned, in his pleasant, forgiving, loving nature, to his father, the stern old justice, forgetting his pride and his pomposity, burst into tears and sobbed like a child, as he murmured something about he, also, needing forgiveness.

“Dear father,” cried Richard, his own eyes wet, “it is forgiven and forgotten already. Think how happy we shall be again together! you, and I, and my mother.”

The justice’s hands, which had been wound round his son, relaxed their hold. They were twitching curiously; the face was twitching curiously; the body also began to twitch: and he fell upon the shoulder of Colonel Bethel, in a second stroke of paralysis.

## CHAPTER XX.

## THE DEATH CHAMBER.

BY the side of William Carlyle's dying bed, knelt the Lady Isabel. The time was at hand, and the boy was quite reconciled to his fate. Merciful indeed is God to dying children! It is astonishing how very readily, where the right means are taken, they may be brought to look with pleasure, rather than fear, upon their unknown journey.

The brilliant hectic, type of the disease, had gone from his cheeks, his features were white and wasted, and his eyes large and bright. His silky brown hair was pushed off his temples, and his little hot hands were thrown outside the bed.

"It won't be so very long to wait, you know, will it, Madame Vine?"

"For what, darling?"

"Before they all come. Papa and mamma, and Lucy, and all of them."

A jealous feeling shot across her wearied heart. Was *she* nothing to him? "Do you not care that I should come to you, William?"

"Yes, I hope you will. But, do you think we shall know *everybody* in heaven? Or will it be only our own relations?"

"Oh, child! I think there will be no relations, as you call them, up there. We can trust all that to God—however it may be."

William lay looking upwards at the sky, apparently in thought. A dark blue, serene sky, from which shone the hot July sun. His bed had been moved near the window, for he liked to sit up in it and look at the landscape. The window was open now, and the butterflies and bees sported in the summer air.

“I wonder how it will be?” pondered he, aloud. “There will be the beautiful city, with its gates of pearl, and its shining precious stones, and its streets of gold: and there will be the clear river, and the trees with their fruits and their healing leaves, and the lovely flowers: and there will be the harps, and music, and singing; and what else will there be?”

“Everything that is desirable and beautiful, William.”

Another pause. “Madame Vine, will Jesus come for me, do you think, or will he send an angel?”

“Jesus has *promised* to come for his own redeemed; for those who love him and wait for him.”

“Yes, yes. And then I shall be happy for ever. It will be so pleasant to be there! never to be tired or ill again.”

“Pleasant? Ay! Oh, William! would that the time were come!” she was thinking of herself; her freedom; though the boy knew it not. She buried her face in her hands and continued speaking: William had to bend his ear to catch the faint whisper.

“‘And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying; neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.’”

“Madame Vine, do you think mamma will be there?” he presently asked. “I mean mamma that was.”

“Ay. Ere long”

“But how shall I know her? You see, I have nearly forgotten what she was like.”

She leaned over him, laying her forehead upon his wasted arm; she burst into a flood of impassioned tears. “You will know her; never fear, William: she has not forgotten you.”

“But how can we be sure that she will be there?” debated William, after a pause of thought. “You know” — sinking his voice, and speaking with hesitation — “she was not quite good. She was not good to papa or to us. Sometimes I think, suppose she did not grow good, and did not ask God to forgive her?”

“Oh, William,” sobbed the unhappy lady, “her whole life, after she left you, was one long scene of repentance, of seeking forgiveness. Her repentance, her sorrow was greater than she could bear, and —”

“And what?” asked William, for there was a pause.

“Her heart broke in it; yearning after you and your father.”

“What makes you think it?”

“Child, I *know* it.”

William considered. Then — had he been strong enough — would have started up with energy. “Madame Vine, you could only know that, by mamma’s telling you! Did you ever see her? Did you know her abroad?”

Lady Isabel’s thoughts were far away; up in the clouds, perhaps. She reflected not on the possible consequences of her answer: or she had never given it.

“Yes: I knew her abroad.”

“Oh!” said the boy. “Why did you never tell us? What did she say? What was she like?”

“She said” — sobbing wildly — “that she was

parted from her children here. But she should meet them in heaven and be with them for ever. William, darling! all the awful pain, and sadness, and guilt of this world, will be washed out, and God will wipe our tears away.

“What was her face like?” he questioned, softly.

“Like yours. Very much like Lucy’s.”

“Was she pretty?”

A momentary pause. “Yes.”

“Oh dear! I am ill! Hold me!” cried out William, as his head sank to one side, and great drops, as large as peas, broke forth upon his clammy face. It appeared to be one of the temporary faint attacks that had overpowered him at times lately, and Lady Isabel rang the bell hastily.

Wilson came in, in answer. Joyce was the usual attendant upon the sick room, but Mrs. Carlyle, with her infant, was passing the day at the Grove, unconscious of the critical state of William, and she had taken Joyce with her. It was the day following the trial. Mr. Justice Hare had been brought to West Lynne in his second attack, and Barbara had gone to see him, to console her mother, and to welcome Richard to his home again. If one carriage drove, that day, to the Grove, with cards and inquiries, fifty did; not to speak of the foot callers. “It is all meant by way of attention to you, Richard,” said gentle Mrs. Hare, smiling through her loving tears at her restored son. Lucy and Archie were dining at Miss Carlyle’s, and Sarah attended little Arthur: leaving Wilson free. She came in, in answer to Madame Vine’s ring.

“Is he off in another faint?” unceremoniously cried she, hastening to the bed.

“I think so. Help me to raise him.”

William did not faint. No: the attack was quite different from those he was subject to. Instead of losing consciousness and power, as was customary, he shook as if he had the ague, and laid hold both of Madame Vine and Wilson, grasping them convulsively.

“Don’t let me fall! don’t let me fall!” he gasped.

“My dear, you cannot fall!” responded Madame Vine. “You forget that you are on the bed.”

He clasped them yet, and trembled still, as from fear. “Don’t let me fall! don’t let me fall!” the incessant burden of his cry.

The paroxysm passed. They wiped his brow, and stood looking at him: Wilson with a pursed-up mouth, and a peculiar expression of face. She put a spoonful of restorative jelly between his lips, and he swallowed it, but shook his head when she would have given him another. Turning his face to the pillow, in a few minutes he was in a doze.

“What could it have been?” exclaimed Lady Isabel, in an under tone to Wilson.

“I know,” was the oracular answer, “I saw this same sort of attack once before, madame.”

“And what caused it?”

“’Twasn’t in a child, though,” went on Wilson. “’Twas in a grown-up person. But that’s nothing: it comes for the same thing in all. I think he was taken for death.”

“Who?” uttered Lady Isabel, startled.

Wilson made no reply in words, but she pointed with her finger to the bed.

“Oh, Wilson! He is not so ill as that. Mr. Wainwright said this morning that he might last a week or two.”

Wilson composedly sat down in the easiest chair.



She was not wont to put herself out of the way for the governess: and that governess was too much afraid of her, in one sense, to let her know her place. "As to Wainwright, he's nobody," quoth she. "And if he saw the child's breath going out before his face, and knew that the next moment would be his last, he'd vow to us all that he was good for twelve hours to come. You don't know Wainwright as I do, madame. He was our doctor at mother's; and he has attended in all the places I have lived in, since I went out to service. Five years I was head nurse at Squire Pinner's; going on for four, I was lady's maid at Mrs. Hare's; I came here when Miss Lucy was a baby; and in all my places has he attended, like one's shadow. My Lady Isabel thought great guns of old Wainwright, I remember. It was more than I did."

My Lady Isabel made no response to this. She took a seat, and watched William. His breathing was more laboured than usual.

"That idiot Sarah says to me to-day, says she, 'Which of his two grandpapa's will they bury him by—old Mr. Carlyle, or Lord Mount Severn?' 'Don't be a calf?' I answered her. 'D'ye think they'll stick him out in the corner with my lord?—he'll be put in the Carlyle vault, of course.' It would have been different you see, Madame Vine, if my lady had died at home, all proper, Mr. Carlyle's wife. They'd have buried her no doubt by her father, and the boy would have been laid with her. But she did not."

No reply was made by Madame Vine; and a silence ensued. Nothing to be heard but that fleeting breath.

"I wonder how that beauty feels?" suddenly broke forth Wilson again, her tone one of scornful irony.

Lady Isabel, her eyes and her thoughts absorbed

by William, positively thought Wilson's words must relate to him. She turned to her in surprise.

"That bright gem in the prison at Lynneborough," explained Wilson. "I hope he may have found himself pretty well since yesterday! I wonder how many trainfuls from West Lynne will go to his hanging?"

Her face turned crimson; her heart sick. She had not dared to inquire how the trial terminated. The subject altogether was too dreadful; and nobody had happened to mention it in her hearing.

"Is he condemned?" she asked, in a low tone.

"He is condemned; and good luck to him! and Mr. Otway Bethel's let loose again; and good luck to *him*. A nice pair they are! Nobody went from this house to hear the trial—it might not have been pleasant, you know, madame, to Mr. Carlyle—but people came in last night and told us all about it. Young Richard Hare chiefly convicted him. He is back again, and so nice-looking, they say, ten times more so than he was when quite a young man. You should have heard, they say, the cheerings and shouts which greeted Mr. Richard when his innocence came out: it pretty near rose off the roof of the court; and the judge didn't stop it."

Wilson paused, but there was no answering comment. On she went again.

"When Mr. Carlyle brought the news home last evening, and broke it to his wife—telling her how Mr. Richard had been received with acclamations, she nearly fainted; for she's not strong yet, Mr. Carlyle called out to me to bring some water: I was in the next room with the baby: and there she was, the tears raining from her eyes, and he holding her to him. I

always said there was a whole world of love between those two, though he did go and marry another. Mr. Carlyle ordered me to put the water down, and sent me away again. But I don't fancy he told her of old Hare's attack until this morning."

Lady Isabel lifted her aching forehead. "What attack?"

"Why, madame, don't you know? I declare you box yourself up in the house, keeping from everybody, till you hear nothing. You might as well be living at the bottom of a coal-pit. Old Hare had another stroke in the court at Lynneborough: and that's why my mistress is gone to the Grove to-day."

"Who says Richard Hare's come home, Wilson?"

The question, the weak, scarcely audible question, had come from the dying boy. Wilson threw up her hands, and made a bound to the bed. "The like of that!" she uttered, aside to Madame Vine. "One never knows when to take these sick ones. Master William, you hold your tongue, and drop off to sleep again. Your papa will be home soon from Lynneborough, and if you talk and get tired, he'll say it's my fault. Come, shut your eyes. Will you have a bit more jelly?"

William, making no reply to the offer of jelly, buried his face again on the pillow. But he was grievously restless. The nearly worn-out spirit was ebbing and flowing.

Mr. Carlyle was at Lynneborough. He always had much business there at assize time, in the Nisi Prius court. But, the previous day, he had not gone himself; Mr. Dill had been despatched to represent him.

Between seven and eight he returned home, and

came into William's chamber. The boy brightened up at the well-known presence.

"Papa!"

Mr. Carlyle sat down on the bed and kissed him. The passing beams of the sun, slanting from the horizon, shone into the room, and Mr. Carlyle could view well the dying face. The grey hue of death was certainly on it.

"Is he worse?" he exclaimed hastily to Madame Vine.

"He appears worse this evening, sir. More weak."

"Papa," panted William, "is the trial over?"

"What trial, my boy?"

"Sir Francis Levison's."

"It was over yesterday. Never trouble your head about him, my brave boy. He is not worth it."

"But, I want to know. Will they hang him?"

"He is sentenced to it."

"Did he kill Hallijohn?"

"Yes. Who has been talking to him upon the subject?" Mr. Carlyle continued to Madame Vine, marked displeasure in his tone.

"Wilson mentioned it, sir," was the low answer.

"Oh, papa, what will he do? Will Jesus forgive him?"

"We must hope it."

"Do you hope it, papa?"

"Yes. I wish that all the world may be forgiven, William: whatever may have been their sins. My child, how restless you seem!"

"I can't keep in one place. The bed gets wrong. Pull me up on the pillow, will you, Madame Vine?"

Mr. Carlyle gently lifted the boy himself. "Madame Vine is an untiring nurse to you, William," he

observed, gratefully casting a glance towards her in the distance, where she had retreated, and was shaded by the window curtain.

William made no reply. He seemed to be trying to recall something. "I forget; I forget!"

"Forget what?" asked Mr. Carlyle.

"It was something I wanted to ask you; or to tell you. Isn't Lucy come home?"

"I suppose not."

"Papa, I want Joyce."

"I will send her home to you. I am going for your mamma after dinner."

"For mamma?—oh, I remember now. Papa, how shall I know mamma in heaven? Not this mamma."

Mr. Carlyle did not immediately reply. The question may have puzzled him. William continued hastily: possibly mistaking the motive of the silence.

"She *will* be in heaven, you know."

"Yes, yes, child" — speaking hurriedly.

"Madame Vine knows she will. She saw her abroad: and mamma told her that — what was it, madame?"

Madame Vine grew sick with alarm. Mr. Carlyle turned his eyes upon her scarlet face—as much as he could get to see of it. She would have escaped from the room if she could.

"Mamma was more sorry than she could bear," went on William, finding he was not helped. "She wanted you papa, and she wanted us, and her heart broke, and she died."

A flush rose to Mr. Carlyle's brow. He turned inquiringly to Madame Vine.

"Oh, I *beg* your pardon, sir," she murmured, with



desperate energy. "I ought not so to have spoken: I ought not to have interfered in your family affairs. I spoke only as I thought it must be, sir. The boy seemed troubled about his mother."

Mr. Carlyle was at sea. "Did you meet his mother abroad? I scarcely understand."

She lifted her hand and covered her glowing face. "No sir." Surely the recording angel blotted out the words! If ever a prayer for forgiveness went up from an aching heart, it must have gone up then, for the equivocation uttered over her child's death-bed!

Mr. Carlyle went towards her. "Do you perceive the change in his countenance?" he whispered.

"Yes, sir! yes. He has looked like this since a strange fit of trembling that came on in the afternoon. Wilson thought he might be taken for death. I fear some four-and-twenty hours will end it."

Mr. Carlyle rested his elbow on the window-frame, and his hand upon his brow, his drooping eyelids falling over his eyes. "It is hard to lose him."

"Oh, sir, he will be better off!" she wailed choking down the sobs and the emotion, that arose threateningly. "We *can* bear death; it is not the worst parting that the earth knows. He will be quit of this cruel world: sheltered in heaven. I wish we were all there!"

A servant came to say that Mr. Carlyle's dinner was served, and he proceeded to it with what appetite he had. When he returned to the sick-room, the daylight had faded, and a solitary candle was placed where its rays could not fall upon the child's face. Mr. Carlyle took the light in his hand to scan that face again. He was lying sideways on the pillow,



his hollow breath echoing through the room. The light caused him to open his eyes.

“Don’t papa, please. I like it dark.”

“Only for one moment, my precious boy.” And, not for more than a moment did Mr. Carlyle hold it. The blue, pinched, ghastly look was there yet. Death was certainly coming on quick.

At that moment Lucy and Archibald came in, on their return from their visit to Miss Carlyle. The dying boy looked up eagerly.

“Good bye, Lucy,” he said, putting out his cold damp hand.

“I am not going out,” replied Lucy. “We have but just come home.”

“Good bye, Lucy,” repeated he.

She laid hold of the little hand then, leaned over, and kissed him. “Good bye, William: but indeed I am not going out anywhere.”

“I am,” said he. “I am going to heaven. Where’s Archie?”

Mr. Carlyle lifted Archie on to the bed. Lucy looked frightened. Archie, surprised.

“Archie, good bye; good bye, dear. I am going to heaven: to that bright blue sky, you know. I shall see mamma there, and I’ll tell her that you and Lucy are coming soon.”

Lucy, a sensitive child, broke into a loud storm of sobs: enough to disturb the equanimity of any sober sick-room. Wilson hastened in at the sound, and Mr. Carlyle sent the two children away, with soothing promises that they should see William in the morning, if he continued well enough.

Down on her knees, her face buried in the counterpane, a corner of it stuffed into her mouth that it

might help to stifle her agony, knelt Lady Isabel. The moment's excitement was well nigh beyond her strength of endurance. Her own child; his child; they alone around its death-bed, and she might not ask or receive from him a word of comfort, of consolation!

Mr. Carlyle glanced at her as he caught her choking sobs; just as he would have glanced at any other attentive governess. Feeling her sympathy, doubtless; but nothing more: she was not heart and part with him and his departing boy. Lower and lower bent he over that boy, for his eyes were wet.

"Don't cry, papa," whispered William, raising his feeble hand caressingly to his father's cheek. "I am not afraid to go. Jesus is coming for me."

"Afraid to go! Indeed I hope not, my gentle boy. You are going to God; to happiness. A few years; we know not how few; and we shall all come to you."

"Yes, you will be sure to come: I know that. I shall tell mamma so. I dare say she is looking out for me now. Perhaps she's standing on the banks of the river, watching the boats."

He had evidently got that picture of Martin's in his mind, the Plains of Heaven. Mr. Carlyle turned to the table. He saw some strawberry juice, pressed from the fresh fruit, and moistened with it the boy's fevered lips.

"Papa, I can't think how Jesus can be in all the boats! Perhaps they don't go quite at the same time? He must be, you know, because he comes to fetch us."

"He will be in yours, darling," was the whispered, fervent answer.

“ Oh yes. He will take me all the way up to God, and say, ‘ Here’s a poor little boy come, and you must please to forgive him and let him go into Heaven, because I died for him!’ Papa, did you know that mamma’s heart broke ?”

A caress was all the reply Mr. Carlyle returned. William’s restlessness of body appeared to be extending to his mind. He would not be put off.

“ Papa! did you know that mamma’s heart broke ?”

“ William, I think it likely that your poor mamma’s heart did break, ere death came. But let us talk of you; not of her. Are you in pain ?”

“ I can’t breathe; I can’t swallow. I wish Joyce was here.”

“ She will not be long.”

The boy nestled himself in his father’s arms, and in a few minutes appeared to be asleep. Mr. Carlyle, after a while, gently laid him on his pillow, watched him, and then turned to depart.

“ Oh, papa, papa!” he cried out, in a tone of painful entreaty, opening wide his yearning eyes, “ say good bye to me!”

Mr. Carlyle’s tears fell upon the little up-turned face, as he once more caught it to his breast.

“ My darling, papa will soon be back. He was not going to leave you for more than an hour. He is going to bring mamma to see you.”

“ And pretty little baby Anna ?”

“ And baby Anna, if you would like her to come in. I will not leave my darling boy for long: he need not fear. I shall not leave you again to-night, William, when once I am back.”

“ Then put me down, and go, papa.”

A lingering embrace; a fond, lingering, tearful

embrace, Mr. Carlyle holding him to his beating heart. Then he laid him comfortably on his pillow, gave him a teaspoonful of strawberry juice, and hastened away.

“Good bye, papa,” came forth the little feeble cry.

It was not heard. Mr. Carlyle was gone. Gone from his living child — for ever. Up rose Lady Isabel, and flung her arms aloft in a storm of sobs.

“Oh, William, darling! in this dying moment let me be to you as your mother!”

Again he unclosed his weary eyelids. It is probable that he only partially understood.

“Papa’s gone for her.”

“Not *her*! I — I —” Lady Isabel checked herself, and fell sobbing on the bed. No; not even at that last hour when the world was closing on him, dared she say, I am your mother.

Wilson re-entered. “He looks as if he were dropping off to sleep,” quoth she.

“Yes,” said Lady Isabel. “You need not wait, Wilson. I will ring if he requires anything.”

Wilson, though withal not a bad-hearted woman, was not one to remain for pleasure, in a sick room, if told she might leave it. Lady Isabel, remained alone. She fell on her knees again, this time in prayer. In prayer for the departing spirit, on its wing, and that God would mercifully vouchsafe herself a resting-place with it in heaven.

A review of the past then rose up before her. From the time of her first entering that house, the bride of Mr. Carlyle, to her present sojourn in it. The old scenes passed through her mind, like the changing pictures in a phantasmagoria. Why should they have come, there and then? She knew not.

William slept on silently : *she* thought of the past. The dreadful reflection, "If I had not — done as I did — how different would it have been now!" had been sounding its knell in her heart so often, that she had almost ceased to shudder at it. The very nails of her hands had, before now, entered the palms with the sharp pain it brought. Stealing over her more especially this night as she knelt there, her head lying on the counterpane, came the recollection of that first illness of hers. How she had lain, and, in her unfounded jealousy, imagined Barbara the house's mistress. She, dead; Barbara exalted to her place, Mr. Carlyle's wife, her child's stepmother! She recalled the day when, her mind excited by certain gossip of Wilson's — it was previously in a state of fever bordering on delirium — she had prayed her husband, in terror and anguish, not to marry Barbara. "How could he marry her?" he had replied, in his soothing pity. "She, Isabel, was his wife: who was Barbara? Nothing to them." But it had all come to pass. *She* had brought it forth. Not Mr. Carlyle; not Barbara; she alone. Oh the dreadful misery of the retrospect!

Lost in thought, in anguish past and present, in self-condemning repentance, the time passed on. Nearly an hour must have elapsed since Mr. Carlyle's departure, and William had not disturbed her. But — who was this, coming into the room? Joyce.

She hastily rose up, as Joyce, advancing with a quiet step, drew aside the clothes to look at William. "Master says he has been wanting me," she observed. "Why — oh!"

It was a sharp, momentary cry, subdued as soon as uttered. Madame Vine sprang forward to Joyce's

side looking also. The pale young face lay calm in its utter stillness; the busy little heart had ceased to beat. Jesus Christ had indeed come, and taken the fleeting spirit.

Then she lost all self-control. She believed that she had reconciled herself to the child's death, that she could part with him without too great emotion. But she had not anticipated it would be quite so soon; she had deemed that some hours more would at least be given him; and now the storm overwhelmed her. Crying, sobbing, calling, she flung herself upon him; she clasped him to her; she dashed off her disguising glasses; she laid her face upon his. Beseeching him to come back to her that she might say farewell; to her, his mother; her darling child, her lost William.

Joyce was terrified; terrified for consequences. With her full strength she pulled her from the boy, praying her to consider; to be still. "Do not, do not, for the love of Heaven! *My lady! my lady!*"

It was the old familiar title that struck upon her fears and induced calmness. She stared at Joyce, and retreated backwards; after the manner of one receding from some hideous vision.

"My lady, let me take you into your room. Mr. Carlyle is come; he is but bringing up his wife. Only think if you should give way before him! Pray come away!"

"How did you know me?" she asked, in a hollow voice.

"My lady, it was that night when there was an alarm of fire. I went close up to you to take Master Archibald from your arms; and, as sure as I am now standing here, I believe that for the moment my senses left me. I thought I saw a spectre; the



spectre of my dead lady. I forgot the present; I forgot that all were standing round me; that you, Madame Vine, were alive before me. Your face was not disguised then: the moonlight shone full upon it, and I knew it, after the first few moments of terror, to be, in dreadful truth, the *living* one of Lady Isabel. My lady, come away! we shall have Mr. Carlyle here."

Poor thing! She sank upon her knees, in her humility, her dread. "Oh, Joyce, have pity upon me! don't betray me! I will leave the house; indeed, I will. Don't betray me while I am in it!"

"My lady, you have nothing to fear from me. I have kept the secret buried within my breast since then. Last April! It has nearly been too much for me. By night and by day I have had no peace, dreading what might come out. Think of the awful confusion, the consequences, should it come to the knowledge of Mr. and Mrs. Carlyle. Indeed, my lady, you never ought to have come."

"Joyce," she said hollowly, lifting her haggard face, "I could not keep away from my unhappy children. Is it no punishment to *me*, think you, the being here?" she added, vehemently. "To see him — my husband — the husband of another! It is killing me."

"Oh, my lady, come away! I hear him; I hear him!"

Partly coaxing, partly dragging her, Joyce took her into her own room, and left her there. Mr. Carlyle was at that moment at the door of the sick one. Joyce sprang forward. Her face, in her emotion and fear, was one of livid whiteness, and she shook as William had shaken, poor child, in the afternoon. It was only too apparent in the well-lighted corridor.

“Joyce!” he exclaimed in amazement, “what ails you?”

“Sir! master!” she panted, “be prepared. Master William — Master William —”

“Joyce! Not *dead*?”

“Alas, yes, sir!”

Mr. Carlyle strode into the chamber. But, ere he was well across it, turned back to slip the bolt of the door. On the pillow lay the white, thin face, at rest now.

“My boy! my boy! Oh, God!” he murmured, in bowed reverence, “mayst Thou have received this child to his rest in Jesus! Even as, I trust Thou hadst already received his unhappy mother!”

## CHAPTER XXI.

## LORD VANE DATING FORWARDS.

TO the funeral of William Carlyle came Lord Mount Severn and his son. Wilson had been right in her surmises as to the resting-place. The Carlyle vault was opened for him, and an order went forth to the sculptor, for an inscription to be added to their marble tablet in the church. "William Vane Carlyle, eldest son of Archibald Carlyle, of East Lynne." Amongst those who attended the funeral as mourners, went one more notable in the eyes of gazers than the rest; Richard Hare the younger.

Lady Isabel was ill. Ill in mind, and ominously ill in body. She kept her room; and Joyce attended on her. The household set down madame's illness to the fatigue of having attended upon Master William: it was not thought of seriously by any one, especially as she declined to see a doctor. All her thoughts, now, were directed to the getting away from East Lynne, for it would never do to remain there to die; and she knew that death was on his way to her, and that no human power or skill, not all the faculty combined, could turn him back again. The excessive dread of detection was not upon her as it had been formerly; I mean, she did not dread the consequences so much, if detection came. In nearing the grave, all fears and hopes, of whatever nature, relating to this world, lose

their force; and fears, or hopes, regarding the next world, take their place.

In returning to East Lynne, Lady Isabel had entered upon a daring act: and she found, in the working, that neither strength nor spirit was equal to it. Presuming upon the extraordinary change which had taken place in her appearance, and which, with her own care, rendered detection next door to an impossibility, she had suffered it to blind her judgment, and lead her upon a course that could only end badly. Let people talk as they will, it is impossible to drive out human passions from the human heart. You may suppress them, deaden them, keep them in subjection, but you cannot root them out. The very best man that attains to the greatest holiness on earth has need constantly to strive and pray, if he would keep away evil from his thoughts, passions from his nature. His life must be spent in self-watchfulness; he must "pray always," at morning, at evening, at midday: and he cannot do it then. One of the greatest of our living divines, grey now with years and infirmities, said in a memorable sermon, preached in Worcester cathedral in the zenith of his fame and power, that the life, even of a good man, was made up of daily sinning and repenting. So it is. Human passions and tempers were brought with us into this world, and they can only quit us when we bid it farewell to enter upon immortality in the next.

When Lady Isabel was Mr. Carlyle's wife, she had never wholly loved him. The very utmost homage that esteem, admiration, affection, could give, was his; but that mysterious passion called by the name of love (and which, as I truly and heartily believe, cannot in its refined etherealism be known to many of us) had

not been given to him. It was now. I told you, some chapters back, that the world goes round by the rules of contrary — conter-rary, mind you, the children have it in their game — and we go round with it. We despise what we have, and covet that which we cannot get. From the very night she had come back to East Lynne, her love for Mr. Carlyle had burst forth with an intensity never before felt. It had been smouldering almost ever since she quitted him. “Reprehensible!” groans a moralist. Very. Everybody knows that, as Afy would say. But her heart, you see, had *not* done with human passions: and they work ill, and conterariness (let the word stand, critic, if you please), and precisely everything they should not.

I shall get blame for it, I fear, if I attempt to defend her. But it was not exactly the same thing, as though she had suffered herself to fall in love with somebody else’s husband. Nobody would defend *that*. We have not turned Mormons yet, and the world does not walk upon its head. When Queen Eleanor handed the bowl of poison to Fair Rosamond, she challenged the execrations of posterity, and they have been liberally bestowed upon her from that hour to this. The queen gets all the blame, the lady all the sympathy. Putting the poison out of view, I think the judgment should be reversed. Had Lady Isabel fallen in love with — say — Mr. Crosby, she would have deserved a little judicious chastisement at Mr. Crosby’s hands. Perhaps an hour or two spent in some agreeable pillory might have proved efficacious. But this was a peculiar case. She, poor thing, almost regarded Mr. Carlyle as *her* husband. The bent of her thoughts was only too much inclined to this. (That evil human heart

again!) Many and many a time did she wake up from a reverie, and strive to drive this mistaken view of things away from her, taking shame to herself. Ten minutes afterwards, she would catch her brain revelling in the same rebellious vision. Mr. Carlyle's love was not hers now; it was Barbara's: Mr. Carlyle did not belong to her; he belonged to his wife. It was not only that he was not hers; he was another's: you may, therefore, if you have the pleasure of being experienced in this sort of thing, guess a little at what her inward life was. Had there been no Barbara in the case, she might have lived and borne it: as it was, it had killed her before her time; that, and the remorse together.

There had been other things, too. The reappearance of Francis Levison at West Lynne, in fresh contact, as may be said, with herself, had struck terror to her heart; and the dark charge brought against him awfully augmented her remorse. Then, the sharp lances perpetually thrust upon her memory—the Lady Isabel's memory—from all sides, were full of cruel stings, unintentionally though they were hurled. And there was the hourly chance of discovery, and the never-ceasing battle with her conscience for being at East Lynne at all. No wonder that the chords of life were snapping: the wonder would have been had they remained whole.

“She brought it upon herself! she ought not to have come back to East Lynne!” groans our moralist again. Don't I say so? Of course she ought not. Neither ought she to have suffered her thoughts to stray, in the manner they did, towards Mr. Carlyle. She ought not; but she did. If we all did just what we “ought,” this lower world would be worth living



in. You must just sit down and abuse her, and so cool your anger. I agree with you that she ought never to have come back; that it was an act little short of madness: but are you quite sure that you would not have done the same, under the facility and the temptation? And now you can abuse me for saying it, if it will afford you any satisfaction.

She was nearer to death than she imagined. She knew—judging by her declining strength, and her inner feelings—that it could not be far off; but she did not deem it was coming so very soon. Her mother had died in a similar way. Some said of consumption—Dr. Martin said so, you may remember; some said of “waste;” the earl, her husband, said of a broken heart—you heard him say so to Mr. Carlyle in the first chapter of this history. The earl was the one who might be supposed to know best. Whatever may have been Lady Mount Severn’s malady, she—to give you the phrase that was in people’s mouths at the time—“went out like the snuff of a candle.” It was now the turn of Lady Isabel. She had no decided disorder, yet Death had marked her. She felt that it was so: and in the approach of Death she dreaded not, as she had once done, the consequences that must ensue, did discovery come. Which brings us back to the point whence ensued this long digression. I dare say you are chafing at it, but it is not often I trouble you with one.

But she would not willingly let discovery come; neither had she the least intention of remaining at East Lynne to die. Where she should take refuge, was quite a secondary consideration: only let her get smoothly and plausibly away. Joyce, in her dread, was for ever urging it. Of course the preliminary

step was, to arrange matters with Mrs. Carlyle, and in the afternoon of the day following the funeral, Lady Isabel proceeded to her dressing-room, and craved an interview.

Mr. Carlyle quitted the room as she entered it. Barbara, fatigued with a recent drive, was lying on the sofa.

“We shall be so sorry to lose you, Madame Vine! You are all we could wish for Lucy: and Mr. Carlyle feels truly grateful for your love and attention to his poor boy.”

“To leave will give me pain also,” Madame Vine answered, in a subdued tone. Pain? Ay. Mrs. Carlyle little guessed at its extent. All she cared for on earth, she should leave behind her at East Lynne.

“Indeed you must not leave,” resumed Barbara. “It would be unjust to allow you to do so. You have made yourself ill, waiting upon poor William, and you must remain here and take holiday until you are cured. You will soon get well, if you will only suffer yourself to be properly waited on and taken care of.”

“You are very considerate. Pray do not think me insensible if I decline. I believe my strength is beyond getting up: that I shall never be able to teach again.”

“Oh, nonsense,” said Barbara, in her quick way. “We are all given to fancy the worst when we are ill. I was feeling terribly weak, only a few minutes ago, and said something of the same sort to Archibald. He talked and soothed me out of it. I wish you had your dear husband living, Madame Vine, to support you and love you; as I have him.”

A tinge of scarlet streaked Madame Vine’s pale face, and she laid her hand upon her beating heart.

“How could you think of leaving? We should be glad to help re-establish your health, in any case, but it is only fair to do it now. I felt sure, by the news brought to me when I was ill, that your attention upon William was overtaxing your strength.”

“It is not the attendance upon William that has brought me into this state,” was the quick answer. “I *must* leave; I have well considered it over.”

“Would you like to go to the sea-side?” exclaimed Barbara, with sudden energy. “I am going there on Monday next: Mr. Carlyle insists upon it that I try a little change. I had intended only to take my baby; but we can make different arrangements and take you and Lucy. It might do you good, Madame Vine.”

She shook her head. “No: it would make me worse. All that I want is perfect quiet. I must beg you to understand that I shall leave. And I should be glad if you could allow the customary notice to be dispensed with, so that I may be at liberty to depart within a few days.”

“Look here, then,” said Barbara, after a pause of consideration; “you remain at East Lynne until my return—which will be in a fortnight. Mr. Carlyle cannot stay with me, so I know I shall be tired in less time than that. He and his office are quite overwhelmed with business, after his long sojourn in London. I did not care to go until August or September, when he will be at leisure, but he would not hear of it, and says we can go again then. I do not want you to remain to teach, you know, Madame Vine: I do not wish you to do a single thing. Lucy shall have holiday, and Mr. Kane can come up for her music. Only, I could not be content to

leave her, unless under your surveillance: she is getting of an age, now, not to be consigned to servants, not even to Joyce. Upon my return, if you still wish to leave, you shall then be at liberty to do so. What do you say?"

Madame Vine said "Yes." Said it eagerly. To have another fortnight with her children, Lucy and Archibald, was very like a reprieve, and she embraced it. Although she knew, as I have said, that grim death was on his way, she did not think he had drawn so near the end of his journey. Her thoughts went back to the time when *she* had been ordered to the sea-side after an illness. It had been a marvel if they had not. She remembered how her husband had urged the change upon her: how he had taken her, travelling carefully; how tenderly anxious he had been in the arrangements for her comfort, when settling her in the lodgings; how, when he came again to see her, he had met her in his passionate fondness, thanking God for the visible improvement in her looks. That one injunction, which she had called him back to give him, as he was departing for the boat, was bitterly present to her now: "Do not get making love to Barbara Hare." All this care, and love, and tenderness, belonged now of right to Barbara; and were given to her.

Now Barbara, although she pressed Madame Vine to remain at East Lynne, and indeed would have been glad that she should do so, did not take her refusal to heart. Barbara could not fail to perceive that she was a thoroughly refined gentlewoman, far superior to the generality of governesses. That she was also truly fond of Lucy, and most anxious for her welfare in every way, Barbara also saw. For

Lucy's sake, therefore, she would be grieved to part with Madame Vine, and would raise her salary to anything in reason, if she would but stay. But, on her own score, Barbara had as soon Madame Vine went, as not; for, in her heart of hearts, she had never liked her. She could not have told why. Was it instinct? Very probably. The birds of the air, the beasts of the field, the fishes of the sea have their instincts; and man has his. Perhaps it was the unaccountable resemblance that Madame Vine bore to Lady Isabel. A strange likeness, Barbara often thought: but whether it lay in the face, the voice, or the manner, she could never decide. A suspicion of the truth did not cross her mind. How should it? And she never spoke of it: had the resemblance been to any one but Lady Isabel, she would have talked of it freely. Or, it may have been that there was now and then a tone in Madame Vine's voice that grated on her ear: a wrung, impatient tone, wanting in respect, savouring of hauteur, which Barbara did not understand, and did not like. However it may have been, certain it is that Mrs. Carlyle would not shed tears after the governess. Only for Lucy's sake did she regret parting with her.

These different remembrances and reflections were separately passing through the minds of the two ladies, when Madame Vine at length rose from her chair to depart.

"Would you mind holding my baby for one minute?" cried Barbara.

Madame Vine quite started. "The baby there!" she uttered. Barbara laughed.

"It is lying by my side, under the shawl, quiet, little sleeping thing."



Madame Vine advanced and took the sleeping baby. How could she refuse? She had never had it in her arms before: had, in fact, scarcely seen it. One visit of ceremony she had paid Mrs. Carlyle, as in politeness bound, a day or two after the young lady's arrival, and had been shown a little face, nearly covered with lace, in a cradle.

"Thank you. I can get up now. I might have half smothered it, had I attempted before," continued Barbara, still laughing. "I have been here long enough, and am quite rested. Talking about smothering children, what accounts we have in the registrar-general's weekly returns of health. So many children 'overlaid in bed;' so many children 'suffocated in bed.' One week there were nearly twenty; and often there are as many as eight and ten. Mr. Carlyle says he knows they are smothered on purpose."

"Oh, Mrs. Carlyle!"

"I exclaimed, just as you do, when he said it, and laid my hand over his lips. He laughed, and told me I did not know half the wickedness of the world. Thank you," again repeated Mrs. Carlyle, taking her child from Lady Isabel. "Is she not a pretty baby? Do you like the name: Anna?"

"It is a simple name," replied Lady Isabel. "And simple names are always the most attractive."

"That is just what Archibald thinks. But he wanted this child's to be Barbara. I would not have had it Barbara for the world. I remember his once saying, a long, long while ago, that he did not like elaborate names; they were mouthfuls; and he instanced mine, and his sister's, and his own. I recalled his words to him, and he said he may not have liked the name of Barbara then, but he loved it now. So we



entered into a compromise; Miss Baby was named Anna Barbara, with an understanding that the first name is to be for use, and the last for the registers."

"It is not christened," said Lady Isabel.

"Only baptized. We should have had it christened before now, but for William's death. Not that we give christening dinners; but I waited for the trial at Lynneborough to be over, that my dear brother Richard might stand to the child."

"Mr Carlyle does not like christenings made into festivals," Lady Isabel dreamily observed, her thoughts buried in the past.

"How did you know that?" exclaimed Barbara, opening her eyes. And poor Madame Vine, her pale face flushing, had to stammer forth some confused words that "she had heard so somewhere."

"It is quite true," said Barbara. "He has never given a christening dinner for any of his children. He cannot understand the analogy between a solemn religious rite, and the meeting together afterwards to eat and drink and make merry, according to the fashion of this world."

As Lady Isabel quitted the room, young Vane was careering through the corridor, throwing his head in all directions, and calling out.

"Lucy! I want Lucy."

"What do you want with her?" asked Madame Vine.

"*Il m'est impossible de vous le dire, madame,*" responded he. Being, for an Eton boy, wonderfully up in French, he was rather given to show it off, when he got the chance. He did not owe it to Eton: Lady Mount Severn had taken better care than that. Better care? What could she want? There was

one whole real live French tutor—and he an Englishman!—for the eight hundred boys. Very unreasonable of her ladyship to disparage that ample provision!

“Lucy cannot come to you just now. She is practising.”

“*Mais, il le faut. J’ai le droit de demander après elle. Elle m’appartient, vous comprenez, madame, cette demoiselle-là.*”

Madame could not forbear a smile. “I wish you would speak English sense, instead of French nonsense.”

“Then the English sense is, that I want Lucy, and I must have her. I am going to take her for a drive in the pony-carriage if you must know. She said she would come, and John is getting it ready.”

“I could not possibly allow it,” said Madame Vine. “You would be sure to upset her.”

“The idea!” he returned, indignantly. “As if I should upset Lucy! Why, I am one of the great whips at Eton! I care for Lucy too much not to drive steadily. She is to be my wife, you know, *ma bonne dame.*”

At this juncture, two heads were pushed out from the library, close by: those of the earl and Mr. Carlyle. Barbara also, attracted by the talking, appeared at the door of her dressing-room.

“What’s that about a wife?” asked my lord, of his son.

The blood mantled in the young gentleman’s cheeks, as he turned round and saw who spoke. But he possessed all the fearlessness of an Eton boy, the honour of a right mind; and he disdained to equivocate.

“I intend Lucy Carlyle to be my wife, papa. I mean, in earnest,—when we shall both be grown up. If you will approve, and Mr. Carlyle will give her to me.”

The earl looked grave: Mr. Carlyle, amused. “Suppose,” said the latter, “we adjourn the discussion to this day ten years?”

“But that Lucy is so very young a child, I should reprove you seriously, sir,” said the earl. “You have no right to bring Lucy’s name into any such absurdity.”

“I mean it, papa: you’ll all see. And I intend to keep out of scrapes—that is, of nasty dishonourable scrapes—on purpose that Mr. Carlyle shall find no excuse against me. I have made up my mind to be what he is—a man of honour. I am right glad you know about it, sir. And I shall let mamma know it, before long.”

The last sentence tickled the earl’s fancy, and a grim smile passed over his lips. “It will be war to the knife, if you do.”

“I know that,” laughed the viscount. “But I am getting a better match for mamma in our battles than I used to be.”

Nobody saw fit to prolong the discussion. Babara put her veto upon the drive in the pony-carriage, unless John sat behind to look after the driver, which Lord Vane’s skill resented as an insult. Madame Vine, when the corridor became empty again, laid her hand upon the boy’s arm, as he was moving away, and drew him to the window.

“In speaking, as you do, of Lucy Carlyle, do you forget the disgrace reflected on her through the conduct of her mother?”

“Her mother is not Lucy.”

“It may prove an impediment with Lord and Lady Mount Severn.”

“Not with his lordship, And I must do—as you heard me say—battle with my mother. Conciliatory battle, you understand, madame; bringing the enemy to reason.”

Madame Vine was agitated. She held her handkerchief to her mouth and the boy noticed how her hands trembled.

“I have learnt to love Lucy,” said she. “It has appeared to me, in these few months’ sojourn with her, that I have stood to her in the light of a mother. William Vane,” she solemnly added, keeping her hold upon him, “I shall soon be where earthly distinctions are no more; where sin and sorrow are wiped away. Should Lucy Carlyle indeed become your wife in after years, never, never cast upon her, by so much as the lightest word of reproach, the sin of Lady Isabel.”

Lord Vane threw back his head, his honest eyes flashing in their indignant earnestness.

“What do you take me for?”

“It would be a cruel wrong upon Lucy. She does not deserve it. That unhappy lady’s sin was all her own: let it die with her. Never speak to Lucy of her mother.”

The lad dashed his hand across his eyes, for they were filling. “I shall. I shall speak to her often of her mother—that is, you know, after she’s my wife. I shall tell how I loved Lady Isabel—that there’s nobody I ever loved so much in the world, but Lucy herself. *I* cast a reproach to Lucy on the score of her mother!” he hotly added. “It is through her mother that I love her. You don’t understand, madame.”

“Cherish and love her for ever, should she become yours,” said Lady Isabel, wringing his hand. “I ask this as one who is dying.”

“I will. I promise it. But, I say, madame,” he continued, dropping his fervent tone, “to what do you allude? Are you worse?”

Madame Vine did not answer. She glided away without speaking.

When she was sitting that evening by twilight in the grey parlour, cold and shivering, and wrapped up in a shawl, though it was hot summer weather, somebody knocked at the door.

“Come in,” cried she, apathetically.

It was Mr. Carlyle who entered. She rose up, her pulses quickening, her heart throbbing against her side. In her wild confusion, she was drawing forward a chair for him. He laid his hand upon it, and motioned her to her own.

“Mrs. Carlyle tells me that you have been speaking to her of leaving. That you find yourself too much out of health to continue with us.”

“Yes, sir,” she faintly replied, having a most imperfect notion of what she did say.

“What is it that you find to be the matter with you?”

“I—think—it is chiefly weakness,” she stammered.

Her face had grown as grey as the walls. A dusky, livid sort of hue, not unlike that which William’s had worn the night of his death, and her voice sounded strangely hollow. The voice struck Mr. Carlyle, and awoke his fears.

“You cannot—you never can have caught William’s complaint, in your close attendance on him!” he exclaimed, speaking in the impulse of the moment, as the



idea flashed across him. "I have heard of such things."

"Caught it from him!" she rejoined, carried away also by impulse. "It is more likely that he —"

She stopped herself just in time. "*Inherited it from me,*" had been the destined conclusion. In her alarm, she went off volubly, something to the effect that "it was no wonder she was ill; illness was natural to her family."

"At any rate, you have become ill at East Lynne, in attendance on my children," rejoined Mr. Carlyle decisively, when her voice died away; "you must therefore allow me to insist that you permit East Lynne to do what it can towards renovating you. What is your objection to see a doctor?"

"A doctor could do me no good," she faintly answered.

"Certainly not — so long as you will not consult one."

"Indeed, sir, doctors could not cure me. Nor — as I believe — prolong my life."

Mr. Carlyle paused. "Do you believe yourself to be in danger?"

"Not in immediate danger, sir. Only in-so-far that I know I shall not live long."

"And yet you will not see a doctor! Madame Vine, you must be aware that I could not permit such a thing to go on in my house. Dangerous illness, and no advice!"

She could not say to him, "My malady is on the mind; it is a breaking heart, and therefore no doctor of physic could serve me." That would never do. She had sat with her hand across her face, between her spectacles, and her wrapped-up chin. Had Mr.



Carlyle possessed the eyes of Argus, he could not have made anything of her features in the broad light of day. But *she* did not feel so sure of it. There was always an undefined terror of discovery when in his presence, and she wished the interview at an end.

“I will see Mr. Wainwright, if it will be any satisfaction to you, sir.”

“Madame Vine, I have intruded upon you here, to say that you *must* see him. And, should he deem it necessary, Dr. Martin also.”

“Oh, sir,” she rejoined with a curious smile, “Mr. Wainwright will be quite sufficient. There will be no need of another. I will write a note to him to-morrow.”

“Spare yourself the trouble. I am going into West Lynne, and will send him up. You will permit me to urge that you spare no pains or care—that you suffer my servants to spare no pains or care to re-establish your health. Mrs. Carlyle tells me that the question of your leaving remains in abeyance until her return—”

“Pardon me, sir. The understanding with Mrs. Carlyle was, that I should remain here until her return, and should then be at liberty at once to leave.”

“Exactly. That is what Mrs. Carlyle said. But I must express a hope that by that time you may be feeling so much better as to reconsider your decision, and continue with us. For my daughter’s sake, Madame Vine, I trust it will be so.”

He rose as he spoke, and held out his hand. What could she do but rise also, drop hers from her face, and give it him in answer? He retained it, clasping it warmly.

“How shall I repay you; how thank you for your love to my poor lost boy?”

His earnest, tender eyes were on her double-spectacles; a sad smile mingled with the sweet expression of his lips, as he bent towards her—lips that had once been hers! A faint exclamation of despair; a vivid glow of hot crimson; and she caught up her new black silk apron, so deeply bordered with crape, in her disengaged hand, and flung it up to her face. He mistook the sound; mistook the action.

“Do not grieve for him. He is at rest. Thank you, thank you greatly for all your sympathy.”

Another wring of her hand, and Mr. Carlyle had quitted the room. She laid her head upon the table, and thought how merciful would be death when he should come.

## CHAPTER XXII.

## IT WON'T DO, AFY.

MR. JIFFIN was in his glory. Mr. Jiffin's house was the same. Both were in apple-pie readiness to receive Miss Afy Hallijohn, who was, in a very short period indeed, to be converted into Mrs. Jiffin.

Mr. Jiffin had not seen Afy for some days: had never been able to come across her since the trial at Lynneborough. Every evening had he danced attendance at her lodgings, but could not get admitted. "Not at home; not at home," was the invariable answer, though Afy might be sunning herself at the window in his very sight. Mr. Jiffin, throwing off as he best could the temporary disappointment, was in an ecstasy of admiration, for he set it all down to Afy's retiring modesty on the approach of the nuptial day. "And they could try to calumniate her!" he indignantly breathed.

But now, one afternoon, when Mr. Jiffin, and his shopman, and his shop, and his wares were all set out to the best advantage, and very tempting they looked as a whole, especially the spiced bacon, Mr. Jiffin, happening to cast his eyes to the opposite side of the street, beheld his beloved sailing by. She was got up in the fashion. A mauve silk dress with eighteen flounces, and about eighteen hundred steel buttons that glittered your sight away; a "zouave" jacket,

worked with gold; a black straw hat with no visible brim perched on the top of her skull, garnished in front with what court milliners are pleased to term a "plume de coq," but which, by its size and height, might have been taken for a "coq" himself, while a white ostrich feather was carried round and did duty behind, and a spangled hair-net hung down to her waist. Gloriously grand was Afy that day; and if I had but a photographing machine at hand — or whatever may be the scientific name for the thing — you should certainly have been regaled with the sight of her. Joyce would have gone down in a fit, had she encountered her by any unhappy chance. Mr. Jiffin, dashing his apron anywhere, tore across.

"Oh, is it you?" said Afy, freezingly, when compelled to acknowledge him, but his offered hand she utterly repudiated. "Really, Mr. Jiffin, I should feel obliged if you would not come out to me in this offensive and public manner."

Mr. Jiffin grew cold. "Offensive! Not come out!" gasped he. "I do trust I have not been so unfortunate as to offend you, Miss Afy!"

"Well—you see," said Afy, calling up all her impudence to say what she had made up her mind to say, "I have been considering it well over, Jiffin, and I find that to carry out the marriage will not be for my—for our happiness. I intended to write and inform you of this; but I shall be spared the trouble—as you *have* come out to me."

The perspiration, cold as ice, began to pour off Mr. Jiffin in his agony and horror. You might have wrung every thread he had on. "You—don't—mean—to—imply—that—you—give—me—up,—Miss Afy?" he jerked out, unevenly.

“Well; yes I do,” replied Afy. “It’s as good to be plain; and then there can be no misapprehension. I’ll shake hands now with you, Jiffin, for the last time: and I am very sorry that we both made such a mistake.”

Poor Jiffin looked at her. His gaze would have melted a heart of stone. “Miss Afy, you *can’t* mean it! You’d never, sure, crush a fellow in this manner, whose whole soul is yours; who trusted you entirely! There’s not an earthly thing I would not do, to please you. You have been the — the light of my existence.”

“Of course,” returned Afy, with a lofty and indifferent air, as if to be the “light of his existence” was only her due. “But it’s all done, and over. It is not at all a settlement that will suit me, you see, Jiffin. A butter and bacon factor is so very — so very — what I have not been accustomed to! And then, those aprons! I never could get reconciled to them.”

“I’ll discard the aprons altogether,” cried he, in a fever. “I’ll get a second shopman, and buy a little gig, and do nothing but drive you out. I’ll do anything if you will but have me still, Miss Afy. I have bought the ring, you know.”

“Your intentions are very kind,” was the distant answer. “But it’s a thing impossible: my mind is fully made up. So farewell for good, Jiffin: and I wish you better luck in your next venture.”

Afy, lifting her capacious dress, for the streets had just been watered, minced off. And Mr. Joe Jiffin, wiping his wet face as he gazed after her, insanely wished that he could be nailed up in one of his pickled pork barrels, and so be put out of his misery.

“That’s done with, thank goodness!” soliloquised

Afy. "Have *him*, indeed! after what Richard Hare let out on the trial. As if I should now look after anybody less than Dick! I shall get him, too. Telling to the judge's face that he only wanted to make me his honourable wife. I always knew Dick Hare loved me above everything else on earth: and he does still, or he'd never have said what he did, in open court. It's better to be born lucky than rich. Won't West Lynne envy me! 'Mrs. Richard Hare, of the Grove!' Old Hare is on his last legs, and then Dick comes into his own. Mrs. Hare must have her jointure house elsewhere, for we shall want the Grove for ourselves. I wonder if Madame Barbara will condescend to recognise me? And that blessed Corny? I shall be a sort of cousin of Corny's then. I wonder how much Dick comes into?—three or four thousand a year. And to think that I had nearly escaped this by tying myself to that ape of a Jiffin! What sharks do get in our unsuspecting paths, in this world!"

On went Afy, through West Lynne, till she arrived close to Mr. Justice Hare's. Then she paced slowly. It had been a frequent walk of hers, since the trial. Luck favoured her to-day. As she was passing the gate, Richard Hare came up from the direction of East Lynne. It was the first time Afy had obtained speech of him.

"Good day, Mr. Richard. Why! you never were going to pass an old friend?"

"I have so many friends," said Richard. "I can scarcely spare time for them, individually."

"But you might for me. Have you forgotten old days?" continued she, bridling and flirting, and altogether showing herself off to advantage.



“No, I have not,” replied Richard. “And I am not likely to do so,” he pointedly added.

“Ah, I felt sure of that. My heart told me so. When you went off, that dreadful night, leaving me to anguish and suspense, I thought I should have died. I have never had, so to say, a happy moment, until this, when I meet you again.”

“Don’t be a fool, Afy!” was Richard’s gallant rejoinder, borrowing the favourite reproach of Miss Carlyle. “I was young and green once: you don’t suppose I have remained so. We will drop the past, if you please. How is Mr. Jiffin?”

“Oh, the wretch!” shrieked Afy. “Is it possible you can have fallen into the popular scandal that I have anything to say to *him*? You know I’d never demean myself to it. That’s West Lynne all over! nothing but inventions in it from week’s end to week’s end. A man who sells cheese! who cuts up bacon! Well, I am surprised at you, Mr. Richard!”

“I have been thinking what luck you were in, to get him,” said Richard, with composure. “But it is your business; not mine.”

“Could *you* bear to see me stooping to him?” returned Afy, dropping her voice to the most insinuating whisper.

“Look you, Afy. What ridiculous folly you are nursing in your head, I don’t trouble myself to guess: but, the sooner you get it out again, the better. I was an idiot once, I don’t deny it: but you cured me of that; and cured me with a vengeance. You must pardon me for intimating that from henceforth we are strangers; in the street, as elsewhere. I have resumed my own standing again: which I perilled when I ran after you.”

Afy turned faint. "How can you speak these cruel words?" gasped she.

"You have called them forth. I was told yesterday that Afy Hallijohn, dressed up to a caricature, was looking after me again. *It won't do, Afy.*"

"Oh-o-o-o-oh!" sobbed Afy, growing hysterical, "and is this to be all my recompense for the years I have spent, pining after you? keeping single for your sake!"

"Recompense! Oh, if you want that, I'll get my mother to give Jiffin her custom." And with a ringing laugh, which, though it had nothing of malice in it, showed Afy that he took her reproach for what it was worth, Richard turned in at his own gate.

It was a deadly blow to Afy's vanity. The worst it had ever received: and she took a few minutes to compose herself, and smooth her ruffled feathers. Then she turned and sailed back towards Mr. Jiffin's, her turban up in the skies and the plume de coq tossing, to the admiration of all beholders, especially of Miss Carlyle, who had the gratification of surveying her from her window. Arrived at Mr. Jiffin's, she was taken ill exactly opposite his door, and staggered into the shop in a most exhausted state.

Round the counter flew Mr. Jiffin, leaving the shopman, staring, behind it. What *was* the matter? What *could* he do for her?

"Faint—heat of the sun—walked too fast—allowed to sit down for five minutes!" gasped Afy, in disjointed sentences.

Mr. Jiffin tenderly conducted her through the shop—to his parlour. Afy cast half an eye round, saw how comfortable were its arrangements, and her symptoms of faintness increased. Gasps and hys-

terical sobs came forth together. Mr. Jiffin was as one upon spikes.

“She’d recover better there than in the public shop — if she’d only excuse his bringing her in, and consent to stop in it a few minutes. No harm could come to her, and West Lynne could never say it. He’d stand at the far end of the room, right away from her: he’d prop open the two doors and the window: he’d call in the maid—anything she thought right. Should he get her a glass of wine?”

Afy declined the wine by a gesture, and sat fanning herself, Mr. Jiffin looking on from a respectful distance. Gradually she grew composed; grew herself again. As she gained courage, Mr. Jiffin lost it, and he ventured upon some faint words of reproach, of remonstrance, touching her recent treatment of him.

Afy burst into a laugh. “Did I not do it well?” she exclaimed. “I thought I’d play off a joke upon you, so I came out this afternoon and did it.”

Mr. Jiffin clasped his hands. “*Was* it a joke?” he returned, trembling with agitation, uncertain whether he was in paradise or not. “Are you still ready to let me call you mine?”

“Of course it was a joke,” said Afy. “What a soft you must have been, Mr. Jiffin, not to see through it! When young ladies engage themselves to be married, you can’t suppose they run back from it, close upon the wedding-day!”

“Oh, Miss Afy!” and the poor little man actually burst into delicious tears, as he caught hold of Afy’s hand and kissed it.

“A great, green donkey!” thought Afy to herself, bending on him, however, the sweetest smile.

Mr. Jiffin is not the only green donkey in the world.

Richard Hare, meanwhile, had entered his mother's presence. She was sitting at the open window, the justice opposite to her, in an invalid-chair, basking in the air and the sun. This last attack of the justice's had affected the mind more than the body. He was brought down to the sitting-room that day for the first time; but, of his mind, there was little hope. It was in a state of half imbecility: the most wonderful characteristic being, that all its self-will, its surliness had gone. Almost as a little child in tractability, was Justice Hare.

Richard came up to his mother, and kissed her. He had been to East Lynne. Mrs. Hare took his hand and fondly held it. The change in her was wonderful: she was a young and happy woman again.

"Barbara has decided to go to the sea-side, mother. Mr. Carlyle takes her on Monday."

"I am glad, my dear. It will be sure to do her good. Richard"—bending over to her husband, but still retaining her son's hand—"Barbara has agreed to go to the sea-side. It will set her up."

"Ay, ay," nodded the justice, "set her up. Sea-side? Can't we go?"

"Certainly, dear, if you wish it: when you shall be a little stronger."

"Ay, ay," nodded the justice again. It was his usual answer now. "Stronger. Where's Barbara?"

"She goes on Monday, sir," said Richard, likewise bending his head. "Only for a fortnight. But they talk of going again later in the autumn."

"Can't I go too?" repeated the justice, looking pleadingly in Richard's face.

“ You shall, dear father. Who knows but a month or two’s bracing would bring you quite round again? We might go all together, ourselves and the Carlyles. Anne comes to stay with us next week you know, and we might go when her visit is over.’

“ Ay, all go together. Anne coming?”

“ Have you forgotten, dear Richard? She comes to stay a month with us, and Mr. Clitheroe and the children. I am so pleased she will find you better,” added Mrs. Hare, her gentle eyes filling. “ Mr. Wainwright says you may go out for a drive to-morrow.”

“ And I’ll be coachman,” laughed Richard. “ It will be the old times come round again. Do you remember, father, my breaking the pole, one moonlight night, and your not letting me drive for six months afterwards?”

The poor justice laughed in answer to Richard, laughed till the tears ran down his face, probably not knowing in the least what he was laughing at.

“ Richard,” said Mrs. Hare to her son, almost in an apprehensive tone, her hand pressing his, nervously, “ was not that Afy Hallijohn I saw you speaking with at the gate?”

“ Did you see her? What a spectacle she had made of herself! I wonder she is not ashamed to go through the streets in such a guise! Indeed, I wonder she shows herself at all.”

“ Richard, you you—will not be drawn in again?” were the next whispered words.

“ Mother!” There was a sternness in his mild blue eyes as he cast them upon his mother. Those beautiful eyes! the very counterpart of Barbara’s; both his and hers the counterpart of Mrs. Hare’s.



The look had been sufficient refutation without words.

“Mother mine, I am going to belong to you in future, and to nobody else. West Lynne is already busy for me, I understand, pleasantly carving out my destiny. One, marvels whether I shall lose myself again with Miss Afy; another, that I shall set on, off-hand, and court Louisa Dobede. They are all wrong: my place will be with my darling mother—at least, for several years to come.”

She clasped his hand to her bosom in her glad delight.

“We want happiness together, mother, to enable us to overget the past: for upon none did the blow fall, as upon you and upon me. And happiness we shall find, in this our own home, living for each other, and striving to amuse my poor father.”

“Ay, ay,” complacently put in Justice Hare.

So it would be. Richard had returned to his home, had become, to all intents and purposes, its master: for the justice would never be in a state to hold sway again. He had reassumed his position; had regained the favour of West Lynne, which, always in extremes, was now wanting to kill him with kindness. A happy, happy home from henceforth: and Mrs. Hare lifted up her full heart in thankfulness to God. Perhaps Richard's went up also.

One word touching that wretched prisoner in the condemned cell at Lynneborough. As you may have anticipated, the extreme sentence was not carried out. And—little favourite as Sir Francis is with you and with me—we can but admit that justice did not demand that it should be. That he had wilfully killed Hallijohn, was certain; but the act was com-



mitted in a moment of wild rage: it had not been premeditated. The sentence was commuted to penal servitude for life. A far more disgraceful one in the estimation of Sir Francis: a far more unwelcome one in the eyes of his wife. It is of no use to mince the truth. One little grain of comfort had penetrated to Lady Levison: the anticipation of the time when she and her ill-fated child should be alone, and could hide themselves in some hidden nook of the wide world: *he*, and his crime, and his end gone; forgotten. But it seems he was not to go, and be forgotten: she and the boy must be tied to him still: and she was lost in horror and rebellion.

That man envied the dead Hallijohn, as he looked forth on the future. A cheering prospect, truly! The gay Sir Francis Levison working in chains with his gang! Where would his diamonds and his perfumed handkerchiefs and his white hands be then? After a time he might get a ticket of leave. He groaned in agony as the turnkey suggested it to him! A ticket of leave for *him*! Oh, why did they not hang him? he wailed forth as he closed his eyes to the dim light: to the light of the cell, you understand: he could not close them to the light of the future. No; never again: it shone out all too plainly, dazzling his brain as with a flame of living fire.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

## UNTIL ETERNITY.

BARBARA was at the sea-side; and Lady Isabel was in her bed, dying. You remember the old French saying, "L'homme propose, et Dieu dispose." An exemplification of it was here.

She, Lady Isabel, had consented to remain at East Lynne during Mrs. Carlyle's absence, on purpose that she might be with her children. But the object was frustrated; for Lucy and Archibald had been removed to Miss Carlyle's. It was Mr. Carlyle's arrangement. He thought the governess ought to have entire respite from all charge: and that poor governess dared not say, Let them stay with me. Lady Isabel had also purposed to be safely away from East Lynne before the time came for her to die: but that time had advanced with giant strides, and the period for removal was past. She was going out as her mother had done, rapidly, unexpectedly, "like the snuff of a candle." Wilson was in attendance on her mistress: Joyce remained at home.

Barbara had chosen a watering-place near, not thirty miles off, so that Mr. Carlyle went there most evenings, returning to his office in the mornings. Thus he saw little of East Lynne, paying it one or two flying visits only. From the Saturday to the Wednesday in the second week he did not come home

at all ; and it was in those few days that Lady Isabel had changed for the worse. On the Wednesday he was expected home, to dinner and to sleep.

Joyce was in a state of frenzy—or next door to it. Lady Isabel was dying, and what would become of the ominous secret? A conviction, born of her fears, was on the girl's mind that, with death, the whole must become known : and, who was to foresee what blame might not be cast upon her, by her master and mistress, for not having disclosed it? She might be accused of having been an abettor in the plot from the first ! Fifty times it was in Joyce's mind to send for Miss Carlyle, and tell her all.

The afternoon was fast waning, and the spirit of Lady Isabel seemed to be waning with it. Joyce was in the room, in attendance upon her. She had been in a fainting state all day, but felt better now. She was partially raised in bed by pillows, a white cashmere shawl over her shoulders, her night-cap off, to allow as much air as possible to come to her : and the windows stood open.

Footsteps sounded on the gravel, in the quiet stillness of the summer air. They penetrated even to her ear, for all her faculties were keen yet. Beloved footsteps : and a tinge of hectic rose to her cheeks. Joyce, who stood at the window, glanced out. It was Mr. Carlyle.

“Joyce!” came forth a cry from the bed, sharp and eager.

Joyce turned round. “My lady?”

“I should die happier if I might see him.”

“See him!” uttered Joyce, doubting her own ears.

“My lady! See *him*? Mr. Carlyle?”

“What can it signify? I am already as one dead.

Should I ask it, or wish it, think you, in rude life? The yearning has been upon me for days, Joyce: it is keeping death away."

"It could not be, my lady," was the decisive answer. "It must not be. It is as a thing impossible."

Lady Isabel burst into tears. "I can't die for the trouble," she wailed. "You keep my children from me. They must not come, you say, lest I should betray myself. Now, you would keep my husband. Joyce, Joyce, let me see him!"

Her husband! Poor thing! Joyce was in a maze of distress, though not the less firm. Her eyes were wet with tears: but she believed she should be infringing her allegiance to her mistress, did she bring Mr. Carlyle to the presence of his former wife: altogether it might be productive of nothing but confusion.

A knock at the chamber door. Joyce called out, "Come in." The two maids, Hannah and Sarah, were alone in the habit of coming to the room, and neither of them had ever known Madame Vine as Lady Isabel. Sarah put in her head.

"Master wants you, Mrs. Joyce."

"I'll come."

"He is in the dining-room. I have just taken down Master Arthur to him."

Mr. Carlyle had got "Master Arthur" on his shoulder when Joyce entered. Master Arthur was decidedly given to noise and rebellion, and was already, as Wilson expressed it, "sturdy upon his pins."

"How is Madame Vine, Joyce?"

Joyce scarcely knew how to answer. But she did not dare equivocate as to her precarious state. And,

where the use, when a few hours would probably see the end of it?

“She is very ill indeed, sir.”

“Worse?”

“Sir, I fear she is dying.”

Mr. Carlyle, in his consternation, put down Arthur.

“Dying!”

“I hardly think she will last till morning, sir.”

“Why, what has killed her?” he uttered, in amazement.

Joyce did not answer. She looked pale and confused.

“Have you had Dr. Martin?”

“Oh no, sir. It would be of no use.”

“No use!” repeated Mr. Carlyle, in a sharp accent.

“Is that the way to treat dying people? Assume it is of no use to send for advice, and so, quietly let them die! If Madame Vine is as ill as you say, a telegraphic message must be sent off at once. I had better see her,” he said, moving to the door.

Joyce, in her perplexity, dared to place her back against it, preventing his egress. “Oh, master!—I beg your pardon, but—but—it would not be right. Please, sir, do not think of going into her room!”

Mr. Carlyle thought Joyce was taken with a fit of prudery. “Why can’t I go in?” he asked.

“Mrs. Carlyle would not like it, sir,” stammered Joyce, her cheeks scarlet now.

Mr. Carlyle stared at her. “Some of you take up odd ideas,” he cried. “In Mrs. Carlyle’s absence, it is necessary that some one should see her. Let a lady die in my house, and never see after her! You are out of your senses, Joyce. I shall go in after dinner; so prepare Madame Vine.”

The dinner was being brought in then. Joyce, feeling like one in a nervous attack, picked up Arthur and carried him to Sarah, in the nursery. What on earth was she to do?

Scarcely had Mr. Carlyle begun his dinner, when his sister entered. Some grievance had arisen between her and the tenants of certain houses of hers, and she was bringing the dispute to him. Before he would hear it, he begged her to go up to Madame Vine, telling her what Joyce had said of her state.

“Dying!” ejaculated Miss Corny, in disbelieving derision. “That Joyce has been more like a simpleton, lately, than like herself. I can’t think what has come to the woman.”

She took off her bonnet and mantle, and laid them on a chair, gave a twitch or two to her cap, as she surveyed it in the pier-glass, and went up-stairs. Joyce answered her knock at the invalid’s door: and Joyce, when she saw who it was, turned as white as any sheet.

“Oh, ma’am! you must not come in!” she blundered out, in her confusion and fear, as she put herself right in the doorway.

“Who is to keep me out?” demanded Miss Carlyle, after a pause of surprise, her tone one of quiet power. “Move away, girl. Joyce, I think your brain must be softening. What will you try at, next?”

Joyce was powerless, both in right and strength, and she knew it. She knew there was no help, that Miss Carlyle would, and must, enter. She stood aside, shivering, and passed out of the room as soon as Miss Carlyle was within it.

Ah! there could no longer be concealment now! There she was, her pale face lying against the pillow,



free from its disguising trappings. The band of grey velvet, the spectacles, the wraps for the throat and chin, the huge cap, all were gone. It was the face of Lady Isabel: changed, certainly, very, very much; but still hers. The silvered hair fell on either side her face, as the silky curls had once fallen; the sweet, sad eyes were the eyes of yore.

“Mercy be good to us!” uttered Miss Carlyle.

They remained gazing at each other, both panting with emotion: yes, even Miss Carlyle. Though a wild suspicion had once crossed her brain that Madame Vine might be Lady Isabel, it had died away again, from the sheer improbability of the thing, as much as from the convincing proofs offered by Lord Mount Severn. Not but what Miss Carlyle had borne in mind the suspicion, and had been fond of tracing the likeness in Madame Vine’s face.

“How could you dare come back here?” she asked, her tone one of sad, soft wailing; not of reproach.

Lady Isabel humbly crossed her attenuated hands upon her chest. “My children,” she whispered: “how could I stay away from them? Have pity, Miss Carlyle! Don’t reproach me! I am on my way to God, to answer for all my sins and sorrows.”

“I do not reproach you,” said Miss Carlyle.

“I am so glad to go,” she continued to murmur, her eyes full of tears. “Jesus did not come, you know, to save the good, like you: He came for the sake of us poor sinners. I tried to take up my Cross, as He bade us, and bear it bravely for His sake; but its weight has killed me.”

The good, like you! Humbly, meekly, deferentially was it expressed, in all good faith and trust, as

though Miss Corny were a sort of upper angel. Somehow the words grated on Miss Corny's ear; grated fiercely on her conscience. It came into her mind, then, as she stood there, that the harsh religion she had, through life, professed, was not the religion that would best bring peace to her dying bed.

"Child," said she, drawing near to and leaning over Lady Isabel, "had *I* anything to do with sending you from East Lynne?"

Lady Isabel shook her head and cast down her gaze, as she whispered: "You did not send me: you did not help to send me. I was not very happy with you, but that was not the cause of—of my going away. Forgive me, Miss Carlyle, forgive me!"

"Thank God!" inwardly breathed Miss Corny. "Forgive *me*," she said, aloud and in agitation, touching her hand. "I could have made your home happier, and I wish I had done it. I have wished it ever since you left it."

Lady Isabel drew the hand in hers. "I want to see Archibald," she whispered, going back, in thought, to the old time and the old name. "I have prayed Joyce to bring him to me, and she will not. Only for a minute! just to hear him say he forgives me! What can it matter, now that I am as one lost to this world! I should die easier."

Upon what impulse, or grounds, Miss Carlyle saw fit to accede to the request, cannot be told. Possibly she did not choose to refuse a death-bed prayer, possibly she reasoned, as did Lady Isabel—what could it matter? She went to the door. Joyce was in the corridor, leaning against the wall, her apron up to her eyes. Miss Carlyle beckoned to her.

"How long have you known of this?"

“ Since that night in the spring, when there was an alarm of fire. I saw her then, with nothing on her face, and knew her; though, at the first moment, I thought it was her ghost. Ma’am, I have just gone about since, like a ghost myself, from the fear.”

“ Go and request your master to come up to me.”

“ Oh, ma’am! Will it be well to tell him?” remonstrated Joyce. “ Well that he should see her?”

“ Go and request your master to come to me,” unequivocally repeated Miss Carlyle. “ Are you mistress, Joyce, or am I?”

Joyce went down. And brought Mr. Carlyle up from the dinner-table.

“ Is Madame Vine worse, Cornelia? Will she see me?”

“ She wishes to see you.”

Miss Carlyle opened the door as she spoke. He motioned to her to pass in first. “ No,” she said, “ you had better see her alone.”

He was going in, when Joyce caught his arm. “ Master! master! you ought to be prepared. Ma’am, won’t you tell him?”

He looked at them, thinking they must be moonstruck, for their conduct seemed inexplicable. Both were in evident agitation; an emotion Miss Carlyle was not given to. Her face and lips were twitching, but she kept a studied silence. Mr. Carlyle knitted his brow, and went into the chamber. They shut him in.

He walked gently at once to the bed, in his straightforward manner. “ I am grieved, Madame Vine —”

The words faltered on his tongue. Did he think, as Joyce had once done, that it was a ghost he saw? Certain it is, that his face and lips turned the hue of

death, and he backed a few steps from the bed: though he was as little given to show emotion as man can well be. The falling hair, the sweet, mournful eyes, the hectic which his presence brought to her cheeks, told too plainly of the Lady Isabel.

“Archibald!”

She put out her trembling hand. She caught him ere he had drawn quite beyond her reach. He looked at her, he looked round the room, as does one awaking from a dream.

“I could not die without your forgiveness,” she murmured, her eyes falling before him as she thought of her past sin. “Do not turn from me! bear with me a little minute! Only say you forgive me, and I shall die in peace.”

“Isabel? Are you — are you — were you Madame Vine?” he cried, scarcely conscious of what he said.

“Oh, forgive, forgive me! I did not die. I got well from that accident, but it changed me dreadfully: nobody knew me, and I came here as Madame Vine. I could not stay away. Archibald, forgive me!”

His mind was in a whirl, his wits were scared away. The first clear thought that came thumping through his brain, was, that he must be a man of two wives. She noticed his perplexed silence.

“I could not stay away from you and from my children. The longing for you was killing me,” she reiterated wildly, like one talking in a fever. “I never knew a moment’s peace after the mad act I was guilty of, in quitting you. Not an hour had I departed, when my repentance set in; and, even then, I would have retracted and come back, but I did not know how. See what it has done for me!”

tossing up her grey hair, holding out her attenuated wrists. "Oh forgive, forgive me! My sin was great, but my punishment was greater. It has been as one long scene of mortal agony."

"Why did you go?" asked Mr. Carlyle.

"Did you not know?"

"No. It has always been a mystery to me."

"I went, out of love for you."

A shade of disdain crossed his lips. Was she equivocating to him on her death-bed?

"Do not look in that way," she panted. "My strength is nearly gone; you must perceive that it is; and I do not, perhaps, express myself clearly. I loved you dearly, and I grew suspicious of you. I thought you were false and deceitful to me; that your love was all given to another; and, in my sore jealousy, I listened to the temptings of that bad man, who whispered to me of revenge. It was not so, was it?"

Mr. Carlyle had regained his calmness; outwardly, at any rate. He stood by the side of the bed, looking down upon her, his arms crossed upon his chest, and his noble form raised to its full height.

"Was it so?" she feverishly repeated.

"Can you ask it?—knowing me as you did then; as you must have known me since? I never was false to you, in thought, in word, or in deed."

"Oh, Archibald, I was mad, I was mad! I could not have done it in anything but madness. Surely you will forget and forgive!"

"I cannot forget. I have already forgiven."

"Try and forget the dreadful time that has passed since that night!" she continued, the tears falling on her cheeks, as she held up to him one of her poor hot



hands. "Let your thoughts go back to the days when you first knew me; when I was here, Isabel Vane, a happy girl with my father. At times I have lost myself in a moment's happiness in thinking of it. Do you remember how you grew to love me, though you thought you might not tell it me?—and how gentle you were with me when papa died?—and the hundred-pound note? Do you remember coming to Castle Marling, and my promising to be your wife?—and the first kiss you left upon my lips? And oh, Archibald! do you remember the loving days, after I was your wife?—how happy we were with each other?—do you remember, when Lucy was born we thought I should have died; and your joy, your thankfulness that God restored me? Do you remember all this?"

Ay. He did remember it. He took that poor hand into his, retaining there its wasted fingers.

"Have you any reproach to cast to me?" he gently said, bending his head a little.

"Reproach to you! To you who must be almost without reproach in the sight of heaven! you, who were ever loving to me, ever anxious for my welfare! When I think of what you were, and are, and how I requited you, I could sink into the earth with remorse and shame. My own sin I have surely expiated: I cannot expiate the shame I entailed upon you, and upon our children."

Never. He felt it as keenly now, as he had felt it then.

"Think what it has been for me!" she resumed; and he was obliged to bend his ear to catch her gradually weakening tones. "To live in this house with your wife; to see your love for her; to watch the envied



caresses that once were mine! I never loved you so passionately as I have done since I lost you. Think what it was, to watch William's decaying strength; to be alone with you in his dying hour, and not be able to say, He is my child as well as yours! When he lay dead, and the news went forth to the household, it was *her* petty grief you soothed; not mine; mine, his mother's. God alone knows how I have lived through it all: it has been to me as the bitterness of death."

"Why did you come back?" was the response of Mr. Carlyle.

"I have told you. I could not *live*, away from you and my children."

"It was wrong. Wrong in all ways."

"Wickedly wrong. You cannot think worse of it than I have done. But the consequences and the punishment would be mine alone, so long as I guarded against discovery. I never thought to stop here to die: but death seems to have come upon me with a leap, as it came to my mother."

A pause of laboured breathing. Mr. Carlyle did not interrupt it.

"All wrong, all wrong," she resumed: "this interview, with you, amongst the *rsst*. And yet—I hardly know: it cannot hurt the new ties you have formed, for I am as one dead now to this world, hovering on the brink of the next. But you *were* my husband, Archibald; and, the last few days, I have longed for your forgiveness with a fevered longing. Oh! that the past could be blotted out! that I could wake up and find it but a hideous dream; that I were here, as in the old days, in health and happiness, your ever-

loving wife! Do *you* wish it?—that the dark past had never had place?”

She put the question in a sharp, eager tone, gazing up to him with an anxious gaze, as though the answer must be one of life or death.

“For your sake I wish it.” Calm enough were the words spoken; and her eyes fell again, and a deep sigh came forth.

“I am going to William. But Lucy and Archibald will be left. Oh, be ever kind to them! I pray you, visit not their mother’s sin upon their heads! do not, in your love for your later children, lose your love for them!”

“Have you seen anything in my conduct that could give rise to fears of this?” he returned, reproach mingling in his sad tone. “The children are dear to me as you once were.”

“As I once was. Ay! and as I might have been now.”

“Indeed you might,” he answered, with emotion.

“Archibald, I am on the very threshold of the next world. Will you not bless me—will you not say a word of love to me before I pass it? Let what I am, be blotted for the moment from your memory: think of me, if you can, as the innocent, timid child, whom you made your wife. Only a word of love! my heart is breaking for it.”

He leaned over her, he pushed aside the hair from her brow with his gentle hand, his tears dropping on her face. “You nearly broke mine when you left me, Isabel,” he whispered. “May God bless you, and take you to His Rest in heaven! May He so deal with me, as I now fully and freely forgive you!”

Lower and lower bent he his head, until his breath nearly mingled with hers. But, suddenly, his face grew red with a scarlet flush, and he lifted it again. Did the form of one, then in a felon's cell at Lynneborough, thrust itself before him? or that of his absent and unconscious wife?

"To His Rest in Heaven," she murmured, in the hollow tones of the departing. "Yes, yes: I know that God has forgiven me. Oh, what a struggle it has been! Nothing but bad feelings; rebellion, and sorrow, and repining; for a long while after I came back here: but Jesus prayed for me and helped me; and you know how merciful he is to the weary and heavy-laden. We shall meet again, Archibald, and live together for ever and for ever. But for that great hope, I could hardly die. William said mamma would be on the banks of the river, looking out for him: but it is William who is looking for me."

Mr. Carlyle released one of his hands; she had taken them both; and, with his own handkerchief, wiped the death-dew from her forehead.

"It is no sin to anticipate it, Archibald. For there will be no marrying or giving in marriage in heaven: Christ has said so. Though we do not know how it will be. My sin will be remembered no more there, and we shall be together with our children for ever and for ever. Keep a little corner in your heart for your poor lost Isabel."

"Yes, yes," he whispered.

"Are you leaving me?" she uttered, in a wild tone of pain.

"You are growing faint, I perceive. I must call assistance."

“Farewell, then; farewell, until eternity,” she sighed, the tears raining from her eyes. “It is death I think; not faintness. Oh! but it is hard to part! Farewell, farewell, my once dear husband!”

She rose her head from the pillow, excitement giving her strength; she clung to his arm; she lifted her face, in its sad yearning. Mr. Carlyle laid her tenderly down again, and suffered his lips to rest upon hers.

“Until eternity,” he whispered.

She followed him with her eyes as he retreated, and watched him from the room; then turned her face to the wall. “It is over. Only God now.”

Mr. Carlyle took an instant’s counsel with himself, stopping at the head of the stairs to do it. Joyce, in obedience to a sign from him, had already gone into the sick chamber: his sister was standing at its door.

“Cornelia.”

She followed him down into the dining-room.

“You will remain here to-night? With *her*.”

“Do you suppose I shouldn’t?” crossly responded Miss Corny. “Where are you off to now?”

“To the telegraph office, at present. To send for Lord Mount Severn.”

“What good can he do?”

“None. But I shall send for him.”

“Can’t one of the servants go just as well as you? You have not finished your dinner: hardly begun it.”

He turned his eyes on the dinner-table, in a mechanical sort of way, his mind wholly pre-occupied, made some remark in answer, which Miss Corny did not catch, and went out.

On his return his sister met him in the hall, drew

him inside the nearest room, and closed the door. Lady Isabel was dead. Had been dead about ten minutes.

“ She never spoke after you left her, Archibald. There was a slight struggle at the last, a fighting for breath, otherwise she went off quite peacefully. I felt sure, when I first saw her this afternoon, that she could not last till midnight.”

## CHAPTER XXIV.

## I. M. V.

LORD MOUNT SEVERN, wondering greatly what the urgent summons could mean, lost no time in obeying it, and was at East Lynne the following morning, early. Mr. Carlyle was in his carriage at the station; his close carriage; and, shut up in that, he made the communication to the Earl as they drove to East Lynne.

The earl could with difficulty believe it. Never had he been so utterly astonished. At first he really could not understand the tale.

“Did she—did she—come back to your house to die?” he blundered. “You never took her in? I don’t comprehend.”

Mr. Carlyle explained farther. And the earl at length understood. But he could not recover his perplexed astonishment.

“What a mad act!—to come back here! Madame Vine! How on earth did she escape detection?”

“She did escape it,” said Mr. Carlyle. “The strange likeness Madame Vine possessed to my first wife often struck me as being marvellous, but I never suspected the truth. It was a likeness, and



not a likeness ; for every part of her face and form was changed. Except her eyes : and those I never saw but through those disguising glasses."

The earl wiped his hot face. The news had ruffled him in no measured degree. He felt angry with Isabel, dead though she was, and thankful that Mrs. Carlyle was away.

"Will you see her?" whispered Mr. Carlyle as they entered the house.

"Yes."

They went up to the death-chamber, Mr. Carlyle procuring the key. Very peaceful she looked now, her pale features composed under her white cap and bands. Miss Carlyle and Joyce had done all that was necessary : nobody else had been suffered to approach her. Lord Mount Severn leaned over her, tracing the former looks of Isabel : and the likeness grew upon him in a wonderful degree.

"What did she die of?" he asked.

"She said, a broken heart."

"Ah!" said the earl. "The wonder is, that it did not break before. Poor thing! poor Isabel!" he added, touching her hand, "how she marred her own happiness! Carlyle, I suppose this is your wedding-ring?"

Mr. Carlyle cast his eyes upon the ring. "Very probably."

"To think of her never having discarded it!" remarked the earl, releasing the cold hand. "Well, I can hardly believe the tale now."

He turned and quitted the room as he spoke. Mr. Carlyle looked steadfastly at the dead face for a minute or two, his fingers touching the forehead : but, what his thoughts or feelings may have been, none can tell.

Then he replaced the sheet over the face, and followed the earl.

They descended in silence to the breakfast-room. Miss Carlyle was seated at the table waiting for them. "Where *could* all your eyes have been?" exclaimed the earl to her, after a few sentences, referring to the event, had passed.

"Just where yours would have been," retorted Miss Corny, with a touch of her old temper. "You saw Madame Vine as well as we did."

"But not continuously. Only two or three times in all. And I do not remember ever to have seen her without her bonnet and veil. That Carlyle should not have recognised her is almost beyond belief."

"It *seems* so, to speak of it," said Miss Corny; "but facts are facts. She was young, gay, active, when she left here, upright as a dart, her dark hair drawn from her open brow and flowing on her neck, her cheeks like crimson paint, her face altogether beautiful. Madame Vine arrived here a pale, stooping woman, lame of one leg, *shorter* than Lady Isabel — and her figure stuffed out under those sacks of jackets. Not a bit, scarcely, of her forehead to be seen, for grey velvet and grey bands of hair; her head smothered under a close cap, large blue double spectacles hiding the eyes and their sides, and the throat tied up; the chin partially. The mouth was entirely altered in its character, and that upward scar, always so conspicuous, made it almost ugly. Then she had lost some of her front teeth, you know, and she lisped when she spoke. Take her for all in all," summed up Miss Carlyle, "she looked no more like the Isabel who went away from here than I look like Adam. Just get your dearest friend

damaged and disguised as she was, my lord, and see if you'd recognise him."

The observation came home to Lord Mount Severn. A gentleman whom he knew well, had been so altered by a fearful accident, that little resemblance could be traced to his former self. In fact, his own family, could not recognise him: and *he* used no artificial disguises. It was a case in point, and, reader! I assure you that it is a true one.

"It was the *disguise* that we ought to have suspected," quietly observed Mr. Carlyle. "The likeness was not sufficiently striking to cause suspicion."

"But she turned the house from that scent as soon as she came into it," struck in Miss Corny. Telling of the 'neuralgic pains' that afflicted her head and face, rendering the guarding them from exposure necessary. Remember, Lord Mount Severn, that the Ducies had been with her in Germany, and had never suspected her. Remember also another thing: that, however great a likeness we may have detected, we could not and did not speak of it, one to another. Lady Isabel's name is never so much as whispered amongst us."

"True; all true," said the earl.

On the Friday, the following letter was despatched to Mrs. Carlyle:

"My Dearest,— I find I shall not be able to get to you on Saturday afternoon, as I promised, but will leave here by the late train that night. Mind you don't sit up for me. Lord Mount Severn is here for a few days: he sends his regards to you.

"And now, Barbara, prepare for news that will prove a shock. Madame Vine is dead. She grew

rapidly worse, they tell me, after our departure, and died on Wednesday night. I am glad you were away.

“Love from the children. Lucy and Archie are still at Cornelia’s; Arthur wearing out Sarah’s legs in the nursery.

“Ever yours, my dearest,  
“ARCHIBALD CARLYLE.”

Of course, as Madame Vine, the governess, died at Mr. Carlyle’s house, he could not in courtesy do less than follow her to the grave. So decided West Lynne, when they found which way the wind was going to blow. Lord Mount Severn followed also, to keep him company, being on a visit to him. And very polite indeed of his lordship to do it! Condescending also! West Lynne remembered another funeral at which those two had been the only mourners — that of the late earl. By some curious coincidence, the French governess was buried close to the earl’s grave. As good there as anywhere else, quoth West Lynne: there happened to be a vacant spot of ground.

The funeral took place on the Saturday morning. A plain, respectable funeral. A hearse and pair, and mourning coach and pair, with a chariot for the Reverend Mr. Little. No pall-bearers, or mutes, or anything of that show-off kind, and no plumes on the horses, only on the hearse. West Lynne looked on with approbation, and conjectured that the governess had left sufficient money to bury herself: but of course that was Mr. Carlyle’s affair, not West Lynne’s. Quiet enough lay she in her last resting-place.

They left her in it, the earl and Mr. Carlyle; and

entered the mourning coach to be conveyed back again to East Lynne.

“Just a little upright stone of white marble, two feet high by a foot and a half broad,” remarked the earl, on their road, pursuing a topic they were speaking upon. “With the initials, I. V. and the date of the year. Nothing more. What do you think?”

“I. M. V.,” corrected Mr. Carlyle. “Yes.”

At that moment the bells of another church, not St. Jude’s, broke out in a joyous peal, and the earl inclined his ear to listen.

“What can they be ringing for?” he cried.

They were ringing for a wedding. Afy Hallijohn, by the help of two clergymen and six bridesmaids (of whom you may be sure Joyce was *not* one), had just been converted into Mrs. Joe Jiffin. When Afy took a thing in her head, she somehow contrived to carry it through, and to bend even clergyman and bridesmaids to her will. Mr. Jiffin was blessed at last.

In the afternoon, the earl left East Lynne; and, somewhat later, Barbara arrived. Wilson scarcely gave her mistress time to step into the house before her, and she very nearly left the baby in the fly. Curiously anxious was Wilson to hear all particulars, as to what could have taken off that French governess. Mr. Carlyle was much surprised at their arrival.

“How could I stay away, Archibald, even until Monday, after the news you sent me?” said Barbara. “What did she die of? It must have been awfully sudden.”

“I suppose so,” was his dreamy answer. He was



debating a question with himself, one he had thought over a good deal since Wednesday night. Should he, or should he not, tell his wife? He would have preferred not to tell her: and, had the secret been confined to his own breast, he would decidedly not have done so. But it was known to three others: to Miss Carlyle, to Lord Mount Severn, and to Joyce. All trustworthy and of good intention: but it was impossible for Mr. Carlyle to make sure that not one of them would ever, through any chance unpremeditated word, let the secret come to the knowledge of Mrs. Carlyle. That would not do: if she must hear it at all, she must hear it from him, and at once. He took his course.

“Are you ill, Archibald?” she asked, noting his face. It wore a pale, worn look.

“I have something to tell you, Barbara,” he answered, drawing her hand into his as they stood together. They were in her dressing-room, where she was taking off her things. “On Wednesday evening, when I got home to dinner, Joyce told me that she feared Madame Vine was dying: and I thought it right to see her.”

“Certainly,” returned Barbara. “Quite right.”

“I went into her room, and I found that she was dying. But I found something else, Barbara. She was not Madame Vine.”

“Not Madame Vine!” echoed Barbara.

“It was my former wife, Isabel Vane.”

Barbara’s face flushed crimson, and then grew white as marble; and she drew her hand from Mr. Carlyle’s. He did not appear to notice the movement, but stood with his elbow on the mantelpiece while he



talked, giving her a rapid summary of the interview; not its details.

“She could not stay away from her children,” she said, “and came back as Madame Vine. What with the effects of the railway accident in France, and those spectacles she wore, and her style of dress, and her grey hair, she felt secure in not being recognized. I am astonished now that she was not discovered. Were such a thing related to me I should refuse credence to it.”

Barbara’s heart felt faint with its utter sickness, and she turned her face from the view of her husband. Her first confused thoughts were as Mr. Carlyle’s had been — that she had been living in his house with another wife. “Did you suspect her?” she breathed, in a low tone.

“Barbara! Had I suspected it, should I have allowed it to go on? She implored my forgiveness; for the past, and for having returned here; and I forgave her fully. I went to West Lynne to telegraph for Mount Severn. She was dead when I came back. She said her heart was broken. Barbara, we cannot wonder at it.”

There was a pause. Mr. Carlyle began to perceive that his wife’s face was hidden from him.

Still there was no reply. Mr. Carlyle took his arm from the mantelpiece, and moved so that he could see her countenance: a wan countenance then, telling of pain.

He laid his hand upon her shoulder and made her look at him. “My dearest, what is this?”

“Oh, Archibald!” she uttered, clasping her hands together all her pent-up feelings bursting forth, and

the tears streaming from her eyes, "has this taken your love from me?"

He took both her hands in one of his, he put the other round her waist and held her there, before him, never speaking, only looking gravely into her face. Who could look at its sincere truthfulness, at the sweet expression of his lips, and doubt him? Not Barbara.

"I had thought my wife possessed entire trust in me."

"Oh, I do, I do; you know I do. Forgive me, Archibald," she softly whispered.

"I deemed it better to impart this to you. Barbara. My darling, I have told it you in love."

She was leaning on his breast, sobbing gently, her repentant face turned towards him. He held her there in his strong protection, his enduring tenderness.

"My wife! my darling! now, and always."

"It was a foolish feeling to cross my heart, Archibald. It is done with, and gone."

"Never let it come back again, Barbara. Neither need her name be mentioned again between us. A barred name it has hitherto been: let it so continue."

"Anything you will. My earnest wish is to please you; to be worthy of your esteem and love. Archibald," she timidly added, her eyelids drooping, as she made the confession, while the colour rose in her fair face, "there has been a feeling in my heart against your children, a sort of jealous feeling, can you understand, because they were hers; because she had once been your wife. I knew how wrong it was, and I have tried earnestly to subdue it. I have

indeed, and I think it is nearly gone. I"—her voice sank lower—"constantly pray to be helped to do it; to love them and care for them as if they were my own. It will come with time."

"Every good thing will come with time that we earnestly seek," said Mr. Carlyle. "Oh, Barbara, never forget—never forget that the only way to ensure peace in the end, is, to strive always to be doing right, unselfishly under God."

THE END.

LONDON

PRINTED BY SPOTTISWOODE AND CO.

NEW-STREE SQUARE













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