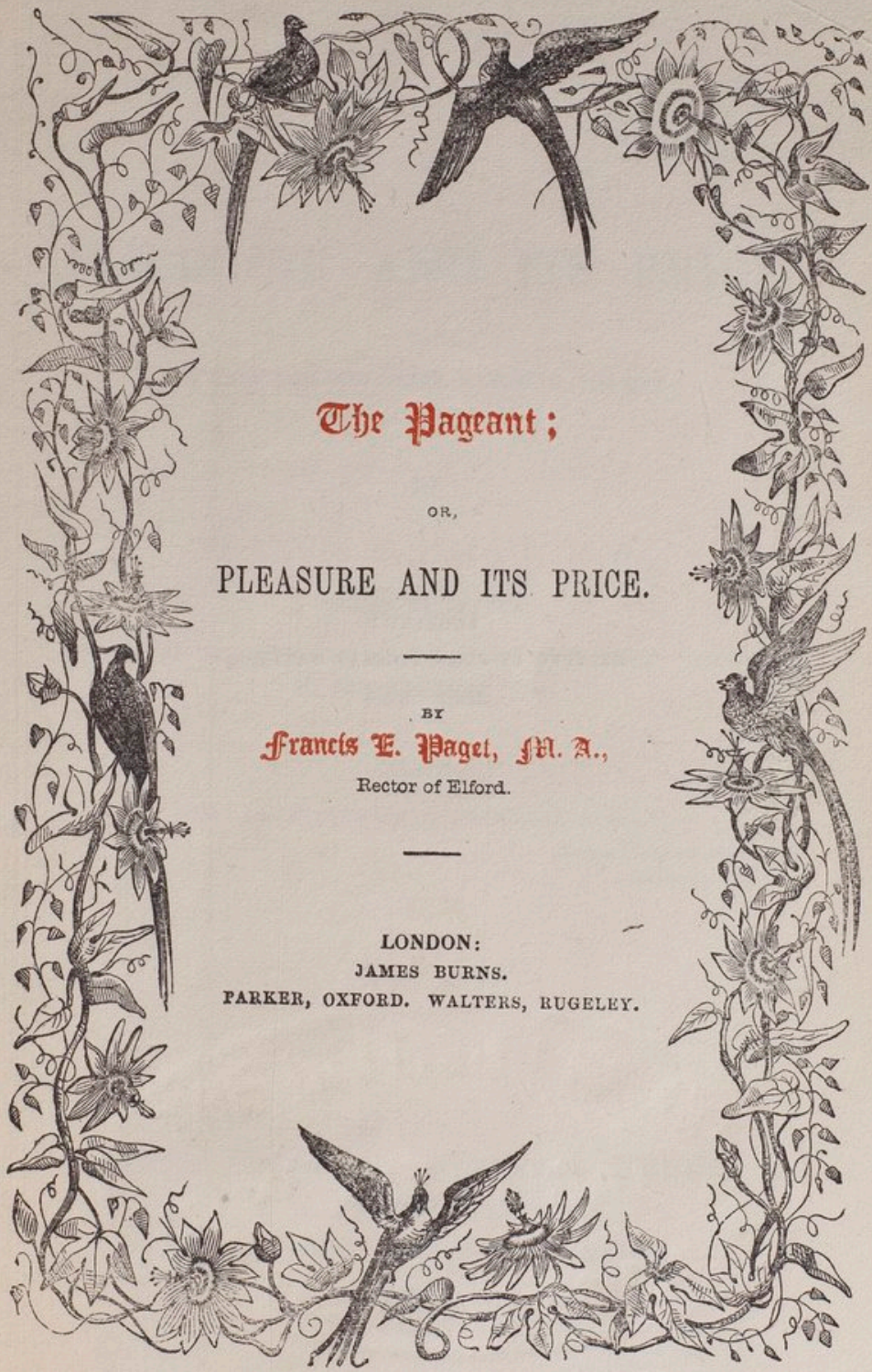

The Pageant;

OR,

PLEASURE AND ITS PRICE.

BY

Francis E. Paget, M. A.,

Rector of Elford.

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PLEASURE AND ITS PRICE

A TALE FOR THE UPPER RANKS OF SOCIETY.

BY

FRANCIS E. PAGET, M.A.,

RECTOR OF ELFORD.

AUTHOR OF "ST. ANTHOLIN'S," "MILFORD MALVOISIN," "WARDEN OF BERKINGHOLT," ETC.

"It's no fish ye're buying—it's MEN'S LIVES."

Maggie Mucklebackit.
(Antiquary Vol. 1.)

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CONTENTS.

" Ce réprouvé qui sort aujourd'hui de l'abyme pour vous instruire, étoit riche; il étoit vêtu de pourpre et de lin; il faisoit tous les jours bonne chere;—du reste, moins attentif qu'il n'auroit dû, aux besoins de Lazare qui languissoit à sa porte; *voilà tous ses crimes*."

" Une vie passée dans les plaisirs de l'abondance, et dans la mollesse, VOILÀ CE QUI L'A DAMNÉ.'

Massillon. Sermon pour le jeudi de la seconde semaine de Carême.

ERRATUM,

Page 63, line 14, for "are," read "is."

PREFACE.

THE ensuing pages address themselves to the younger members of the higher classes of society; and they were written in the hope of drawing attention to a most painful subject,—the amount of physical suffering undergone by multitudes, in the humbler ranks, who subsist by providing for the artificial wants of the wealthier.

The Inquiries of the Childrens' Employment Commission, have already substantiated the fact, that in almost every branch of manufacture in which young persons can be employed, they are subjected to treatment more or less cruel and inhuman, their

minds left without cultivation, and their bodies worn out prematurely, by unceasing toil. And those whose duties carry them into the workshops of our fashionable trades-people, and into the garrets and cellars, inhabited by their workmen and workwomen, know full well that no language, however strong, can overstate the miseries and privations which they there witness. "There is nothing," writes one who has had abundant opportunities of judging, "there is nothing like a stay in the City of London, in the house of an active clergyman, for opening one's eyes to the *depths* of human misery. The so-called poor people of my own dear Kent, are, I see clearly now, the actual originals of the shepherds and shepherdesses of the Golden Age."

But there are few of the young, and happy, and light-hearted, who care to pore over the ponderous folios of a Parliamentary Report, and fewer still, probably, who have fathomed the deep abyss of sin, and suffering, of which our Metropolis is the vortex; —that huge city, where the extremes of guilty

luxury, and hopeless penury are mingled together, and where, within a few yards of some street of palaces, may be found such dens of horror, and abject destitution, as without actual inspection would be inconceivable. It has been conceived, therefore, that a short tale in which these subjects are brought before the reader, may be not altogether without its use. It may reveal facts, of which, many perhaps were previously in ignorance; it may awaken in others, a sense of their responsibilities; it *ought* to induce those who read it, to reflect deeply upon the probable *end* of such a state of things.

For obvious reasons, it was impossible in a single story, to dwell upon the sufferings, and privations of more than one profession. That of the Dress-makers was selected, first, because the victims were women; secondly, because the evil is capable of speedy and complete remedy; thirdly, because it is impossible to believe that those who have (unconsciously, of course,) contributed to keep up the existing state of things, will not gladly lend their all-powerful aid to its removal.

As to the facts stated in the ensuing pages, the author has been careful to mention nothing, for which he has not the warrant of good authority, either in the Parliamentary Report, or from private sources of information: but, by way of substantiating what has been said, perhaps he cannot do better than print at length, a communication he received, while these pages were passing through the press, from a lady, whose name, did he feel justified in mentioning it, would of itself give any statement a sufficient sanction.

"The young woman," writes this correspondent, "whom I have this morning seen, and whose parents are most respectable, (brewers in a very small way in this neighbourhood) was apprenticed to Mr. and Mrs. G———'s establishment in B——— Street. The premium was £40, and there are about seventy apprentices. The meat is contracted for in Newgate market,—the bread somewhere else. The former is so bad, that frequently they cannot touch it, although they are almost starving.—(Mr. and Mrs. G———

dine on *good* meat *by themselves.)* They have made complaint after complaint, but ineffectually, for the meat was contracted for, for six months, at 4½d. per pound. Finding this to be the case, they complained of the bread, which (being also contracted for) had long been so sour as to disagree with them. This was afterwards rather better. Beer they have none; tea as poor as possible. Each of the apprentices is forced to pay 3d. a week to the housemaid, who having no other wages, does not give herself much trouble to clean their wretched rooms; so that on one Sunday when they were allowed more sleep than usual, they found it necessary to get up, and avail themselves of the unwonted season of leisure to remove some of the accumulated filth. For three weeks last season, 1842, (the occasion was then the Fancy Ball at Buckingham Palace, though it is no uncommon occurrence) they were only allowed to lie on their wretched flock beds for two hours without undressing, and were also kept at work a part of the two Sundays. At last, one poor girl, who had often

complained of illness, but been tauntingly told by Mrs. G——— that with such a colour and appearance there could be nothing the matter, (she was very beautiful, and a bright hectic flush had enhanced her loveliness within the last six weeks) declared that she could endure it no longer, and she must lie down. I should have stated that the seats provided for these poor creatures, were wooden stools without backs.—Mr. G——— was summoned to quell such an instance of insubordination. He said it was quite out of the question, or he should always have his young people lying down. About three o'clock in the afternoon she went without leave; and in the course of the evening, the cook passing through the girls' room heard a groan, and insisted on going for medical aid. Mr. O—— of H—— B——* was summoned, and said that had he been called in sooner he might have been of use, but it was then too late. *Accord-*

* The other extremity of London, from that in which the catastrophe took place; the poor girl dying in a fashionable street at the West End, and the surgeon living in the city.—F. E. P.

ingly in an hour she expired. It appeared on examination, that there was extensive disease on the liver. The poor girl was a farmer's daughter, and had been used to plenty of air and exercise; the confinement and sedentary habits of the profession killed her. The father instituted legal proceedings against Mr. G———, but that tender-hearted gentleman paid £200 to have the matter hushed up, and so the world has, up to this time, heard nothing of it. —Since that period five and twenty young women have quitted that establishment, some leaving their clothes behind them, some giving notice more courageously. My informant remained to the end of her engagement (eighteen months) because her father, who was in embarrassed circumstances, would have been distressed had she left the situation before she was sufficiently well acquainted with the business, to be able to get her own living;—one of the many unsentimental, but true-hearted martyrs to duty and affection. Her health, I fear, is ruined for life. At nineteen, she is a complete wreck, covered with

swellings and eruptions, and her medical attendant speaks very unfavourably of her.—One thing I must add; these apprentices work in a room at the top of the house, lighted by sky lights, so that the room is almost all glass. The result is, that in summer they are almost burnt up, and in winter frozen. All this, you will say is shocking enough, but there is a Mrs. S——— who has eighty apprentices in her establishment in H——— S———, and who treats them still worse than do Mr. and Mrs. G———."

The Reader, who peruses such a statement as this, will not be backward to allow that the evil is a crying one, and will, perhaps, be disposed to admit that although the author may have wandered out of his province, in order to bring the subject before the public, he has not done so without a fair excuse.

ELFORD RECTORY.
WHITSUN EVE, 1843.

CHAPTER I.

HOW TO RECEIVE A FRIEND.

"Though he be blunt, I know him passing wise;
Though he be merry, yet withal he's honest."

TAMING OF THE SHREW.

IT was about that time in the morning, when fashionable ladies, wearied with the exertion of turning night into day, and having now rested themselves by turning day into night, come dropping into the breakfast-room one by one; and when their no less fashionable footmen, having recently finished their luncheon—(in some great houses their *second* luncheon) are beginning to hope that something specially

of the cab, the driver paid and dismissed, and a little old gentleman, in a great coat which reached down to his heels, and neither fitted very well, nor seemed very new, was looking rather sourly at the lion's head on the knocker.

"Please, Sir, who did you want?" asked the rather surprised page, when the visitor throwing off his great coat, made it evident that he was going to make himself at home.

"Bring in the portmanteau," said the gentleman, and without more explanation, showed that he knew his way about the house by opening a door, and ushering himself into the breakfast-room.

"Walter Blunt, Esquire, passenger, No. 320, Belgrave-square," remarked the page to himself, as he perused, for his own personal satisfaction, the direction on the portmanteau; "that's him they calls 'Uncle Wat,' I reckon; and a precious vinegar-faced old farmer he looks like," observed the respectful cleaner of knives, as, inserting his hands into his pockets, he proceeded leisurely down the stairs to make known to Dennis, the porter, the name and business of the "single knock."

The gentleman, whose arrival in Belgrave-square has just been described, was the person intimated by his portmanteau, — Walter Blunt, of Wroxton Court, in the county of Nottingham, and the house at which he had presented himself was that of his nephew, Lord Blondeville, at present occupied by his own sister, Lady Blondeville,—(now in the fifth year of her widowhood) and her two daughters.

Mr. Blunt was a man of an ancient race, and extensive property, and though fast approaching his sixtieth year was still a bachelor. Having no relations in the world but his sister and her family, they, not unnaturally, looked forward to being his heirs. As he was known to be wealthy, the prize was thought to be worth securing, and as he was considered rather eccentric and capricious, they took great pains to keep in his good graces,—a thing not always very easy, where a rough, plain-spoken, matter-of-fact country gentleman comes in contact with a set of people who are wedded to the artificial habits of fashionable life. Had Mr. Blunt and his relatives lived much together, it is probable that each party would have made the discovery that they were by no

means suited to each other; but as matters stood, they were very good friends, and got on with only an occasional burst of wonder at the strangeness of each other's foibles. The young ladies were a little afraid of their uncle, were very cautious what they did and said before him, were rather nervous as to what *he* might say or do next, writhed now and then under some caustic pleasantry, half jest, half earnest, and always shuddered when they saw for the first time the cut and pattern of his best waistcoat. He, on the other hand, was occasionally a little impatient at the frivolity and love of dissipation which the conversation and habits of his sister and nieces involuntarily displayed: but, though not sorry when their visit was over, he was always pleased to receive them for a fortnight in the course of every year at Wroxton Court: and they contrived to amuse him for the same length of time during the London season;—for he paid an annual visit to London with the ostensible purpose of seeing his lawyer, and his wine-merchant; though, perhaps, the sights of the metropolis, the exhibitions, the panorama, and, above all, the Polytechnic Institution had full as many charms

for him as any thing which he learned of the Somersetshire property, or the last vintage. Living great part of the year in seclusion, he had cultivated his natural taste for mechanics during the many hours of leisure which fell to his lot; and this circumstance, together with the fact of his living in a manufacturing neighbourhood, had given him such an interest in all matters connected with machinery, that there were few inventions or great improvements introduced into our factories, which he had not personally inspected. And hence he had learned more of the physical and moral condition of our manufacturing population, than is the case with most country-gentlemen.

For the rest, his character might be almost comprised in a single sentence. "Deeds, not words," was his motto, and his abhorrence of anything like insincerity was so great, that it perhaps drove him into the other extreme. He was a religious man, and a sound churchman; but this was to be inferred from the consistent course of his every-day life, rather than from his conversation. In society, he was wholly silent on such topics. He was a very

generous man, but such pains did he take to "do good by stealth," and to conceal his many acts of munificence from the eyes of the world, that he was often looked upon as penurious, and niggardly. He was a very kind-hearted man too, but from waywardness, or some other cause, he frightened and repelled people by his roughness of manner; and in his dislike of what he called "humbug," it must be confessed that he sometimes said *all* he thought, when so full an expression of his opinion was quite unnecessary. If, to these qualities, be added a fund of dry humour, and a great share of child-like simplicity, the component parts of Mr. Blunt's character will have been fully enumerated. In a word, he was one whom all that really knew him loved and appreciated, while with those who could not understand him, or whom he chose to keep at a distance, he passed for a man whose odd, old-bachelor habits, want of sympathy with the ways of the world, and irrepressible boldness in telling home-truths, made him rather *awful* and disagreeable in society.

As for Mr. Blunt's personal appearance, the page's impertinent remark was no great caricature,

except in so far as this, that the brilliant, deep-set eye, which was, perhaps, sternly fixed on the saucy jackanapes, had for its usual expression, one of deep and thoughtful benevolence.

Such was the visitor who ushered himself into the breakfast-room at Lady Blondeville's, unannounced, and, as the event proved, unexpected.

On entering the apartment, the first thing that struck Mr. Blunt's eye was his eldest niece, sitting with her back towards him, busily occupied with her breakfast: the next thing which caught his attention, was a table, on which lay a heap of drawings of female costume of the fashion of Henry the Eighth's reign, and several nondescript articles of female apparel, composed of the most costly materials, embroidered velvet, gold brocade, and such like.

"Some more dry toast, Lucas;" said the young lady, without turning her head round, and addressing herself, as she supposed, to the groom of the chambers.

Whereupon, uncle Wat walked straight up to the table, and selecting a coif or cap of sky blue

velvet and pearls, stuck it jauntily on one side of his head, and then coming quietly behind his niece's chair, put his head over her shoulder, and looking into her face, said in his softest tone, "Yes, Ma'am."

Certainly there was enough in the apparition of that old, wrinkled, weather-beaten face in its azure head-gear, to make anybody start, on whom it came unexpectedly, and there was nothing very extraordinary in the fact that Miss Blondeville dropped her cup of cocoa, started from her chair, and screamed violently; but an acute observer might have perceived that the scream which commenced in sheer fright, was prolonged indefinitely till its undulations subsided into a sort of hysterical giggle, not so much of terror as of despair.

"Upon my word, my dear Augusta, I didn't mean to frighten you so. I can't think how I could be such a fool."

"A....h!" exclaimed the lady, with a sort of running accompaniment of shriek, "My dear uncle Wat, how could you terrify me so? What has happened?"

"You've upset the tea-cup, that's all. Well,

never mind. How are you all?" inquired the uncle, laying aside his coif, and looking rather guilty.

"But where did you come from? when did you arrive?"

"I came from Wroxton this morning; got to town by the last train."

"Well, uncle Wat," said the young lady, gradually recovering herself, and endeavouring, as best she might, to conceal the vexation she was feeling at her uncle's most (as it happened) inopportune visit, "this is a most unexpected, most agreeable," (how did her looks belie her words!) "surprise. How amazed Mamma will be when she hears you are in the house! So kind of you to come."

"Amazed! unexpected! surprise!" exclaimed Mr. Blunt, repeating his niece's words. "Why, Augusta, I do believe I've frightened you out of your senses. You expected me to day, did'nt you? Tuesday, the fifteenth, it was to be; and to day is Tuesday, the fifteenth, is it not?"

"Oh yes, so it is," replied Augusta, looking blanker than ever, "it *is* the fifteenth; but...."

"But what?" asked uncle Wat, who could never tolerate an unfinished sentence.

The sentence, however, was not destined to be finished: for at that moment the door opened, and Lady Blondeville's youngest daughter, Gertrude, entered, and having done so, stood for a moment transfixed, as though she had seen a ghost, and then with a sudden exclamation darted out of the room.

Up the stairs she bounded,—two or three steps at a time, till she reached her mother's dressing-room, and then pausing once more, as if to take courage, presented herself to Lady Blondeville, who was just finishing her toilette.

"Oh, Mamma!" she exclaimed, "you'll be so dreadfully angry with me; you never will forgive me; I've done such a thing!"

"What! not accepted Edwin Stanley, I trust?" said the affectionate parent, who shrunk from contemplating the immeasurable turpitude of an union, in which high principle would be the only compensation for an income that barely reached a thousand a-year.

Gertrude coloured, and replied, "Oh no, it is something which you would think a great deal worse than that."

"Worse!" cried Lady Blondeville. "My goodness! you haven't broken Madame de Pompadour's Chocolate cup?"

"Oh no, dear Mamma, worse, worse, worse. Uncle Wat wrote me word that he was coming here this morning, and I forgot to tell you, and....and.... he's now in the breakfast room with Augusta!"

"Gertrude!" said her mother, in utter dismay, "you had better have broken the cup, aye, and married the footman, than done such a thing as this. I'm excessively displeased. What could have been the reason of such intolerable carelessness?"

"I'm very, very sorry Mamma; but the moment I got the letter I went into your room to tell you, and just then came the Duchess of Knutsford's note, inviting us to the Field of Cloth of Gold, and we were so busy and so eager, that I forgot all about it, and never once thought of it again till I saw my Uncle in the house."

Lady Blondeville, however angry she felt, saw that there was no time to be lost, and hurried down into the breakfast room, where, with a countenance refulgent with pleasure, and beaming with smiles,

she welcomed her brother, whom she was all the while "wishing at Jericho," as the saying is.

"My dear, dear Wat, how glad I am to see you, how well you are looking; grown quite fat again, no more sleepless nights, I hope, or return of sciatica? Ah! you are quite right; there *is* nobody like Jephson: rather domineering and despotic about the bill of fare, but so essentially kind, and clever, and judicious.—Really to see you, and see you so well, I feel it quite a refreshment already,—for I've been rather over-done of late: but we wont talk about that, for I must crave your pardon for a sad heedless girl who has used you very ill. Ah, Gertrude, you may well look ashamed; will you believe it, Wat, that girl's head was so turned with the thoughts of her first Fancy-ball, that she actually forgot to tell us a word about your proposed visit?"

"Ho, ho! Mistress Gertrude, so that's the way you treat your correspondents is it?" said the old man in a kind tone, "well, I must think of some heavy penalty to be inflicted on you, What shall it be? more partners than you can find time to dance with, or more balls than you can find time to go to?—But

how is this?" he added in an altered tone, "if I was unexpected, Augusta, why couldn't you tell me so, instead of humbugging me as you did just now? I had much rather you would spit at me, than throw dust in my eyes, Aye, aye, I know what you would say, but I happen to like truth better than civility. I know you fashionable people think nothing of these kind of tricks. I dare say they are often very convenient; but for my part I see little difference between equivocation and downright lying. —Ah! yes, I know you are thinking Uncle Wat a great bear: why don't you say so at once? you may as well say it as think it."

Miss Blondeville *did* think it, but she also thought it useless to argue with a bear, and so remained silent, heartily wishing that she could have helped blushing at the severity of her uncle's remarks: but, as yet, conscience was too strong for her.

Lady Blondeville broke the silence with an apology for her favourite daughter.

"My dear Wat, we must beg you to make allowance for us, if, owing to Gertrude's inexcusable heedlessness, our welcome has been less satisfactory to

you than usual. It is not that we have been less delighted to receive you, but you came on us suddenly, when we were quite pre-occupied with what is absorbing all London at this moment....the Duchess of Knutsford's Fête. I fear you have already been put to some inconvenience,—Dennis met me as I came down stairs, full of distress that you had been kept for ages at the door, and only admitted at last by the steward's-room boy."

"It was just the same to me," observed Mr. Blunt rather drily, "who admitted me, so that I was admitted."

"Yes, but I was explaining; the footman was gone to the milliner's, and as I had been obliged to send Lucas to Storr and Mortimer's, there was nobody but the boy to open the door, for Dennis was unluckily down stairs. The fact is, my dear Wat, that all London is gone mad, about this Fancy-ball. It is to be the handsomest thing that ever was seen. They say the Duke won £20,000 at Newmarket the other day,—(by the bye, wasn't it shocking, poor Harry Bromley losing everything in the world,—and coming home stark mad, and cutting his own and

his two children's throats?—Poor Lady Mary died yesterday morning)—well, but as I was saying, this Ball is to be the finest thing imaginable,—a sort of revivification of the meeting of Henry the Eighth, and Francis the First, on the Field of Cloth of Gold. —The Duke was in such high good humour that he gave the Duchess carte-blanche to do what she pleased, and this is the scheme she hit upon.

"Ah, like enough," quoth Uncle Wat, "fools and their money are soon parted."

"Well, but people of their rank must open their houses, Wat, and if a thing is to be done, surely it should be done well. And this really will be magnificent. Every body is to go *en costume*, and represent somebody who either was, or might have been, at Ardres, or Guisnes.—Lord Tarporley, for instance, the Duke's eldest son, is to be Harry the Eighth. Gracious! how handsome he will look!"

"And the Duke, his father," rejoined Mr. Blunt, in the same tone as his sister, "is I trust, to be Will Somers, the king's fool. Gracious! how foolish he will look!"

"Oh, if you are going into one of your sarcastic

ways, brother mine,—I have done, and will tell you nothing, and you shall die of curiosity," said Lady Blondeville gaily.

"I am as grave as a judge," replied Uncle Wat, "and desire to rub off my rusticity, and to know what is going on in the London world. Instruct me I pray you, my sweet nieces: Augusta, enlighten my ignorance: Gertrude so please you, recover your tongue, and insense me with the fashions of the sixteenth century. Discourse to me largely upon kirtles and fardingales. This, I presume," he continued, turning to the table, which had already attracted his attention, "is one complete dress for one of you. Well, variety has its charms, and here is variety enough to make a paroquet die of envy. Red, orange, yellow, green, blue, purple, violet! The prism personified, a rainbow in masquerade! Never was thought so pretty and original, since the days when Snout enacted *Wall*, and Peter Quince, *Moonshine*."

"Oh, you're a great deal too bad, Uncle Wat," cried Augusta, "you know well enough that all those things could never be worn by one person. The fact is Mamma," she added turning to her mother, "they

are some things that Mademoiselle Angelique has just received from Paris, and she sent them up this morning to see if we liked to take any of them: she is to call in an hour."

"Well, really," exclaimed Lady Blondeville with fervour, "that is the most good-natured, pains-taking, attentive little woman in the world. Never was such a fascinating milliner as Mademoiselle Angelique: every body loses their heart to her."

"And their money too, I presume," observed the bachelor of three-score. "By the bye, isn't she the woman whom Lucy Brooke lives with? Its very odd that girl has not written to my housekeeper these three months."

"Why, during the height of the season, the milliners are so busy, that I dare say they have not much leisure for correspondence," answered Augusta.

"It does'nt much matter certainly," continued Mr. Blunt, *thinking out loud*, "but if she had written regularly, one should have known better how she was going on. She *is* doing well I hope?" added he, addressing himself to his sister.

"Oh yes, I believe so. I feel sure, indeed; for

Mademoiselle Angelique spoke very well of her abilities."

"But haven't you seen her lately?"

"Not *very* lately," answered Lady Blondeville, colouring slightly, "one's time is so little one's own, and one is liable to such continual interruptions, that one never can do, in London, all that one wishes to do."

"But why did you undertake to look after this girl, if you can't and don't do it?" asked Uncle Wat sturdily.

"My dear Wat, I am quite vexed that you should think me neglectful: but I really feel so much confidence in that good creature Angelique, that I should always be as well satisfied about any young persons who are under her charge, as if they were under my own eye."

Uncle Wat did not reply to his sister in words, but with a short snort of impatience.

Lady Blondeville hastened to appease him. "It is hardly fair to ask for a holyday for Lucy till this fête is over, for I know all the milliners are at their wits' end to get their work finished for *the* day; but

as soon as it is over, Mademoiselle Angelique shall send her down to us for the morning, and you shall tell her all about Wroxton, and its belongings." And then, anxious to get rid of the subject, her Ladyship proceeded. "This certainly will be a most splendid sight. I know you don't much care about these kind of things, but this will be an exception; as fine or finer than the Coronation, which you enjoyed so much."

"Oh, that was a reality: this is a farce and travestie;—a mere magnificent mummery, a dull supplanting of the sublime by the ridiculous, an extirpating of one's lingering love of the old days of chivalry and romance, by exhibiting them in all the frivolity and extravagance of Bond Street."

"Indeed you are wrong, dear Uncle," said Augusta. "I am sure if you were to be transported to the spot without trouble, you would both admire and enjoy it."

"Augusta, I might be dazzled by the brilliancy of light and colour," replied the old man gravely, "but I should have too heavy a heart to enjoy it."

"Dear me! why should you have a heavy heart?"

"I should be thinking of THE COST of what I saw before me."

"But you would not have to pay for it," answered Miss Blondeville smiling.

"I am not so sure of that" rejoined her Uncle. "I believe we shall all have to pay for this, and such like things by and bye; and a tremendous reckoning it will be."

"You mean that if the Duke was ruined, it would involve many in great suffering: no doubt; but he is immensely rich, and certainly he is not, in the common acceptation of the phrase, an extravagant man."

"No, Augusta, you misunderstood me. When I spoke of the *cost* of this entertainment, I was not exactly thinking of pounds, shillings, and pence. Other things besides money go to make up the cost of most of our luxuries."

"I am not good at finding out riddles, Wat," said Lady Blondeville; but though the words were said indifferently, there was a slight nervousness in her manner: she was dreading 'a thunderclap,' as she was wont to designate her brother's plain-spoken exposition of his opinions.

"I will tell you what I mean," replied Mr. Blunt. "You said just now that the Duke of Knutsford was to pay for this fête out of his late winnings at Newmarket. His winnings are other people's losses. Did Harry Bromley lose money to the Duke? I trust not, for your sakes: for if he did, I should aver boldly that besides its price in hard cash, this entertainment will have cost two murders, a suicide, and a broken heart, to say nothing of the misery of poor Bromley's more distant connexions and friends."

"Oh Wat," said Lady Blondeville shuddering, "what a horrible idea! But, thank heaven, there is no truth in it. I *know* that the Duke did not win a sixpence from Mr. Bromley."

"Deduct those items, then, from the cost of the fête. But I have not done. The Duke, you say, and say truly, is immensely rich. Whence comes his wealth?"

"From the Lancashire collieries," answered Lady Blondeville.

"Well, you know nothing about collieries: no more, probably, does the Duke; at least, if he did, a kind-hearted man, such as he is always represented

to be, would never, I think, have allowed such a system to be carried on, as I myself *saw* in his pits."

"*Saw!*" exclaimed the lady and her daughters in a breath. "You don't mean that you ever went into one of those horrid places?"

"Indeed I do. I wanted to see Skurryfunge's new ventilating engine, (you know I am curious in such matters) and therefore down I went, the summer before last, into a place that I should think could have no counterpart save in Hell. I say nothing of scrambling in mud and filth through passages less than a yard high, and such like evils, which the locality, perhaps makes inevitable, and to which use may reconcile those who are daily exposed to them: nor do I allude to the perils from explosive gases, which often destroy twenty or thirty lives in an instant: I am speaking of the scenes of cruelty and profligacy which those subterranean prisons hide from the face of day,—scenes so shocking that I scarce dare allude to them in the presence of dainty, delicate persons like yourselves."

"What! do you really mean that all those horrors which the newspapers brought before the public

last year were true? It was said there was great exaggeration."

"Who said so? The guilty and the interested. Who has controverted the statement that women, half-naked, (the putters, as they are called) are yoked with chains to the coal carts, which they drag on their hands and knees along passages not two feet high; and that of these women some are on the point of becoming mothers.* Who has denied that in many of these mines the men work without any article of clothing whatever upon them? Who has disproved the fact that in many mines children have been maimed for life by the wanton cruelty of the men? that these children are often immured at five years old? that some-times they work from fourteen to fifteen hours a day? that diseases of peculiar character, as well as crippled limbs, are the result of this overtasking the powers of the body? that many of these poor little creatures sit on the same spot for

* "Chained, belted, harnassed like dogs in a go-cart,— black, saturated with wet, and more than half-naked,— crawling upon their hands and feet, and dragging their heavy loads behind them, they present an appearance indescribably disgusting and unnatural." Mr. Scriven's Report. Children's Employment Commission, App. ii., p. 75.

twelve hours at a time in utter darkness,* with no good thoughts to occupy their minds,† and gathering,

* The "trappers" as they are called, are children whose business it is to attend to the trap-doors which occasionally intercept the passages in a colliery. "The trappers," says Mr. Symons in his Report, "sit in a little hole scooped out for them in the side of the gates behind each door, where they sit with a string in their hands attached to the door, and pull it open the moment they hear the corves (i. e. carriages for conveying the coal) at hand, and the moment it has passed they let the door fall to, which it does by its own weight....They have nothing else to do: but as their office must be performed from the repassing of the first to the passing of the last corve during the day, they are in the pit the whole time it is worked, frequently above twelve hours a day. They sit, moreover, in the dark, often with a damp floor to stand on, and exposed necessarily to drafts. It is a most painful thing to contemplate the dull dungeon-like life these little creatures are doomed to spend, a life for the most part passed in solitude, damp, and darkness. They are allowed no light; but sometimes a good-natured collier will bestow a little bit of candle on them as a treat. On one occasion, as I was passing a little trapper, he begged me for a little grease from my candle. I found that the poor child had scooped out a hole in a great stone, and having obtained a wick, had manufactured a rude sort of lamp, and that he kept it going as well as he could by begging contributions of melted tallow from the candles of any Samaritan passers by."

It may perhaps seem that sitting for hour after hour in darkness is no such great trial to a child. Hear the evidence of one of the victims; —Sarah Gooder, aged eight years. "I'm a trapper in the Gauber Pit. I have to trap without a light, and *I'm scared.* I go at four and sometimes half-past three in the morning, and come out at five, and half-past. I never go to sleep. *Sometimes I sing when I've light, but not in the dark. I dare not sing then.*"

Another child says, "I *never* see the day-light except on Sundays.

† "You have expressed some surprise," said Mr. Wilcox, a mine proprietor in the Yorkshire coal-field, to Mr. Scriven, "at Thomas

and able to gather, no more knowledge of religion than can be gained from the oaths, and curses, and blasphemies, of persons older indeed, but scarcely less ignorant than themselves? Who has, or can contradict these things? and if they be true, have I not made out my case that there are other things besides money that go to make up the cost of luxury?"

"Luxury? coals are not so much a luxury as a necessary of life," observed Lady Blondeville.

"But great houses and great fêtes are rather luxuries, I suppose, than necessaries? And great houses and great fêtes call for ample revenues: and there must be much scraping and pinching somewhere, before a large revenue can be made up. Had the Kirkendale Collieries been in a better condition as regards the comforts of the miners, when I saw them, (for no doubt they are in a less bad state now) the aggregate of profit would have been probably reduced, and that would not have been pleasant either to the Duke's agent, or to the Duke himself."

Mitchell's not having heard of God. I judge there are very few colliers hereabout that have." App. ii. 73.

"I never heard of Jesus Christ."—"I don't know what you mean by God," are quite common answers on the part of the unhappy heathen collier-children of this part of *Christian (!)* England.

"But of course, Uncle Wat," said his eldest niece interposing, "the Duke did not know of any of these horrors."*

"No, of course not; but you do not suppose, do you, that he is not therefore *responsible* for them, or that he is not *just as much answerable for the way in which his money is made, as for that in which it is spent.* I can't find in the Parable that the Rich man either *knew* that Lazarus was at his gate, hungry, or covered with sores: had he known it, he might, for what we know, have gladly relieved him. But he *might* have known it, and what came of his not caring to know it, I need not say."

"Brother," said Lady Blondeville, "you really make me tremble."

"Sister," was the reply, "I am glad of it. I wish I could make many do so. There is abundant reason why they should."

* It is hoped that there are few Proprietors of Collieries who could make such a statement as the following.

"I trust the entire management of the pit to an agent; and I merely come and ride over here as an amusement, and do not interfere with the pit at all. The Coroner's Inquest will give the best information about the rope being broken when two men were killed about the 6th of January. *I never have never been in the pit, and never will go.* We have no children under eight or nine years, as far as I know. *I don't know* whether there are lasses or not working in the pit."

Examination, No. 121, Mr. Symon's Report.

CHAPTER II.

NOTHING BUT PERPLEXITY.

"———————— and then to breakfast, with
What appetite you have."

KING HENRY VIII.

WHATEVER might have been the amount of trepidation which her brother's remarks on the responsibilities of the rich and great, produced on Lady Blondeville, its duration was not sufficient to take away her inclination for her morning-meal, and as it was now past one o'clock, her ladyship began to think that she might proceed from conversation to her coffee and her toast.

"I know it is useless my asking you, Wat, to eat anything at this time of the day, but Gertrude and I are only now about to commence our breakfast. We were terribly late last night. I must confess I

always feel rather guilty, when I go to bed with the sun shining through the divisions of the shutters."

"Indeed?" said Uncle Wat drily, "I should have thought you must have got pretty well used to it by this time. Your's must be a very remarkable conscience. Anybody else's, however keen at the outset, must have been pretty well blunted with the attrition of half a century."

Lady Blondeville thought her dear brother intolerably rude; but she did not stop to analyze the cause of her vexation, or decide whether it arose from having her sincerity doubted, or her age alluded to.—"Well, but *will* you eat anything? there's a cold chicken on the side-board; you had much better, after your journey."

"Thank you, no; I presume that I breakfasted about the time you were going to supper, and if I were now to dine when you were at your breakfast, we should never get right again. I should grow tired of playing at cross-purposes at every meal for a fortnight, and therefore, if you please, I will drop a meal or two, till I have got into the ways of the house. I always like to do at Rome as they do at Rome. I

hate the old-bachelor ways (come, come Mistress Gertrude don't you laugh!) of a man who can't dine at unusual hours, and on unusual fare...."

"On puppies for instance, with the Chinese ambassador, when we have one?" asked Gertrude laughing.

"Yes, Miss Pert, if you'll come with me. Let me see," he continued; "it is now twenty minutes past one, and you are midway through your breakfast: you will dine about nine. Do you dine at home?"

"Why, my dear Wat, nothing was ever so unlucky. Augusta and I are to dine at York House. Her Royal Highness asked us personally a week ago, and I fear we cannot back out of it, even for you. However, Gertrude, will be but too happy to dine with you at your own hour."

"Well, Gertrude, then you and I will have a tête à tête, and will talk over the Field of Cloth of Gold, wo'nt we? Meanwhile I must go to the Temple, and see old Holt." And thereupon Uncle Wat left the breakfast-room.

"I am sure," said Lady Blondeville, when her

brother was gone, "nobody can love your uncle better than I do, but certainly this visit comes rather inopportunely."

"Inopportunely, Mamma!" exclaimed Augusta, "I am in utter, absolute despair! I cannot conceive what we are to do with him; I know he will torment our very souls out about this ball. He has given *me* a fine specimen of his inclinations that way already. And he will be bored to death himself into the bargain. Oh! that some good fairy would carry him back again to Wroxton!"

Whether Gertrude was feeling herself to be the guilty author of this contre-temps, or whether she had been struck by her uncle's remarks, remains to be seen, but she continued silent, while her mother and sister performed a long duet of lamentation, the theme thereof being the intense disgust they were experiencing at the arrival which had professedly afforded them so much satisfaction.

Now it is not to be inferred from this, that either Lady Blondeville or Augusta were *more* hollow and insincere than worldly people in general; on the contrary, they were in some respects less so; they

would have been ashamed of that kind of manœuvring and finessing to which many persons resort for the accomplishing of their own ends, and which, so far as the world is concerned, is only held to be blameworthy, when it is unsuccessful: but they were identified in their habits and feelings with that system, whose first law is, that its subjects should rather study to say what will please, than what is strictly true. Christian courtesy often requires of us to abstain from saying *all* we think; the courtesy of the world expects people to say *more* than they think, or even the reverse of what they think.

And it is a miserable thing, that they who live in a round of dissipation, soon shrink from the task of sober reflection and self-examination, and so enure themselves to ways of falsehood without being aware of their guilt, and even contrive to lull their reproving consciences to sleep, by fallacious arguments about those things which the rules of society require, the duty of avoiding to give pain and offence, or to appear rude. Those habits of daily life must be evil which tend to encourage modes of speech and action which are directly at variance with the law of God.

The reader must not, however, suppose that Lady Blondeville was what, in common parlance, is called a worldly-minded woman. Worldly-minded she was to a miserable degree, but not being a whit more so than nine-tenths of those with whom she mingled in society, and whose tone and standard were no higher than her own, the fact remained unsuspected both by her and them. Her character had nothing in it of extravagance or caricature: she was a fair average specimen of her kind. Quite irreproachable (so far as the world's judgment could go) in life and morals,—an affectionate parent,—prudent in the management of her property, never exceeding her income,—charitable withal in the modern acceptation of the term, (ready, that is, to give a guinea, when it is asked for)—good humoured, civil, and well-bred,—not inattentive to the externals of religion, nor at all unwilling to admit that religion is a very right and proper thing in its proper place, so that it be kept free from the taint of vulgarity and enthusiasm,—taking the world as she found it,—ready to bear and forbear, and desiring nothing beyond the comfortable enjoyment of those pleasures of life, which her station and means afforded her,—Lady

Blondeville was but the counterpart of hundreds of other members of the fashionable world, who are respected and looked up to by their acquaintance. Or, to take the test which in such cases seems all-sufficient, her family was considered by parents as one with whom a connection, either for sons or daughters, would be quite unexceptionable.—What but uncharitableness, or bigotry, could speak with misgiving about such a person's real condition?

As for Augusta Blondeville, she was, as might naturally be expected, a duplicate of her mother in many respects, for she had imbibed the same opinions, was leading the same life, and daily breathed the same atmosphere. On the whole, however, she was more accomplished than her mother, but less winning and popular, and, if the truth must be told, less amiable where her own will came in contact with that of others; in fact she was a selfish person; not more selfish, perhaps, than Lady Blondeville, but as yet less clever in concealing it.

Gertrude, as has been seen, was only just "out," so she was in great measure unspoilt by the world's corrupting influence, and unblighted by its pestilen-

tial breath. But no pains had been taken to form or fix her principles, and so her mind was like a sheet of paper, unsullied indeed as yet, but destined to be "made or marred" by external influence. For the rest, she was a clever, thoughtful girl, of deep but undisciplined feelings, and with something of that natural inclination to act for herself, which young ladies in their eighteenth year are said to feel, when they have turned their backs for ever, on Miss Buffet, and the school-room, one o'clock dinners, and "coming down to dessert."

But to return. It seems highly probable that Lady Blondeville and Augusta might have continued to rail at Fortune and old bachelors for a much longer period, but for a circumstance which we shall proceed to narrate. For the reader's sake, the conversations, recorded in the last and present chapter, have been presented in an unbroken form, but in reality they were interrupted by the entrance of a servant about once in every two minutes with a card or a note. The cards were looked at mechanically and then thrown down on the table, with a mere passing comment,—such as "How tiresome people

are, how *can* people go to six balls in one night ? —Lady Busby, on Friday—I'm sure we needn't go there.—Mrs. Willoughby St. John, actually going to give another breakfast after all ! well, that is charming !—'Lady Fizzlegig at home !' She's always at home. I wish to goodness she'd go out. Dreadful old bore ! And such a house too ; really how people *can* live in Baker Street ! Gloucester Place is it ? well it's only out of the frying-pan into the fire."

The notes, or rather their contents, could not be read so easily, and therefore instead of being opened, they were piled together in a heap to be opened at leisure, and there they lay,—not less than twenty, perhaps,—of all imaginable shapes, colours, and sizes,—this one poisoned with musk, and that with pachouli ; here, an envelope printed in gold and colours, (blessings on the inventor of an art with such a brief, soft, and euphonious name as that of lithochromotography !) there, one stamped and embossed and perforated, after that sensible fashion which endeavours to make good paper look like bad lace, (so manifold and ingenious are the devices of extravagant luxury in the present day, that we are

content to despoil common things of half their usefulness in order to render them costly!) and all variously adorned with embossed cyphers, and tricked out with dainty devices,—all but one, which the page had brought in while Mr. Dennis O'Rafferty, the porter, was settling his turf-affairs in the lower story.

Perhaps it was because this note looked so unlike the rest that Lady Blondeville opened it first; she soon, however, threw it down, and with a very perturbed air rung the bell.

"It is really a very extraordinary thing, Dennis," remarked her ladyship, as the porter entered the room, "that you will persist in bringing these sort of letters to me. Here is a most pitiable, lamentable story of a widow with one child lying dead of scarlet fever, and three more dying, and she herself without the necessaries of life; I never read anything so dreadful. You know perfectly well that I always wish such cases to be relieved, but why am I to run the risk of scarlet fever being brought into the house?"

"I'm sure, I'm very sorry, my lady. It was James that took it in, when I was down stairs at my breakfast."

"You have chosen rather an unfortunate deputy, I think," said Lady Blondeville drily, as the recollection of the manner of Uncle Wat's admission came into her mind.

"I ask your ladyship's pardon," said the porter, "but I never take in begging letters, if I can help it. Your ladyship's generosity is so well known, that the house is quite beset with applicants; but the greater part of them are impostors, and I dare say that note comes from one of them."

"Oh no, it comes backed by recommendation from Miss Parker the district-visitor, and I am sure she would not point out improper persons as objects of charity. She is certain to know all about this family, for she gives herself up to visiting the poor. It really is a great blessing," continued her ladyship, "that there are people with leisure for such occupations, for I am afraid there is a great deal of distress, though I must say that I do think Miss Parker might be a little more careful of the danger of spreading infection, than to allow these poor people to write letters. It seems that she is in the habit of visiting them,—she is a single woman, and I dare say has no dread of contagion,—but everybody knows what a

coward I am on that subject, and therefore she might have saved me from the risk of having this most infectious disorder conveyed by the air in that letter."

"Certainly, my lady;" replied the porter, "does your ladyship wish anything further to be done?"

"Yes, by all means: step down to Miss Parker with my compliments, and beg her to give this sovereign to Widow Wade, of Crown Court. Say, I would not trouble her with a note, as you could explain it, and I know how fully her time is occupied."

Dennis bowed and withdrew. Experience had taught him that his mistress was always ready to give *money* to charitable purposes, but that the alms being once bestowed, she never thought more on the subject; and he knew further that Lady Blondeville's personal intercourse with Miss Parker, amounted to a civil curtsey as they happened to meet going into, or coming out of St. Peter's, Pimlico. So without the slightest compunction he transferred Widow Wade's money into his own pocket, and congratulated himself with the reflection that by adopting a similar course on four other occasions, he could

repay himself for that unlucky loss upon Rhadaman thus, which had caused him an early visit from the Duke of Doncaster's coachman.

It is not the object of this book to recommend people to expose themselves to infection unnecessarily, nor yet to libel that very portly and respectable class of persons to which Mr. Dennis belonged, —but may it not be suggested in passing, that it is just *possible* that such pleas as that of the dread of contagion, may be a mere self-deceptive excuse for indolence, and that it does not *always* happen that the alms of those persons who are content to see with other people's eyes, and to bestow no trouble of their own, reach their intended destination?

The next note which Lady Blondeville opened was of a more interesting character. It was from Lady Isabella Bohun, the Duchess of Knutsford's clever daughter, and the representative of Catherine of Arragon at the coming fête. It ran thus:—

"My dear Lady Blondeville

I think I can help you out of your difficulty. Miss Gwillym, who, on more grounds than

one, deserves her nickname of Rouge-dragon, (a dignity, which, if the Earl Marshal has the least discrimination he will confer on her, at the next vacancy) tells me that there is a picture of the Duchess of Suffolk at Hampton Court; and she was Duchess of Suffolk in 1520, though she seems to have attended the Field of Cloth of Gold as Queen Dowager of France. In the latter character, Miss Gwillym says that she is described by De Mezeray, or one of the French historians, as having a robe of blue velvet 'semé en fleurs de lys, en broderie d'or de Chypre,'—whatever that may be. So, as King Harry's sister and King Louis's widow, Augusta may make herself as fine as she pleases,—only she must remember that she is a very young widow.

Ever my dear Lady Blondeville,

Your's most sincerely,

ISABELLA BOHUN.

P. S. By the bye, who is the Duke of Suffolk? There can be no doubt as to how *he* must be dressed;—

"Cloth of gold do not despise,
Though thou be matched with *cloth of frize;*
Cloth of frize be not too bold,
Though thou be matched with cloth of gold."

P. S. *No.* 2. Would you believe it, that ugly, venomous, old toad, Lady Crutchley, is going (like the real reptile) to wear a precious jewel in her head? In plain English, she means to bedizen her mummyship with all the Crutchley diamonds, and she won't lend poor Adela Boucheret one of them."

It is often asserted that the pith of a lady's letter is to be found in her postscript; and the rule, if rule it be, found no exception in the present instance. That brief enquiry, "Who is to be Duke of Suffolk?" entirely upset (as her dear friend Lady Isabella intended it should) all Miss Blondeville's preparations.

There was a certain Colonel Marney, very rich and very handsome, and not troubled with any great amount of good principle, who, after coquetting with a great number of fashionable young ladies, and making their silly hearts ache, had at last, as it seemed, relieved all his victims of their suspense but

two, and the world was at this time divided by wonders and bets, whether Augusta Blondeville, or Adela Boucheret would be the happy object of his choice, and the sharer (when the Marquis of Wurmeaton was gathered to his ancestors) of his coronet. Lady Isabella naturally favoured her cousin Boucheret, and foreseeing that the Queen Dowager of France would be a more important person in the approaching pageant, than the character which Adela was to assume, she lit upon an ingenious expedient of civilly thwarting Miss Blondeville, and that at the last moment, when her costly dress was nearly completed.

It had been arranged from the first that all anachronisms, whether of dress or person, should be avoided at the fête. It was to be, so far as possible, a correct delineation of the original scene. Nobody was to appear in the character of any one, however illustrious, who was unborn or dead in 1520, or who *might* not have mingled in the Courts of Henry or Francis. Miss Blondeville had quite forgotten that the widow of Louis the Twelfth had, after her few months' occupation of the throne of France, returned

to her native land, married her first lover, Charles Brandon, Duke of Suffolk, and that at the Field of Cloth of Gold she was his Duchess.—Now it was easy enough for Miss Blondeville to assume the character of a widow, but by no means so easy to assume that of a wife, because it followed by a natural consequence, that she must needs have a *husband;* and it would, of course, be highly indecorous for any one but a brother, or some very near relation, to appear with her in that capacity.—And Miss Blondeville's brother was on the Continent, and "Uncle Wat" was her only other *near* male connection.—All this, Lady Isabella well knew, and knowing it, contrived her scheme of mischief so adroitly, that under the pressure of business to which the London milliners were exposed, there was hardly a chance that Augusta could have a new dress made; and unless she were in character, she could not appear at the fête. Meanwhile, Adela Boucheret was invited by her cousin to represent Anne Boleyn, and Colonel Marney was petitioned to undertake the part of the gay and gallant Lord Mountjoy, and (like Anne Boleyn) to be an attendant on her, in her assumed character

of Catherine of Arragon. — Such are the secret manœuvres and duplicity occasionally exhibited by some of those young ladies who, as far as externals go, seem very paragons of gentleness, and innocent simplicity;—such the hateful tempers which the spirit of the world is, to a greater or less extent, sure to engender!

"Well, this is a scrape!" exclaimed Lady Blondeville, when Augusta had read the note,—"My dear, what is to be done?"

"Scrape, Mamma?" cried Miss Blondeville in a bitter tone of disappointment, "it is completely check-mate."—And mother and daughter remained silent for some minutes.

Meanwhile, Gertrude read the note, and not immediately perceiving that it affected Augusta's plans, began to suppose that her mother and sister were sympathizing with Miss Boucheret.

"What an odious woman Lady Crutchley must be! I don't wonder Isabella abuses her so, though she *is* her aunt! What need can she have of diamonds, she must be eighty years old? I wonder whom she is to represent. Do you know, Mamma?"

"Know? how should I know?" answered Lady Blondeville.—"Oh, by the bye, somebody said she was to be Isabella of Castile, Catherine of Arragon's mother."

"Impossible, Mamma," observed Gertrude, "she was dead twenty years before the Field of Cloth of Gold."

"I beg your pardon," said Miss Blondeville, "not at all impossible. I think it would be a very happy choice of a character. Lady Crutchley looks exactly as Isabella of Castile *might* have looked on that occasion,—dead and dug up again. I am positive that there is nobody who sees Lady Crutchley, but must feel inclined to beg her to return immediately to the place from whence she came,—the family vault: I am sure she has been defunct many years, and her corpse has been taken, by way of ready-furnished lodgings, by a Ghoul or a Vampyre."

"Fie, fie, Augusta! how can you be so ill-natured? What has Lady Crutchley done to affront you?"

"Affront me? she has not affronted me. I was simply stating a fact; and indeed I am rather dis-

posed to fight her battles. She's an absurd old fright, but I quite love her for keeping her diamonds to herself?"

"Why?"

"Because Adela Boucheret has'nt a single ornament to bless herself with beyond a coral necklace, and a Scotch-pebble bracelet. And I feel quite sure that, somehow or other, Miss Adela is at the bottom of this trick that has been played me. I know her of old, and Isabella Bohun is a mere tool in her hands, but I'll be even with her yet, I promise her."

"You must make haste, then," said Lady Blondeville, "if you are to have any alterations made in your dress, or it will be so far advanced that Mademoiselle Angelique will not be able to alter it."

"Why, Mamma, you forget that my dress is all but finished. I tried the greater part on yesterday before you came home. Isabella knew it perfectly when she wrote that note. You only spoke about the way of dressing my hair, and she chose to put in all that rigmarole, by way of pretending that she supposed that my dress was unsettled."

"My goodness!" exclaimed Lady Blondeville,

"you don't mean that you will have to get up *another* dress? Mademoiselle Angelique told me distinctly that this would cost five and thirty guineas!"

"Five and thirty, *without* the train, Mamma; fifteen more, with the train."

"Fifty guineas thrown into the fire! How in the world do you propose to pay for all this?"

"Uncle Wat always gives me fifty guineas on my birth-day; so that if the worst comes to the worst I shall do pretty well: but I think I can contrive to get out of the difficulty still better."

"How?" asked Gertrude eagerly.

"It was only last night that Caroline Ferrers and her brother Clarence were regretting that they could not go as husband and wife. I know neither of them had then settled anything, and they are both such thorough dawdles that I will engage to say that nothing is yet determined on. Caroline is just my size, and I am sure she will be but too glad to take my dress, and have the whole matter arranged for her."

"Write to her instantly!" exclaimed Lady

Blondeville. The note was written, dispatched, and in ten minutes back came an answer, full of delight and gratitude from Lady Caroline Ferrers. She should be rejoiced to take Augusta's dress, and be Duchess of Suffolk, and her brother Clarence was equally pleased at being the representative of Charles Brandon.

Meanwhile Lady Blondeville was looking among the list of persons who were present at the Field of Cloth of Gold, with the object of selecting some female character, hitherto unchosen, for her daughter. In vain, however, did she run through a tempting catalogue of illustrious names, "Duchess of Buckingham," "Countess of Stafford," "Lady Fitzwalter," "Lady Abergavenny," "Lady Cobham," "Lady Gray," "Lady Parr," "Lady Guildford," "Lady Wingfield," and twenty more: to all and each Augusta replied with a short and decided negative. But as soon as she had read Lady Caroline Ferrers' answer to her note, she turned to her mother, with as much bitterness as if she had been a *real* rebel to her country, and said—"No, Mamma, I will have nothing to do with Catharine of Arragon and her

English Court. I hate and detest them. La belle France for me. I will write to Queen Claude, tell her I have been abominably used, and ask her to help me. I know she will, for she is resolved on having the most brilliant Court of the two."

Another note was then dispatched, and in due time came a civil answer from Countess Marmion (the representative of the Queen of France) suggesting to Augusta that she could not do better than assume the character of Beatrice of Portugal, Duchess of Savoy, and promising that there should be no *Duke* of Savoy allowed.

The part of the proud and clever sister-in-law of Charles the Fifth was just that which was suited to Augusta Blondeville, and having first satisfied herself that the weak and foolish husband of Beatrice had borne no part in the real pageant, (for experience had now made her cautious) she entered on her new preparations with a zeal which showed how much her heart was in the business. With rapid hand she turned over such volumes as she thought likely to help her in the details of costume, and with ready pencil sketched a design which Gertrude and Lady Blondeville pronounced to be "perfect."

CHAPTER III.

A TÊTE À TÊTE.

"Here are a few of the unpleasant'st words
That ever blotted paper!"

MERCHANT OF VENICE.

IT was not without considerable trepidation, and a preference of her bed to her dinner, more than once expressed, that Gertrude Blondeville prepared to fulfil the duties which had devolved upon her, and to receive her uncle at the evening meal. She had heard so much, while still in the school-room, of old Wat's bluntness, and caustic remarks, and merciless satire, that, although she had never found him anything but thoroughly good-natured to herself, the idea of encountering him alone, and without support, for a whole evening, made her very nervous and uncomfortable, and, on the whole, she found herself

very much in the same state as on that formidable morning when she was waiting to have her ears bored. Only in the latter case, the pain, though sharp, was soon over, whereas her fright and sufferings might be protracted through many hours on the present occasion. If Uncle Wat would give her one good kick, or a few smart raps, (as Miss Buffet used to do) and would then make himself like other people, she felt that she would gladly submit to the discipline, but the thought of a succession of little stings, continued unintermittingly for a whole evening, was quite intolerable, and the more so, because, not knowing her uncle well enough to be sure of her ground, she believed herself certain to fall into all sorts of trouble, and that she should not only be *baited* for every thing she did and said, but for all that she left undone and unsaid. All the time she was at her toilette she was longing to change gowns with her maid, lest Uncle Wat should think her over dressed; and as, with palpitating heart, she entered the drawing room, she suddenly turned pale with fright at the sudden recollection, that she had forgotten to ask her mother how long she ought to

stay with her uncle after the dessert was set upon the table.

The event, as might be expected, proved that Gertrude had taken, on hearsay evidence, a very false impression of her uncle's character; and she found to her surprise, that instead of being addressed as a child, and her shyness and awkwardness being made a subject of ridicule, she was treated as a reasonable being, nay with much more respect and consideration than she received from her mother and sister, who it must be confessed, were sometimes a little hard on her.

It was quite true that among his equals and cotemporaries, Mr. Blunt would amuse himself by saying startling things in a rough, uncourtierlike way; often doing so on principle, and with the object of making people reflect; oftener still in entire unconsciousness that his plain truth-speaking ways were capable of giving offence; and occasionally, it must be owned, in a spirit of school-boy mischief, and with no worthier object than amusing himself at the shock which some blunt straightforward observation inflicted on some some soft and

silken, and blind admirer of the ways of the fashionable world. But it would never have entered the kind old man's head to play off his "brusquerie" at the expense of a timid girl like Gertrude, to any greater extent than would serve to amuse her, and give a spirit to conversation. And besides, he was really fond of her; thought that he saw good in her which only wanted developing and bringing out, and so prepared himself to be as amiable as possible, decked his old wrinkled face with smiles, and put on an extra-hideous waistcoat to do her honour.

And so by the time Gertrude had finished her soup, she found her nervousness (like Acres's courage) oozing out of the tips of her fingers; the last symptom of trepidation went out with the first course; at the end of the second she was at her ease; and when the dessert was set on the table, and the servants had left the room, she found herself quite happy that so agreeable a tête á tête would now be carried on without the restraint of their presence. Nevertheless, it must be confessed that there was a slight return of the former symptoms, when after a momentary silence, Uncle Wat observed, "By the bye,

Gertrude, you have never told me anything about all these grand doings at Knutsford House."

"I am sure, Uncle, I would have told you all I know, only I felt that you didn't care to hear about such things."

"How can you tell what I care about? I care very much to hear about such things."

"Indeed? Really, after what you said this morning, I should not have expected it."

"Perhaps, Gertrude, I don't care about such matters from any personal interest, and yet I may wish to hear about them. Come, there's a riddle for you."

"I never could find out a riddle, Uncle," replied Gertrude nervously, for she felt that they were getting upon dangerous ground.

"Well then, tell me whom you are to represent, and how you are to be dressed; that will do as well."

"Mamma, you know, goes as Elizabeth Scrope, Countess Dowager of Oxford, and I am to be her daughter, Margaret de Vere."

"Very proper and correct, my Lady Margaret, but I thought your mother had been Lady Anne

Howard. Don't you remember her picture at Trussell Court?"

"I beg your pardon, dear Uncle: she was the wife of my brother, the Lord High Chamberlain," said Gertrude laughing.

"And who is your brother?"

"Oh dear! I haven't a notion. I shouldn't have known I had a brother, if Mamma had not sent me to Collins's heraldry, to discover whether I had any existence myself."

"A very frank confession upon my word. And how is your ladyship to be dressed?"

"You shall see that to-morrow, Uncle:—at least if my things are finished."

"Rather an awful '*if*,' Gertrude, in the present state of the world of millinery. And pray how much is your dress to cost?"

"A great deal of money, dear Uncle,—twenty pounds."

"Twenty pounds for five hours amusement;—pleasure, at the cost of half-a-crown for every two minutes; yes, that *is* dear certainly," observed Mr. Blunt drily, "especially when we know that there

are thousands and tens of thousands at this very moment, who cannot raise half-a-crown a week to live upon."

Gertrude looked down in confusion, and then said, "I assure you, Uncle Wat, my dress costs nothing, in comparison to what the expense of many people's will be. Lady Baliol gives fifteen guineas a yard for her train,—(she is to be Madame Louise, King Francis' mother)—and though twenty pounds is a great deal for *me*, still I have only chosen materials which will make up again into other dresses."

"Oh, pardon me," observed Uncle Wat, "if there is to be a Field of Cloth of Gold, and if you are to go to it, I by no means take upon myself to say that the going to an expense of twenty pounds for your millinery would be at all out of keeping with the character of the business. On the contrary, extravagance will be about the only point in which the copy will resemble the original; for if I remember right, it was said of the English on the real field, that they carried their manors, and of the French that they carried their forests, on their backs."

"I fear, dear Uncle, you think me very blame-

worthy for going to this fête: but how can I do otherwise? I do not mean that I have not looked forward to it with great pleasure; but even supposing I thought it ever so questionable, how could I help myself? I can't fly in mamma's face, and set myself up to know better than she."

"To be sure not;—at least, until you were quite satisfied that what was proposed to you was sinful. But let us look at the matter in another point of view. You have an allowance of your own, have you not?"

"Yes, Uncle."

"And you are at liberty to spend it as you please?"

"Certainly."

"Then, if you please, you *might* spend nine-tenths of it in charity and alms deeds!"

"I have no expenses, certainly, but those of dress."

"And your mother never insists on your spending any given portion of it in dress only?"

"No: she could not bear me to look *dowdy*, or under-dressed; but so long as I was not remarkable

one way or the other, I do not think she would interfere."

"So that if you had been disposed, you might have given these twenty guineas a month ago, to the good Bishop of London's Fund for Building Churches, or to St. George's Hospital, or any other charitable institution?"

"Yes," replied Gertrude, "but it is always necessary to have something in hand for contingencies."

"Of course: but what I mean to suggest to your consideration is this, — the money so disposed of would have been safe: it would have passed from your hands without soiling them, without making an item against you in the day of final account. Can you feel quite sure that such will be the case when it is spent as now it must be spent? I am not saying positively whether Hospitals are good things, and ball-dresses bad; but if there is only a chance, the remotest, faintest, possible *chance* that you may be judged hereafter for the extravagance of your personal decoration, would it not be *safest* to put it out of your power to commit a sin of this kind, by consecrating to God all that upon a fair calculation is

not *necessary* to maintain you properly in your rank in society?"

"But, Uncle, as society is now constituted, it requires a very large sum to enable one to appear as others do."

"And how much longer, Gertrude," asked the old man very gravely, "do you expect that 'society as now constituted' will go on? Do you, does any reasonable being, suppose that a country where tens of thousands know not where to look for bread, myriads upon myriads are left to a condition of actual heathenism, while others of their fellow-countrymen are living in such luxuries as Tyre, and Rome, and Babylon never knew, are likely to escape, for long, some terrible and overwhelming national convulsion?"

The question was so new to Gertrude, and so startling that she had nothing to answer to it.

"Oh, my dear child, you have never thought of this; your looks tell me so: and, indeed, it would be strange if you had. You have never yet known, so to say, what it is to have a want ungratified. Food and raiment, all that you have needed, all that

you have wished for, have come to you as a matter of course, so that you can scarce understand, perhaps, that a state of things might arise in which it would be otherwise. 'Oh, gay ladies,' as that old tiger, John Knox, said to Mary of Scotland and her train, 'what a fine world this would be if all these braveries could last for ever!' That which the Reformer spake in bitter irony, seems to have been adopted by the present generation as a matter of serious belief."

"But why should things *not* go on as they do at present? Of course, there is great room for improvement; there is among individuals much shocking extravagance...."

"A nation is made up of individuals," said Mr. Blunt, interposing.

"And," continued Gertrude, "there is a lamentable indisposition among us to give as we ought to give; but surely there is a perceptible improvement of late years,—at least, in the latter respect. And if so, may we not hope, that by gradual amelioration we may escape a political catastrophe such as you allude to?"

"There are states of the atmosphere, Gertrude, in which the air is so dense and unwholesome that nothing short of a hurricane can purify it: there are forms and stages of disease in which the only chance of saving life is to be found in some remedy which for a while prostrates the whole system."

"But what makes you think so ill, dear Uncle, of the state of the body politic? Instead of foreboding evil, would it not be easy to draw a picture of our power, and glory, and commercial prosperity? of an empire on which the sun never sets? of fleets and armies that carry all before them? of trade and manufactures which serve but, as it were, to heap the wealth of the world into our bosoms? Was ever people so over-loaded with prosperity as we?"

"And is it safe to augur thence that God looks on us favourably? May not those very things which our world-worn eyes look on as blessings, be in reality curses and judicial inflictions?—the drops which shall cause the overflow of a cup whose dregs (when we are forced to drink them) we shall find to be gall and bitterness?—the harbingers of vengeance?—the tokens that wrath irresistible is coming

upon us to the uttermost?—Power, glory, commercial prosperity! Can you name one mighty city or nation whose terrible end and political annihilation are among the landmarks of history, whose downfall and ruin are not to be traced to these things?—Power, glory, commercial prosperity! Look at the individuals who have been most illustrious for these things, and reflect whether in the day of account, the poorest, and weakest, and humblest Christian is not to be more envied than they. Has there been no Tyre or Babylon raised on high, in order that, conspicuous in power and crime, it might be yet more conspicuous in its punishment and desolation? no Amalek allowed to become "the first of nations," in order that by way of warning, its end should be, that it should perish for ever? no wicked Pharaoh exalted to the throne of Egypt,

'Ut lapsu graviore ruat,'

in order that when he fell he might become a by-word for the reason and manner of his destruction?"

"Yes, Uncle, such things have been, and may be again; but why should you go ont of your way

to put such a terrible construction upon the temporal advantages which Providence has allotted to us as a nation? Ought we not rather to receive them thankfully, than distrustfully?"

"As thankfully as you will, but with the awful sense of anxiety which a knowledge of the responsibilities they involve ought to produce. But you speak as if you thought my notions on this subject peculiar. Gertrude, I have seen, and see daily, more of the world than perhaps you are ever likely to do.—I mingle with persons of all classes, manufacturers, and agriculturists, high and low, rich and poor; I have friends of all parties, and I have acquaintances, at least, who are not within the Church's pale: but I have seldom conversed with any observant, thoughtful-minded individual among them, on these subjects, who has not expressed a deep and melancholy conviction, that as a nation we have utterly forfeited all claims to the favour of the Almighty, and that if in His mercy the bolt has not yet been launched forth against us, it is only that He may afford us the opportunity of being cleansed, and purified, and changed through sufferings. Suffer-

ing alone can save us now: sharp privations, terror, poverty, persecution, whatever is most opposed to all that we now most prize, can alone be the remedy of our disorder. But it is a fearful thought that where suffering does not soften, it invariably hardens, and we are already far, far gone in the hardening process. A people's hard-heartedness is always in exact proportion to its love of luxury, for hard-heartedness is only another name for selfishness."

"But do you really think us hard-hearted, Uncle?—I mean as a nation."

"No nation that was not hard-hearted would allow such an enactment as the Poor Law, *as it exists at present*, to remain for a single hour on the pages of the Statute book. But I will not speak of this. I will rather take my proof from a source where at present there is no controversy, and from the testimony of men who certainly are troubled with no sickly sensibilities. Nine tenths of our manufacturers in this country,—or if not quite so large a proportion as this, still a very great proportion are rather caterers to our luxuries, than providers for our absolute necessities. Now then let

us ask the question whether our factories bear any tokens of hard-heartedness about them or no? Alas, the question is soon answered. Take and read the volume recently put forth by authority, on the moral and physical condition of children and young persons employed in the mines and manufactures of this country. I do not ask you to peruse the original Reports of the Commissioners, which with the Appendices, contain some four thousand closely printed folio pages, and scarce a page but has some recital of horrors such as Christian men,—nay, such as *heathens* might well shudder to think of, but take the light octavo of 250 pages and read *that*, and then judge what is the amount of sin and misery which the preparation of our luxuries is hourly producing. Be it to deck our houses or our persons, not an article can we touch but has had its unseen price of blood and tears.* Be the labour in our mines or in

* "In every branch of human labour;—in all that contributes to our comforts, and luxuries, and wealth,—in all that has spread the name of England and its manufactures beyond either pole, there is the most reckless and devilish expenditure of human life; infants' tears stiffen and defile the costliest fabrics; velvet and silk, purple and fine linen, all smell of blood,—'The perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten them;' there is not a lady however fair and gentle, who is not decked out in the

our collieries,—above ground, or below it;—be the scene of operation among the dusky forges of Birmingham or Sheffield, or the potteries of Staffordshire; be the employment that of making paper, or glass, cloth or hosiery, calico, silk, or lace, there is still the same evidence against us of cruelty, and grinding oppression, exercised on the part of the manufacturers, for the enhancement of their personal gains, tolerated and encouraged by the public in its unceasing demand of fresh luxuries. I should never bring this conversation to a close were I to enter into particulars. Refer to the volume I have spoken of and judge for yourself."

"But, is there no room to suspect exaggeration, Uncle?" asked Gertrude. "May not there not have been a premature judging, a hasty jumping to general conclusions from particular premises?"

"Impossible," replied Mr. Blunt. "There is the evidence of hundreds, perhaps I should say

pride of a ball-room dress, but at the cost of unnumbered groans, and miserable broken hearts, and weeping eyes, and sleepless nights, and cold, shivering walks, taken by half-starved, half-clothed, wan, sickly girls, creeping like evil spirits, vile, wretched, sinful, diseased, to their daily, nightly toil, polluted alike in body and soul."

CHRISTIAN REMEMBRANCER. (MAY, 1843.) p. 699.

thousands, (I am sure they cannot be less) of unwilling witnesses: and there is the unconscious evidence of the examiners that their inquiries were conducted in a manner the most unimpassioned, and indifferent, and as if they had no higher end in view than the solution of some knotty point of political economy. And as for the Reports themselves, it is quite evident that 'they were neither ordered nor planned, nor prepared, for a Christian end.' No, there is no exaggeration about them; if anything they understate the truth."

"But will not Parliament interfere, and forbid such cruelties. Nobody, one would think, could object to what is obviously right."

"Right!" exclaimed Uncle Wat, bitterly. "It is not much the fashion now-a-days, either for ministers or Parliaments to be guided by what is *right*. Tell them a thing is right, and they are deaf: tell them it is expedient, and if you have good luck and great perseverance, perhaps they will in time listen to you, and think of some palliating half-measure, which will help their own popularity, and offend nobody: and so they will go on, putting off the evil

day, shutting their eyes to national transgressions, or bewailing them in words, without attempting to remove the causes of offence, till in some hour when they expect not, destruction will come upon us like a whirlwind. And it needs no prophet's spirit to foretell that the storm is fast gathering round."

"Dear Uncle, what makes you say so?"

"Because She, who alone is in the position to stand between the dead and living, and to stay the plague, — I mean the Church, — is hindered and shackled from doing so. She is fast bound in misery and iron. The State holds Her back whenever She attempts to spring forward to the people's rescue, and if it may not use Her as a tool, would gladly see Her levelled with the dust and Her children within her."

"Then you would wish to see the Church independent of the State?"

"I would wish the State to remember the infinite peril of tampering sacrilegiously with Holy things: I wish it to be aware that if its connexion with the Church gives it high privileges, that connexion entails likewise very awful responsibilities: I wish it

to remember that the Church is God's building, not man's; that God is in the midst of her; that He is a jealous God, and that it is not a matter of indifference whether we meddle with His Ark or no."

"But you were speaking of the signs of a coming storm;—tell me, dear Uncle, where you perceive them."

"Where? Everywhere. And in saying this I am not alluding to the feverish state of our manufacturing population,—to the outrages and insurrectionary movement of the past year,—to the mischiefs caused by the instigation of Chartist and Socialist agitators,—'the Anti-corn-law League,' and so forth. These things were hardly alarming even for a moment, and as a demonstration of insurrectionary power were an utter failure; and grant them to have been ever so alarming, we have had, ere now, to meet far more formidable symptoms of rebellion, which have been removed without difficulty. Almost everybody among us has something to lose, almost everybody is more or less injured by the continuance of an 'emeute' in this country, and therefore it is the *direct interest* of almost everybody to help to 'unthread the rude eye of rebellion.'"

"Upon what, then, do you ground your apprehensions?" asked Gertrude.

"Upon this," replied Mr. Blunt;—"the silent, gradual corruption and extinction of sound principle among us, and the inability of those who are aware of this, to create an interest on the subject, and to excite the public, while yet there is time, (if haply it be not yet too late) to meet the danger and to remedy it. Why, what is the state of this country? There are districts in which, during the last few years, crime has increased five-fold, and ten-fold. This is notorious. The overwhelming increase of our population is notorious too. And what do we in consequence? We pull down our prisons, and build others, new, larger, handsomer, more sumptuous. We erect poor-houses to contain thousands, and are raising a police-force that might serve for a standing army. We have fire-new theories of education, and royal roads to learning, and thousands of mechanics singing nightly at Exeter Hall, and a great Lord driving down in his coach to make them a speech, and tell them how clever they are; and public grants for education to anybody who

asks for them, — Jews, Turks, Infidels, or heretics;—and lastly, we have education itself, hydrostatics and meteorology, and all other *-ologics*, and every thing else, but *the one thing needful*,—and in place of *that*, we are ingeniously setting ourselves to teach 'morality without religion, and religion without a creed.' Finding human nature to be corrupt, the schoolmaster of the nineteenth century has hit upon a new expedient to purify it, and he proposes to lead mankind through elegant accomplishments and penny magazines, liberalism and latitudinarianism, to the steps of the Temple of Virtue. Such are the day-dreams and hallucinations of those who take upon themselves to lord it over the Church, the proper Instructress of the people, and who, tying Her hands as tight as they can, assume to themselves Her office. Of the people they know nothing. If they did they would have gathered knowledge from the boast of an unhappy man on whom judgment was passed the other day, for the part he took in the outbreak of 1842. 'Though the clergyman may not have taught us,' said he, 'we have been taught elsewhere.' Infidel newspapers, and political agitators

are now the real teachers of the people, and bravely they do the devil's work,—they *half*-educate the masses of a population, quick to perceive, but unskilled to reason, and increasing daily in numbers, in self-reliance, and in distress."

"What a terrible state of things you are describing," said Gertrude breathlessly.

"It is so, Gertrude, and is hourly growing worse. And being so, will any reasonable man suppose that any influence short of Christianity,—*of Christianity brought to each individual's house and hearth*, can stem, or stop, the spreading evil. The *clergyman* must teach, depend upon it, or all else had better never be taught at all. But what signs are there of clergymen being provided to teach, or their being aided in their teaching? Almost none. Go through our ancient cities, and you shall find a Church at almost every hundred yards; go through our prosperous modern manufacturing towns, and you shall walk miles without seeing one. The *factory* bell you will hear, but the Church bell almost never. Thousands live and die without setting foot in a Church at all: tens of thousands are borne there

to their baptism and interment, and during the intervening space of three score years and ten, are never told that they have sins to be repented of, and souls to be saved. And why is this? Because there are none to tell them so; because, though the harvest be plenteous, the labourers are so few, that we had actually more clergy three hundred years ago, than now, when our population is tripled or quadrupled. And when we tell these things to rich nobles, and plethoric manufacturers, and gentlefolk in comfortable circumstances, they shrug their shoulders, and say it is very shocking, and turn on their heels complaining of their poverty, and do—*nothing*. They forego no luxuries, make no sacrifices,—but they go on abetting each other, and hardening each other in their sin; and so it will be till the end come, and a land which might have been as the garden of Eden before them, shall, for their sins, and for their punishment, be turned into an aceldama of anarchy, confusion, and blood. A few, a very few years more, and a generation will have grown up to manhood, which never having been taught the fear of God, or their duty to man, will pay back, without compunction, the accumulated wrongs they have received from

those whom they made rich by days and nights of toil, and suffering, and penury, — from those who *might* have made them good subjects, and good Christians, but would not."

"My dear uncle," exclaimed Gertrude, "forgive my saying so, but if people hear you use such language as this, you will be set down as a revolutionist."

"God forbid!" answered Mr. Blunt solemnly. "It would be a most wicked calumny. Were I saying what I have now said to you, in any but a rich man's house, or to any but the daughter of a rich man, I would have spoken differently. I would not have failed to couple my remarks with strong and urgent exhortations on the duty of patience, of submission to the powers that be, of trust in God's all-seeing Providence to alleviate evils, or remove them. But I am now addressing myself to a member of a class that needs solemn, sincere, unflinching warning. The time is gone by for hinting omissions, and insinuating defects. We must not mind distressing ears polite. We must make them hear us, willing or unwilling;—aye, and listen to us too. We must soften down nothing, extenuate nothing,—but, if it

may be, arouse them to a sense of their responsibilities, and tremendous guilt."

To Gertrude Blondeville all that her Uncle had been saying was so new, so utterly unlike the low worldly tone of the day, to which alone she had been used, and yet his remarks were so startling, and (as her fears and conscience told her) so likely to be true, that she felt quite confused and unable to answer him. Still, she thought she ought to say something, though she would have like to have left the room, and not said a word to anybody till she had pondered and reflected upon all that had passed. So at length she shaped her question thus: "But what can I do?"

"You may do much by and by," was the reply, "when you have learned to think more of your responsibilities. At present, you have ordered a dress which is to cost you twenty guineas, so you must pay for it; *but for the time to come I would advise you to reflect, that not a guinea but may be so spent as to help forward the salvation of some immortal soul.*"

Thus the conversation ended.

CHAPTER IV.

ALL WORK AND NO PLAY.

"Enter Sir Walter Blunt."
(Stage Direction.)
KING HENRY IV., PART I.

As this tale addresses itself to that section of the upper ranks of London society, which in common parlance is designated the fashionable world, it would seem very unnecessary to give anything like an elaborate description of the millinery establishment over which Mademoiselle Angelique ostensibly presides. Not to know her, argues oneself unknown. It would be a depth of moral degradation, like never having been at Almacks, or the Opera, or Howel and James's; things shocking even to think of, and, therefore, intolerable and insupportable to realize. Still as it is possible (for,—and we bless our lucky

stars for it,—the present is a book-buying generation) that this veritable history may find its way to Appleby or Penzance, or even here and there into some obscure market-town where the benighted and only partially-civilized natives, though plunged in Cimmerian darkness, have yet yearnings and glimmerings of desire to know something about that awful prodigy —the world of fashion; and again, as it is also possible that some two thousand years hence, and when Homer and Virgil are forgotten, our volume may be looked upon as the choicest treasure amid all the fifty million books in the New Zealand Library, it really does seem inexpedient to omit all notice of a spot so much in vogue, and having so much about it that is eminently characteristic of the spirit of the nineteenth century, as that to which the course of our story now brings us.

Leaving Grosvenor Square, then, by one of its eight outlets, (whether North, South, East, or West, is nothing to the purpose) a few minutes' walk brings you to a street consisting chiefly of private houses of the nobility and gentry, and with scarcely a single shop from its entrance to its termination. There, from

morn to dewy eve, you will see a string of carriages; there, at the door of one of the best looking houses in the street, you will see, all day long, half a score of tall footmen, magnificent in sauciness and nether garments of many-coloured plush. Knock at the door, and a porter in a handsome livery will admit you into a hall paved with marble, while a very fine gentleman indeed, with a profusion of rings and chains, will usher you up a broad, well-carpetted staircase, into what elsewhere would be the front drawing-room, but which in this mansion is the show-room. It is a fine apartment, radiant with gilding, and upholsterer's taste, and replenished with all manner of tempting extravagancies which can gladden the eye and empty the purse. Here, during any portion of a London morning, (that is, from four to seven in the evening) Mademoiselle Angelique's assistants, dressed in the extremity of the prevailing Parisian mode, may be seen receiving their orders, and showing off their new bonnets, and last-invented novelties, while in an adjoining apartment separated from the show-room by a curtain of arras, (the surface of the walls being almost covered with pier

glasses, and lighted with the greatest possible attention to becoming effect) sits Mademoiselle Angelique herself, ready to interpret the laws of fashion, and utter her oracular decisions upon feathers and flounces, during the course of that daily levee, in which (as her experience has taught her) the obsequiousness of the fine ladies, is in exact proportion to her own cool impertinence, and the airs which she gives herself. Nor was there anything unusual or extraordinary in this. Fashion must always have its arbiters, and be ruled over by tyrants of its own creation. Mademoiselle Angelique holds the sceptre now, which Kent held in a former generation, when he not only reigned supreme over our mansions, parks, and gardens, but extended his sway over the empire of dress, and sent one lady to Court in a petticoat, decorated with the five orders of Architecture, and turned another into a living bronze, bedecking her with a copper-coloured satin, and a train of gold.

Such, to a mere casual observer, would be the appearance of this establishment ; but the reader is about to be admitted behind the scenes.

It was about ten o'clock in the morning of the day succeeding that on which our tale commences, that a large, course-looking woman, haggard, and unwashed, with a dirty cap on her head, her hair *en papillotes*, and an old red silk shawl thrown over her shoulders, and partly obscuring a cotton gown of a large vulgar, tawdry pattern, entered the show-room at Mademoiselle Angelique's, with a basket of the choicest flowers from Covent Garden market. These she proceeded to substitute in the place of those which on the day preceding had filled the vases of Sevres and Dresden china with which the apartment was decorated: but the sweet smell of roses and lilies of the valley by no means over-powered the strong odour of brandy, with which the lady's own person was redolent, and indeed it rather added to, than took off, the close oppressive *fustiness* of the apartment.

Apparently the lady herself was conscious of this, for after she had completed her task, she carefully covered over with a cloth any articles that were likely to be damaged by "blacks," and then opened a window, and after inhaling a mouthful or two of

fresh air, looked up and down the street, and yawned heavily, sat herself down in an easy chair, and was asleep in a moment.

Does the reader desire to know who this person was? She was no other than Mrs. Dennis O'Rafferty, the wife of Lady Blondeville's porter, (it is scarcely necessary to say that Lady Blondeville knew nothing of her existence) and the real proprietress of that establishment, which was nominally Mademoiselle Angelique's.

It is perhaps inevitable (in the existing state of things) that great people should be in ignorance of the real characters of their servants, and of the things that go on under their own roof; and perhaps most people would be horror-struck if they were to know the amount of domestic wickedness of which their houses are the unsuspected scenes. For much of this the heads of families are no doubt responsible. If they hire servants without sufficient previous inquiry, and take no pains to ascertain for themselves that their establishments are, at least, respectably conducted in externals, they cannot but be accountable for the misconduct of their household. But

there are cases, in which it is next to impossible to guard against deception, and such a case was that of Lady Blondeville's porter.

This man, who had come to her with the highest testimonials, was an exceedingly active, steady, and intelligent servant, and in all respects (so far as his mistress knew) "a real treasure." But "real treasures" are not always what they seem to be: and this man united to his qualifications as porter, those of an accomplished smuggler, or to speak more correctly, of a receiver of smuggled goods, he being the agent to whom certain persons, engaged in a contraband trade, consigned their wares,—which being addressed to Lady Blondeville, and delivered at her house, escaped all enquiry from the police and Custom-house officers. This trade he had carried on for many years unsuspected, and with such success, that though wearing the Blondeville livery, he was almost as rich as his mistress. His wife, in her way, was as clever as himself, and though she engaged a French milliner, to give her name and talents to the establishment in ——— Street, and never appeared before the public herself, Mrs. O'Raf-

ferty was fully competent to look after her own interests, and did so most carefully and incessantly, as, perhaps, the reader will be disposed to think, when he is informed that the nap which has been described, was the first sleep she had had for three nights, and that she had never changed her clothes for double that time. It was necessary, for appearance sake, that Mademoiselle Angelique, and the women who attended in the show-room, should have all their energies about them, and consequently they were allowed two or three hours sleep nightly; but the amount of work to be got ready by the day of the Duchess of Knutsford's fête was such, that Mrs. O'Rafferty herself, and forty or fifty unhappy girls, who formed part of her establishment, had no rest whatever during the time specified, except such as could be gained for a few minutes at a time, under circumstances such as have been described.

The slumbers of Mrs. O'Rafferty were short, for ere many minutes had elapsed, some of "the young ladies of the establishment," entered the apartment, dressed out for the day, and Mrs. O'Rafferty feeling very truly that she was not fit to be seen, roused

herself, and retreated to the room from whence she came,—no luxurious chamber carpeted and gilded, adorned with costly furniture, and decorated with fresh summer flowers,—but small and dingy,—the walls and cieling almost black with dirt,—the floor almost as black as the walls, and its only furniture a long deal table, and a set of the commonest wooden stools without backs. The air was hot and stifling, and the steam of many breaths made the light, which found its way through the dim, uncleansed, window, yet more obscure.

Here were congregated the unhappy slaves (ah! what was negro slavery at its worst, compared with this?) who were toiling, unnoticed and unpitied, for the cruelest of task-masters—the fashionable world; who were sacrificing health, and spirits, and all that could make their young lives enjoyable to them, in order to earn a meagre subsistence from the grudging hands of luxury and idleness. The greater part of those assembled (and there were from twenty to thirty, in a room some fifteen feet square) were girls varying in age from seventeen to four and twenty; some few, who had but lately left their pure country

air, still retained somewhat of their natural appearance, but the majority were wan and livid, with sunken cheeks, and weak eyes, and some there were who looked as though a few days, or weeks, must see them confined to their beds, never to leave them but for that narrow home where the weary are at rest, and hear no more of the pomps and vanities of this wicked, miserable world. The greater part of these poor creatures were standing—some had stood with little respite for four and twenty hours—in order that thereby they might keep themselves awake, though they could hardly help dozing even in that unnatural position: others, completely worn out with toil, were taking half an hour's rest upon the hard floor, with a bundle of shreds for their pillow. The stronger women were sitting at their table, with hands and feet deadly cold, and their thin faces flushed, but still able to keep to their work with tolerable energy. What a contrast was there between the looks of these wasted, haggard sufferers, and the gay, bright robes their weary fingers were preparing,—between the rainbow-garments of mirth and joy, and the sad countenances from which the mirth and joy of youth

had passed away for ever! Poor things! they had had no youth, but passed at once from childhood to sickness and decrepitude.

Oh, that some of those who were to be clothed in those gay and sparkling dresses could have seen at what cost they were prepared! And yet no. Haply the sight would but have served to increase their guilt. Selfish pleasure has but few relentings in its nature.

But to return from this digression. The entrance of Mrs. O'Rafferty awoke the sleeping, and roused the dozing, and gave a spur to the labour of all.

"Really, Miss Scrimp," said she, addressing herself to a spare, hard-featured lady, with a skin of yellow vellum, like the parish-register, and of that no-particular age which nothing but the parish-register could elucidate,—"really, Miss Scrimp, if you are to be my fore-woman, you must look after my interests a little better than you are doing this morning. Why half the young ladies are asleep."

"I am very sorry, Ma'am," replied Miss Scrimp meekly and sleepily, "but the two Miss Gilberts were so worn out, they did'nt know what they were

about, and so I thought it would save time to let them have a few minutes' rest; and as for Miss Gusset, she has such a temper, I'm sure I do'nt know who is to manage her; she is quite above me, I assure you, Ma'am."

"There is no reason, Miss Scrimp, why you should stop your own work, because you have to answer a question;" observed Mrs. O'Rafferty, "but you must get on ladies, for there's a fresh order just come in, and one that I can't say no to."

The poor, weary creatures looked at one another in despair; and one delicate-looking girl burst into a fit of hysterical crying.

"It's quite impossible, Ma'am," said sturdy Miss Gusset, "that we can get through the present orders in time, unless you get more help."

"More help!" exclaimed Mrs. O'Rafferty, as if such a thing never had been heard of before,—(for she was of that class of London dress-makers who would rather work their apprentices to death than diminish their own profits by employing extra hands, how great soever the emergency)—"more help! I should like to know where I'm to get help to do

such work as this,"—holding up a very elaborate stomacher;—"hire two or three little girls from the workhouse, who can just hem a towel, I suppose?"

"No, Ma'am, but perhaps Miss Brooke isn't so ill but she could assist us for a day, and Rachel Bond, I'm sure would be happy to do all that lies in her power, and there's yards upon yards of these pearl-beads to be strung, and she could do that as well as if she could still see."

"Stuff and nonsense, Miss Gusset!" cried Mrs. O'Rafferty. "If you have nothing better to suggest than that, Ma'am, you may as well keep your breath to cool your porridge, as the saying is. Miss Siskin, I really am quite ashamed of you. I desire, Ma'am, that you don't sit there in the chimney, sobbing your heart out;" (this was addressed to the hysterical girl already spoken of,) "my goodness, gracious, me! don't you know you'll spoil that blue satin if any of your tears drop upon it? Have done, Ma'am, directly! It's quite shocking to see you expose yourself in such a way."

Such, and such like, were the scenes enacting in Mrs. O'Rafferty's work-room, while, as the morning

advanced, successive parties of young ladies of fashion, and their mothers,—refreshed with a good night's rest, eagerly anticipating the glories of the coming fête, and full of vanity, selfishness, and anxiety about their respective dresses, — thronged the levee of Mademoiselle Angelique.

It was a curious and humiliating sight to watch the little dirty tricks by which her customers endeavoured to secure the especial favour of that great lady, and not less curious to observe how steadily the shrewd milliner kept her eye on her own interests, undiverted from her purpose by any amount of fawning and servility,—never failing to take all possible advantage of her customer's foibles,— and making them, for the most part, do exactly as she pleased, in spite of themselves. And all this was effected without the least appearance of incivility, by a happy mixture of flattery and quiet impertinence, in the midst of such a Babel-scene of ordering and counter-ordering, as must have utterly bewildered any body but this French-woman ; who, nevertheless, must have thoroughly despised, and laughed in her sleeve, as the saying is, at the various awkward

methods by which her customers endeavoured to attain her good graces. She knew that she was wizened and sallow, at the very moment that Lady Toadcaster was complimenting her on her looks; and she was quite aware that the colour of her own gown was hideous (though it *was* the fashion) even while the two Miss Slabberys were in ecstacies at its beauty; but she took people in their own way,—listened to them,—expostulated,—and gained her point.

Thankfully she accepted Mrs. Sawderly's bribe of a bouquet of Cape Jasmine; but Mrs. Sawderly was not permitted to un-order her dress. The eldest Miss Longshanks protested against the trimming of her gown, but the volubility of her compliments did not prevent the milliner from shewing her, her own written directions on the subject. My Lady Camelot, (going upon the other tack, as the sailors say) declared that nothing should induce her to pay for some part of her paraphernalia which she thought too heavy, but Mademoiselle was not to be bullied.

"Sans doute," said she, shrugging her shoulders, "si Miladi le veut absolument, il faut tout reprendre: mais,—je vous dis franchement, miladi, dat we have

not de moment pour en faire des autres: je vous assure que c'est tout a fait impossible,—it is quite in the impossibilities."

"Oh, Mademoiselle," cried fat old Lady Dandlepups, in the most sympathizing tone, "I was so shocked to hear of your misfortune. Poor dear Aspasie! I was so grieved. I can feel for you. I once lost my own little angel Manchon—he ran out of my garden and was lost for ten minutes,—I was ill for a week. Oh, what a beautiful creature was Aspasie. No wonder she was stolen!"

"Ah la ravissante petite chienne!" exclaimed Mademoiselle with emotion, and if she had not been too busy, she would have sighed as though her heart were breaking.

"Dear, dear!" continued the good natured dowager, "I hope Sir Henry Pugsby, or Lady Dotterell will replace your loss. They are the only people who have the breed."

"Dey have already offered me one, miladi, but I say 'non.' Sir Pugsby send me a message. Dat very kind of him,—et a celui, miladi, qui a eu la pensée bonne et généreuse de vouloir remplacer ma chienne,

j'envoie mon plus doux souvenir; mais je reponds, 'NON.' On peut remplacer une fortune, un ami, un amant,—mais un chien;—*jamais!*"*

"Hillo! good people!" cried the masculine voice of Lady Manby Leatherset, "Can't you make a little room for me? You've had a long turn, and mine's come now, I think."

The Misses Longshanks and Lady Camelot looked ineffable disgust, but that was a matter of the most sovereign indifference to the intruder, who, elbowing Lady Dandlepups out of her place, presented herself before Mademoiselle Angelique. Lady Manby was one of those people whom every body dislikes, but nobody cares to quarrel with. Her habit was to get everything she wanted by being ruder than anybody else dared to be; and strange to say, being well married, having a good deal of cleverness, and more of impudence (not, however, unmingled with good nature), she had contrived to kick the world before her, was at the tip-top of fashion, and what in others would be called coarse, or vulgar, or unprincipled,

* We are inclined to believe that this piece of sublimity was stolen by Mademoiselle from a recent Journal des modes.

was tolerated in her as eccentric, and "only her blunt way."

"Bon jour, Mám'selle," said she, "how's my dress getting on? Isn't that a charming piece of brocade I sent you last night?"

"Comme çà, Madame, pour une fabrique Anglaise: mais-voyez-vous-on ne peut pas la mettre à côté d'une fabrique de Lyons! Bah! ces pauvres Tisserands,—ces weavers, qui demeurent dans vat you do call de Spittlefields—(quel drôle de nom ce Spittle!) jamais ils ne peuvent atteindre à notre gôut: but you English,—pardonnez Madame,—mais —you English have *no* taste. Concevez, Miladi, cette vielle Duchesse de Birmingham!* Rien de plus ravissante, vous le savez, que la jolie toque Lamballe, en velours noir, plissée sur un fond de perles à jour, ayant d'un côté un bouquet de trois roses, et destinée a être placèe très de côté sur le haut de la tête. C'est une des modes les plus élégantes qu'on puisse imaginer *pour une jeune mariée:* mais, concevez

*The author having got here altogether out of his depth, begs to acknowledge the friendly aid which has rescued him, and which, he trusts, will be found to have done justice to a subject on which he is incompetent to speak.

cette vieille Duchesse! She did appear de oder night, avec une toque semblable, une robe de velours jaunâtre, rélevée à chaque côté par une guirlande de roses,—corsage, cramoisi, drapé,—petites manches drapées et relevées au milieu, par une petite guirlande de *roses rosées*. Ah, quel horreur!"*

"Well, but about this brocade: you'll make it up for me, Mám'selle?"

"Mais, Miladi, cela ne ce peut pas; se seroit absolument contre nos rêgles. Il faut vraiment m' excuser."

"What," exclaimed Lady Manby, "do you really mean to tell me,—me, an Englishwoman, that you won't make up English goods?"

"Miladi, c'est impossible," said the milliner resolutely.

"Out upon your French impudence then! But if you won't, you won't; so I suppose you must have your own way." And her ladyship yielded the point without further discussion.

* The reader will gladly excuse the omission of the Milliner's expletives,—the oath, or the irreverent exclamation with which every five words were garnished. We cannot be true to nature at the cost of profaneness, though we are quite aware that the omission takes off from the *reality* of the dialogue.

It was, of course, very convenient for an establishment which dealt in smuggled goods to force their customers to buy them; but that Englishwomen should submit to such a rule, with the knowledge that thousands of their countrymen are starving in Spitalfields would be quite incredible, were it not notorious that half the French milliners at the West end of London not only proclaim it as a rule, but adhere to it successfully. And so the fine ladies, and their tyrants,—the French milliners—contrive between them to keep up a state of misery, unparallelled, perhaps, for its duration, in any manufacturing population.

"But if you don't choose to make up this piece of brocade, I suppose you intend to shew me something that will do as well, or better, eh, Mám'selle?'

"Ah! vraiment aujourd'hui j'ai des merveilles de tous genres:—tenez—en voici un échantillon superbe;—velours '*Benvenuto Cellini*' qui surpasse en magnificence tout ce que la ciselure a pu produire de plus curieux en relief. C'est la dernière mode. J'ai aussi des Damas de toute espèce, et particulière-

ment ceux fond rose ou bleu à fleurs d'argent;—les satins à raies de velours,—et tous les *brochés*, et tous les *velontés*, et tous les *satinés*,—les soies et gazes de toute espèce; vous n'avez qu'à choisir. Voyez donc cette robe de soie brochée, (couleur d'un crapaud qui meurt d'amour); garnie de fleurs, ce seroit parfait; et en voici qui ravissent la nature même!" exclaimed Mademoiselle Angelique, displaying a box-full of artificial flowers, "Qu'en pensez vous, Miladi?"

"What does that damask cost?" inquired Lady Manby.

"Ce n'est que deux-cents-francs l'aûne. L'anné passée cela auroit couté au moins *trois* cents: mais tout est devenu si bon-marché! Vous le croyez *cher* encore? Tenez donc, en voici une autre, à *cent* francs. C'est assez bien pour un tel prix; mais, bah! je le vois bien, cela ne vous convient pas; c'est plutôt pour la bourgeoisie. Voyez donc celle-ci, a deux-cents-cinquante,—c'est charmant,—c'est magnifique plutôt! Jusqu 'à présent, personne même ne l'a vue; ainsi, soyez persuadée, que ce sera une parure unique au bal masqué."

"You make one sadly extravagant, Mám'selle; but it certainly is very handsome." Her ladyship smiled, and so did Mademoiselle Angelique. It was evident they understood one another.

"But I want to know about the masque. Is it really decided on after all? And are we to have Alexander the Great, and Julius Cæsar, and Nebuchadnezzar, and Charlemagne, and Hector, and Judas Maccabeus, and so forth?* Good gracious, how absurd!"

Hall, in his Chronicle, gives an account of the Masque, in which the worthies above alluded to appeared. The reader who is curious in such matters. may like (by way of sample) to see how Hercules and some of his companions were habited.

"The firste persone of the firste ten was appareilled like Hercules in a shirt of silver damaske written in letters of purple about the border, "en femes et infauntes cy petit assurance," which in Englyshe is as much to saye: In women and children is little assurance: he had on his head a whode with garlande of grene damaske cutte into leaves like Wine and Hawthorne leaves, in hys hande a club covered wyth grene damaske full of prickes: the Lyons skyn aboute his backe was of cloth of gold of damaske, wrought and frysed wyth flatte gold of damaske for the heeres, and buskins of gold on his legges. Other thre were apparelled for Hector, Alexander and Julius Cæsar, in Turkey Jubbes of grene cloth of gold wrought like chamblet very richly, and on their hedes bonnettes of Turkay fashyn, of cloth of gold of Tyssue, and cloth of sylver rolled in Cypres kercheffes after the Panym fashyon, and girdles of cloth of gold wyth pendantes of the same cutt in greate flages, and every one buskins of grene damaske, and thre other lyke Princes of Jury for David, Josue, and Judas Machabeus; these thre were in longe gounes of russet Tinsel satten with great wide sleves lined with cloth of gold pendant, and tippettes of the same cloth of gold bauder-wickeise,

"Ah! oui, Miladi. Nous finissons à l'instant même la parure de Judith et d'Hélène de Troie. Cette dernière est de drap cachemire vert, brodé en soutache, la pipe en Tablier, avec des nœuds de Ruban couleur de rose. C'est si élégant!"

"Come now, I'll guess who is to be Helen. I'll bet ten to one it is....Ah, Augusta," suddenly cried her ladyship to one of a party who had just entered the room, "how d'ye do to day? We're all on the same errand, I suppose,—anxious to make as great fools of ourselves as we can, and....is it possible? Can I believe my eyes? Mr. Blunt? Uncle Wat himself in propriâ personâ? I'm delighted to see you!" ("That's a lie!" thought Uncle Wat to himself.) "When did you come to town? And being in town, who would have thought of meeting you at a milliner's?"

Uncle Wat blushed like a girl of fifteen, as he heard this loud question, which of course drew all

and whodes of the same, buskyns of grene damaske, their vysers had berdes of fyne gold: the other thre were for Christen prynces, as Charlemaine, Arthur, and Godfry de Bulloigny. These thre were apparalled in long vestures of calendred cloth of golde and purple clothe of gold broched together, with whoddes and cappes of the same, vysers and buskins of grene Damaske."

eyes upon him, and feeling—he scarce knew why,—abashed and affronted, was half-inclined to *sting*; but he checked himself, and only said, "Why should I *not* come to *your milliner's?* If I remember right, the last time I had the honour of meeting Lady Manby Leatherset, was at *my tailor's*?"

"Oh, by the bye," answered her ladyship, "I dare say you are going to take a part in the masque. Perhaps you are come here for petticoats, and mean to represent Hercules assuming the part of Omphale, with a distaff and pattens?"

"Why, no," replied Uncle Wat, who began to buckle on his armour to meet an old antagonist,—"no, your ladyship has made *that* notion quite common-place; the world would say that it was a mere plagiarism from you, who have been playing Omphale in the character of Hercules,—ever since I had the honour of knowing you."

"Well, if you won't be Omphale, take Ursa Major, it's a character that will just suit you," rejoined her ladyship between jest and earnest, and then stretching out her hand good-naturedly, took Mr. Blunt's, shook it, and left the room.

"Do look, Augusta," said Gertrude to her sister, "what a glorious brocade!" and she pointed to that which Lady Leatherset had chosen.

"Mais oui," observed Angelique, "c'est pour la robe de Miladi Leatherset."

"For *her* dress?" cried Augusta, "why, she can never pay for it."

"Cela se peut," said Mademoiselle, with a peculiar smile, "Miladi est pourtant une de nos meilleures amies."

The fact was that Lady Manby never paid for anything which she got from her milliner. She just chose what she pleased, and it was made up for her. Mademoiselle Angelique never asked for her money, and Lady Manby Leatherset advertised Mademoiselle's establishment. Her ladyship set the fashion, and those who followed it, unconsciously paid her ladyship's debts to the milliner, by the per-centage which was laid on to their several accounts. And so all parties were satisfied. Happy system, creditable alike to the employer, and the employed, and imbuing each with a favourable opinion of the other's principles!

Perhaps the reader will, all this while, have wondered as much as Lady Leatherset herself at the apparition of Uncle Wat in so unlikely a place for him to be found in, as a French milliner's. But he did not go there without an object. He, like many others, had been deeply shocked at the statements which had recently been brought before the public, with respect to the treatment of the young persons employed by the London milliners. And when he found that neither Lady Blondeville, nor his nieces, had taken any particular interest about the orphan girl whom he had sent up from Wroxton, he resolved that not another day should go over his head, without his both seeing Lucy Brooke, and judging for himself as to whether her health was suffering by her profession or no. Accordingly, the next morning, when his nieces expressed their intention of going to Mademoiselle Angelique's, he immediately proposed to accompany them, and made his proposition in such a manner that it could not be declined, however much Augusta wished to do so.

Upon entering the room, however, Uncle Wat certainly felt himself out of his element, and Lady

Leatherset's remark fairly abashed him, nor was he at all re-assured by making the discovery that several of the ladies were looking at him, with very much of the same sort of expression which they might have exhibited had they found him lurking behind a door, or hidden under a bed. He began to think he had got into a very awkward predicament, and Ovid's metamorphoses, and the fate of Actæon, rushed unbidden on his mind.

At length one of Mademoiselle Angelique's satellites approached him, and asked him whether he would not like to go into the waiting-room below.

Uncle Wat would have liked it exceedingly, but everything he saw disgusted him so much that he did not choose to leave his nieces without some chaperon, and besides, he wanted to know something about Lucy Brooke. So he declined the lady's offer, and said that he would wait till Miss Blondeville was ready: "unless, indeed," he added, "I could speak to Miss Brooke for a minute or two."

"Sir! speak! Miss Brooke!" exclaimed Miss Thyrza Fisk, with an indignant toss of her head. "Well! really this beats anything!" And off she

bounded to Mademoiselle Angelique, shaking her long ringlets in an ecstacy of virtuous agitation. Mademoiselle Angelique either had not, or would not understand that Mr. Blunt was escorting the Blondevilles.

"Pardonnez moi, Monsieur," she said, as soon as she had made her way towards him, "but we never admit de gentlemans dans cet appartement. En verité, Monsieur, cela ne se peut pas: c'est contre les bienséances: it is not in the decorums."

"I wish you'd be kind enough to speak English, Ma'am."

"Sare, you do fraighten de ladies: vill you go down de stairs?"

"Frighten the ladies? how should I frighten the ladies? Nonsense. I want to see Miss Brooke, Miss Lucy Brooke: she works for you, don't she?"

"Sare .... mais par example!.... c'est inouï! ....Monsieur, ma maison est de la première réputation.* Allez-vous-en, je vous en príe, Monsieur. I must have you quite go. Oui, absolument!"

* This assertion may suffice to hint to the reader the horrible fact, (which for obvious reasons cannot be further dwelt on here,) that it appears there are millinery establishments, in the metropolis, in which the unhappy workwomen are so ill-paid, that they are *driven* to support themselves by the wages of a life of sin.

"But can I see Miss Brooke, or no?"

"No, Sare, I say already, vonce, twice, no, you cannot. Miss Brooke is not here, and if she were you could not."

"But where is she?"

"I cannot tell you, Sare: and you really must go down stairs;—nous sommes bien pressées, et vous voyez, Monsieur, que vous attirez tous les regards!"

"What is the matter, Uncle?" inquired Gertrude Blondeville, who had at length perceived what was going on. Mademoiselle apologized, and explained. She did not know the gentleman, she said; but, perhaps, Miss Gertrude would accompany her uncle down stairs, and Miss Blondeville could join them when she was ready. And Mademoiselle, all smiles and civility, accompanied them to the head of the stairs. But here Uncle Wat made a stand, and was proceeding to explain to the milliner, who in her turn appeared to be uneasy, why he wanted to see Lucy Brooke, when all of a sudden there was heard a violent scream in an inner room; it was repeated again and again in half a dozen different voices,—a door was suddenly flung open, and out burst the

whole troop of young women employed in the house, —all save one or two whose hysterical cries were heard in the distance.

"Ah! A....h! A.....h!" exclaimed Mademoiselle, each interjection increasing in terror, "Qu'est-ce-que c'est donc?"

"Oh the chimney! the chimney!" cried three or four voices at once. "It came down the chimney, and it has killed Miss Siskin, I know it has."

"What has killed Miss Siskin?" cried Uncle Wat; and before Mademoiselle Angelique could stop him, he had hurried into the close, stifling work-room.

Curious was the sight which presented itself to his view. In front of the empty fire-place lay the unfortunate Miss Siskin,—by no means killed, as a very potent fit of hysterics very evidently shewed— but almost covered with soot; while near her, a jack-daw, in the agonies of death, was flapping its wet (the morning had been showery), sooty wings, over a dress of sky-blue satin and silver.

Here was the whole cause of alarm; the poor workwomen, at once weary and excited, their nerves

unstrung, and their spirits depressed by the sleepless labours of three days and nights, had been seized with a panic, at the not very unusual (in London) circumstance of a jackdaw coming down the chimney. While Miss Siskin was engaged, as the reader knows, at that corner of the room, a strange noise was heard above. This was followed in a moment by a heavy fall of soot, from the midst of which emerged the unlucky bird, which, wheeling round the room, dashed against a looking-glass, and, by the same process, broke the glass, and gave itself its own death-blow.

"O merciful me!" exclaimed Miss Gomeril, the apprentice, through her tears, "I thought it was a spirit."

"It's a warning, I'm positive," cried Miss Skunk, a young lady in whose phrenological developement, the love of the marvellous probably formed a conspicuous bump.

Meanwhile Uncle Wat approached, and endeavoured to assist the palpitating Siskin, who rewarded his attentions by biting his finger. This, of course, created a momentary pause in his exertions, and then

Mademoiselle Angelique, who, (after invoking half the saints in the calendar) was only now beginning to recover her scattered senses, ventured to approach the fire-place; and while Miss Scrimp laid hold of the dying jackdaw, held up, what was a sadder sight to her, than fifty apprentices in fits would have been,—the blood-besprinkled, soot-bespattered dress,—and in a piteous tone exclaimed to Gertrude Blondeville, "Ah! Mademoiselle! que faire? .... Miséricorde! ....Miséricorde!....Voila vôtre robe entièrement gatée!....C'est bien la vôtre!"

"Oh, never mind my gown," replied Gertrude good-naturedly, "let us bring this poor young woman to herself, before we think of that."

"Ah! la misérable!" exclaimed the Frenchwoman, "J'enrage! C'est une négligence qu'on ne sauroit pardonner!—Mais,—c'est épouvantable! c'est inoui! ....Veuillez bien passer dans l'autre appartement, ma chère demoiselle," added she, turning to Miss Blondeville, "Ne vous inquiétez pas: elle n'a que les vapeurs. On aura bien soin d'elle....Miss Siskin, levez vous-donc; vous me faites rougir. Miss Scrimp, faites appeler tout de suite Madame O'Rafferty.—Ah! ce maudit oiseau."

Meanwhile Uncle Wat had retreated out of the room, and looking round at the young women, who were crowded at its entrance, said, "What a horrible, suffocating den that is! I hope it is not your only work-room."

"Indeed it is, Sir," answered Miss Gusset, "and, except for our meals, we have none of us left it for three days and nights."

"Do you mean you have all slept there? Impossible."

"We have been working night and day, Sir," was the reply, "it's the Duchess of Knutsford's fête, Sir, to-morrow."

Mr. Blunt was almost too shocked to speak. "I have heard and read of such things," he said, "but unless I had seen it, and breathed in it, I could not have believed that such a place existed. Oh! I am much to blame. Pray, young women, can you, any of you tell me where one Lucy Brooke is?—I do not see her among you."

"She has not been here these three months," answered Gusset, "her health is quite broken, I'm afraid, Sir."

"Not here, and Lady Blondeville not apprized of her removal? This is indeed too bad. Where is she?"

"She is with some friends at Chelsea,—at Mrs. Bond's, 7, Garden Row; she's a laundress, Sir."

"What is the matter with her?" asked Mr. Blunt.

"She has never been well since the ball at the Palace, last year. It was a hard time for us all, and she was always rather delicate; but she didn't become very bad till the end of the winter. It's something of a decline, I believe."

"But why was not Lady Blondeville told of this?"

Nobody could answer the question. So Uncle Wat sent for Mademoiselle Angelique. "I find," said he, with great sternness of manner, "that Miss Brooke has left your house, and is ill at Chelsea, why did you not apprise Lady Blondeville?"

Mademoiselle cast a glance of fury at the workwomen, as much as to say, that she would make them pay for having betrayed her, and then answered, that she had taken for granted that Miss Brooke had, herself, made Lady Blondeville acquainted with

the state of her health. But it was evident from her confused manner that the impudent French-woman was telling a lie.

"Well," said Mr. Blunt bitterly, "be matters as bad as they may, there is at least one comfort, the poor girl is no longer under this roof. I'm sure of this, if there be a hell upon earth, it is to be found in the *ill-regulated* work-room, of a fashionable milliner."

"You may well say that, Sir," answered more than one hollow, feeble voice, which in its tone betrayed the extremity of suffering and privation. They were sounds which haunted the kind-hearted old man for days afterwards.

He then called his nieces to him, and said he could stay no longer; and when both expressed their readiness to return home, he hastened with them into the carriage. It seemed to be a relief to him to be no longer under a roof, which he felt to be the home of cruelty and worldliness. And as he sat silent and unhappy, the words of the Psalmist presented themselves to his mind, and he thought of their awful appropriateness to the scene in which he had been engaged:—

"The ungodly *for his own lust* doth persecute the poor. The ungodly is so proud that he careth not for God: neither is God in all his thoughts.—He hath said in his heart, Tush, God hath forgotten: He hideth away his face, and He will never see it. Arise, O Lord God, and lift up Thine hand: forget not the poor."

"The Lord will be a defence for the oppressed: even a refuge in due time of trouble.—For *when He maketh inquisition for blood He remembereth them:* and forgetteth not the complaint of the poor.—The wicked shall be turned into hell, and *all the people that forget God.* For the poor shall not alway be forgotten: the patient abiding of the meek shall not perish for ever!"

CHAPTER V.

BETTER LATE THAN NEVER.

"————————Why is your cheek so pale?
How chance the roses there do fade so fast?"
MIDSUMMER-NIGHT'S DREAM.

THE Reader who expects to find a heroine in Lucy Brooke will be wofully disappointed. She was nothing of the kind:—merely a quiet, industrious, well-disposed girl, with nothing remarkable about her, either in appearance or intellect. She was a fair average sample of her kind; nothing more; a respectable young person, such as is to be found by the dozen in every extensive millinery establishment.

We are not claiming sympathy for an *individual*, but for a *race*; and to that sympathy, the most ordinary and unattractive girl, whose health has been

broken by incessant toil, and whose life will be required hereafter of those who have contributed to sacrifice it, has as great a claim as the cleverest, or most interesting member of her profession. We should rather injure than aid a good cause, were we to work on the Reader's feelings, by setting before him some isolated case of hard-heartedness on the one hand, and high perfection on the other, such as perhaps occurs once in ten thousand times. The instance would be looked on as an extreme one, the picture would be criticised as too highly coloured, the statement would be represented as exaggerated, and so fail of exciting attention.—Our purpose all along has been to pourtray a common class of people, and the common tone of feeling which prevails among them. We have wholly failed in our sketch of Lady Blondeville and her daughters, unless the Reader can recall very many such persons among his acquaintance in the higher ranks; and Uncle Wat's protegeè has no other claims on our pity, than those which might be made by many hundreds (to name no larger number) of the fifteen thousand persons, who, in the metropolis alone, are supposed to gain

a subsistence by dress-making.—Such cases are to be met with every day, and at every turn.

Lucy Brooke was the daughter of a late gardener at Wroxton Court. This man had lived with Mr. Blunt many years, and therefore, (although he died suddenly) it might have been expected that he would have been able to leave some provision for his family. His wife, however, was a bad manager,—one of those helpless, indolent dawdles that are fit to be nothing but fine ladies,—and the result was, that she and two children were left almost penniless. Mr. Blunt's ready charity supported them for three or four years, at the end of which time Mrs. Brooke, and a boy of fifteen,—(the only son) were both dead, and Lucy was left an orphan, without a relation in the world. By Mr. Blunt's kindness the little girl (she was then about ten years old) was put to school; there she continued for four years; by her own desire served an apprenticeship of two years to a country-milliner, residing in the neighbourhood of Wroxton; and then, through Lady Blondeville's influence, was admitted as an "improver," into

Mademoiselle Angelique's establishment. She was, as has been already said, an industrious, well-behaved girl, very grateful to her benefactor, with a good deal of independence of character, and a delicate shrinking from being burdensome to those from whom she had received so much kindness.

The carriage which was conveying Mr. Blunt and his nieces, had almost reached Belgrave Square before any of them spoke. Uncle Wat was reproaching himself bitterly for not having made himself personally acquainted with the interior of the Frenchwoman's establishment, before he had intrusted his poor orphan to its tender mercies, and so he sat silent and pre-occupied. Miss Blondeville, though she hardly knew why, felt herself in disgrace, and was too much afraid of her uncle to interrupt his reverie, more especially as she could not foresee what turn the conversation would take. Gertrude was the only person who was not ill at ease, for her conscience was approving what she had done, and that supported her under what, only an hour before, would have been a most severe disappointment;—for she had

relinquished her intention of appearing at the Field of Cloth of Gold. While Mr. Blunt was making his inquiries at the door of the work-room about Lucy Brooke, Gertrude had taken the opportunity of asking Mademoiselle Angelique what she proposed to do with respect to the sky-blue satin and silver dress which the jackdaw had spoiled. The milliner said that of course the loss must fall upon her, but that Gertrude should not be disappointed: she was a ready-money customer, and the dress should be delivered in time.

"Who was to make it up?" asked Gertrude.

"The young people in the house," replied the the Frenchwoman.

"No, Mademoiselle," answered Gertrude. "I would not, under the circumstances with which accident has made me acquainted to day, have a dress made up by those poor young women,—no, not for all the wealth of London. My dress was to have cost twenty pounds. I will give you five to be off the bargain. Will you accept the offer?"

Mademoiselle was too glad to do so; Gertrude paid the five sovereigns down, and left the house

happier than she had entered it, for the conversation of the preceding evening had by no means passed from her mind.

When the carriage drew up before Lady Blondeville's door, Mr. Blunt said, "If you don't want the carriage, it will save time if it conveys me to this Mrs. Bond's. I can't lose a moment in looking after poor Lucy."

"By all means," replied Augusta; not sorry, as she thought, to get rid of her Uncle, and a disagreeable subject together: but great was her vexation, when she heard Gertrude say, "May I come with you, dear Uncle?"

"Certainly," said Mr. Blunt encouragingly. "What will you do, Augusta?" he added.

There was nothing for it but to submit with a good grace, and Augusta had been too well disciplined in worldly ways to betray herself; she therefore begged to be of the party.

"Where to?" asked the footman, when he found that the party was not entering the house.

"To No. 7, Garden Row, Chelsea," replied Mr. Blunt.

The footman stared, but repeated the direction to the coachman. That functionary knew nothing of the locality.

"No doubt Dennis knows," observed Miss Blondeville.

Mr. Blunt called him, and inquired. The porter was very much confused, and at first said that he did not know. Then, apparently recollecting himself, he said, "it was a very out of the way place; he did not think a carriage could get there. Could not he go for Mr. Blunt?"

"No," answered Mr. Blunt sternly, for he did not like the man's manner. So Dennis gave the proper directions to the coachman, and the carriage was once more in motion. The drive was a long one, through streets unknown to the inmates of the carriage, and at length, after several inquiries, when the coachman knew his road no longer, the party were obliged to descend from their vehicle, and after passing through a narrow lane, at the back of some nursery-gardens, they found themselves before a row of tidy-looking houses, with a few shadowy limes in front of them, and pleasant green fields, in their rear.

They soon discovered the house for which they were in search, and were admitted by an old lady, with a good-humoured, fresh-coloured, happy face, such as is oftener seen in a country village, than in smoky, unhealthy London.

"Am I speaking to Mrs. Bond?" asked Mr. Blunt.

"Yes, Sir: but won't you and the ladies come in and be seated? I'm sorry you find us rather in confusion, but we have a heavy wash for a family that's just going out of town," observed Mrs. Bond, looking down upon her apron with a somewhat discomfited glance, though there was nothing about the apron, or the house, that required the apology.

"Why, you have got quite a pleasant residence," said Mr. Blunt, as he entered the parlour, "it seems admirably suited for one of your profession."

"That's what all my lady-customers say, who do me the honour of coming here. Mrs. Fowler of Baker Street,—perhaps you know her, Sir,—I wash for her and her ten young ladies,—told me so last week. Says she to me, says she, 'Mrs. Bond, I always think Baker Street a fine air, but this is as

fine as the Malvern Hills.' Very kind spoken lady, Mrs. Fowler, Sir, I assure you, and she makes a deal of work for our tubs."

"I don't doubt it, Mrs. Bond, and if I were a resident in London, which I am not, I should like to send my own shirts and stockings to your wash-house. But my visit is not so much to you, Madam, as to a young person who I understand is staying with you,—Lucy Brooke."

"Ah, poor thing! she's here, sure enough, and I'm very glad to do all I can for her. The most I can do is little, compared with what she did for my dear blind child." And the old woman's eyes filled with tears as she spoke.

"Your daughter is blind?" asked Augusta Blondeville kindly.

"Yes, Ma'am, quite dark. It's a terrible misfortune, but we must submit. It's God's sending, I know, and it is all for the best; but what goes so deep with me is, that I feel I must always reproach myself for it. If I had not been so over anxious to get Rachel on in the world, it never would have happened."

"Aye, how so?" asked Uncle Wat.

"Why, Sir, some ladies,—very old customers of mine, who knew me before I was married, the Miss Marchmonts, when they found that Rachel wanted to be a dress-maker, took a deal of pains,—stirred heaven and earth, as one may say, to get her placed in Madam Angelique's establishment, in ——— Street.

"The Milliner's?" asked Uncle Wat, wishing to lead her on.

"Yes, Sir. Oh! its a dreadful place, that house.* I don't mean that it's worse than many others, but I'm sure, if parents knew what the rules and hours in these houses of business are, they would never let their girls be milliners."

"But, how came your daughter to go blind?" asked Gertrude.

* "I talked the other day," writes a kind friend, in a recent letter, "with a person who had been, for two years, apprenticed, (or rather, I should say, *incarcerated*) in one of these dens. She told me that nothing,—no, not even the sitting up night after night, was so bad as the intense suffering caused by the smell, heat, and glare of the gas-lights, streaming just above the poor creatures' heads; and she assured me that after these lamps were lit in the evening a great many of the girls, (especially new-comers) almost invariably fainted away."

"It was with the last Royal mourning, Ma'am. Madam Angelique works a great deal for the Court, and ladies of the first fashion, and there were so many dresses to be made, that the young women were kept at their needles night and day."

"Do you mean that working at black is worse for the eyes than any other colour?" asked Miss Blondeville.

"So the Surgeon,—the oculist, I think they call him,—told my daughter."*

* John Dalrymple, Esq., assistant-surgeon, Royal London Ophthalmic Hospital, after giving a minute account of the manner in which the general health of great numbers of these young people becomes utterly destroyed, and more especially, in which all forms of ocular disease are induced, "from simple irritation to complete blindness," adds the following illustration: "A delicate and beautiful young woman, an orphan, applied at the hospital for very defective vision, and her symptoms were precisely as just described. Upon inquiry, it was ascertained that she had been apprenticed to a milliner, and was in her last year of indentureship. Her working hours were eighteen in the day, occasionally even more; her meals snatched with scarcely an interval of a few minutes from work, and her general health was evidently assuming a tendency to consumption. An appeal was made, by my directions, to her mistress, for relaxation; but the reply was, that in this last year of her apprenticeship her labours had become valuable, and that her mistress was entitled to them, as recompense for teaching. Subsequently, a threat of appeal to the Lord Mayor, and a belief that a continuation of the occupation would soon render the apprentice incapable of labour, induced the mistress to cancel the indentures, and the victim was saved."

"How very shocking," exclaimed Gertrude. "But did she go blind all at once?"

"No, Ma'am; at first her eyes were only weak; but in a while she began to see things like little midges betwixt her and the light; and then, as she got worse, there were sparks and flashes of light before her eyes, and appearances of all kind of beautiful colours, red, and blue, and yellow; but they were the last

Frederick Tyrrell, Esq., surgeon to the London Ophthalmic Hospital, and to St. Thomas's Hospital, concludes a melancholy description of the progressive stages, by which, complete disorganization of the eyes, and consequent, total loss of vision, take place in many of these young women, as the result of their excessive labour, with the following example: "A fair and delicate girl, about seventeen years of age, was brought to witness, in consequence of total loss of vision. She had experienced the train of symptoms which have been detailed, to the fullest extent. On examination, both eyes were found disorganized, and recovery, therefore, was hopeless. She had been an apprentice as a dress-maker, at the West end of the town; and some time before her vision became affected, her general health had been materially deranged, from too close confinement and excessive work. The immediate cause of the disease in the eyes was excessive and continued application to making mourning. She stated that she had been compelled to remain without changing her dress for nine days and nights consecutively; that during this period she had been permitted only occasionally to rest on a mattress, placed on the floor, for an hour or two at a time; and that her meals were placed at her side, cut up, so that as little time as possible should be spent in their consumption. Witness regrets that he did not, in this, and a few other cases, nearly as flagrant and distressing, induce the sufferers to appeal to a jury for compensation."—*Evidence collected by Mr. Grainger.*

colours she was ever to see,—she soon became quite dark."

"And how was Lucy Brooke of service to her?" asked Mr. Blunt.

"She shall tell you herself, Sir," replied the mother. "Here, Rachel, come down stairs, you're wanted."

A young woman about twenty years of age entered the little parlour.

"Rachel," said her mother, "here's a gentleman here, a friend of our Lucy's. He wants to know what she did for you, when you were going blind."

Rachel curtsied, and then went on to speak of Lucy Brooke with deep affection, and to say that she used to take her work for her, by sitting up extra hours; and that, when her eyes were suffering, she lightened her labours, as much as was possible, by similar contrivances.

"I fear dress-making is a very trying profession," said Uncle Wat.

"Perhaps, I am not a fair judge, Sir," replied Rachel, "for it has made me blind; but this I must say, that I do not think many *men* could stand the

work. Often eighteen, or twenty hours out of the twenty-four, were we kept at our needles—and sometimes, in the height of the season, we never went to bed for nights together. We had not time allowed us for our meals, — indeed, it was often cut up ready, and set by us at the work-table; and at Mademoiselle Angelique's, I must say, we had not enough to eat, and what we had was very unwholesome."*

"But did you make no complaint?"

"Ah, Sir, what good would have come of complaining? We should have been turned out of doors without a character, at a moment's warning; and some, perhaps, would have been cut off from their only means of subsistence."†

"And pray, what are you doing now?" asked Mr. Blunt.

"I live with my mother, Sir; and a lady, one of our kind customers, is trying to teach me music. She thinks I may get a livelihood that way."

"Ha!" said Uncle Wat, reflectingly, and as if some bright thought had come into his mind. "Well,

* See Appendix A. † See Appendix B.

go on, and take pains, and you will not want friends, I am sure."

Rachel curtsied, and was feeling her way to the door, apparently unconscious of the presence of two of the three visitors, for as yet neither Augusta nor Gertrude had spoken: but Uncle Wat stopped her by saying,—"I fear I must detain you a few moments longer. Can I see Lucy Brooke? Is she at home?"

"Ah, poor thing," exclaimed Mrs. Bond, "she seldom goes out now: her cough is sadly troublesome. She went up stairs to lie down just before you came in, Sir."

"Pray, go to her, and tell her that an old friend from Wroxton has called, and would be glad to see her." Mrs. Bond left the room.

"And have not I to thank you, my good young woman," said Mr. Blunt, addressing himself to Rachel, "for having taken your friend Lucy to your own home, when those, who ought to have attended to her, had quite neglected her?"

Rachel blushed, and then said, "Oh, Sir, when she first came, it was only for a few days' change of air, at the beginning of her illness, but when she grew

worse, and it was clear she could not go back to Mademoiselle Angelique's, and she heard nothing from Lady Blondeville, mother said it would be a great pleasure, and the least we could do, to shew what kindness we could to one who had been so kind to me."

"And pray how long has poor Lucy been in declining health? when she left Wroxton, she was well enough."

"Why, Sir, it was just after the Ball at the Palace last year, that she was taken ill. I believe that everybody almost at Mademoiselle Angelique's was knocked up with that; but it so happened that Lucy had a great deal of extra-work thrown on her, just at the time she was ill with the influenza; and the being kept out of bed night after night, made matters worse, and threw it upon her lungs; and what was worse than all, when the doctor said she must go to bed, and stay there, Mademoiselle Angelique forbade him the house altogether."*

"What a fiend!" exclaimed Mr. Blunt with indignation. "But you have not explained to me

* See evidence "No. 529. Miss ———" in Appendix B. of this volume.

about the extra-hours. Why had Lucy more thrown on her than others?"

"Sir, there was a young lady who only gave a day's notice for a dress, which she insisted on having ready for the ball. It was a very troublesome dress to make, but as it was one that would bear a large profit being put upon it, and the lady pays ready-money, Mademoiselle took the order, though she had refused many others from the impossibility of getting them finished. And so Lucy, who, on account of her illness, was to have gone to bed that night, was forced to sit up the whole night through. There was no other chance of getting the work done."

"But why was Lucy Brooke made the victim?"

"Because, Sir, the order came from one of her own friends. Lady Blondeville obtained her the situation at Mademoiselle Angelique's, and this dress was for her ladyship's daughter, Miss Blondeville."

It was even so. The very dress, the successful acquisition of which, in time for the Royal ball, had been made a subject of boasting by Augusta only four and twenty hours before, was now shewn to

have been prepared under circumstances, the very thought of which would be agony to any well-regulated mind. Yesterday, Augusta had only thought of her own cleverness in attaining her object, and, indifferent to the disappointments of others, had made a parade of her proficiency in the arts of feminine diplomacy: to-day she had learned the secret of her success. Well and wisely had her uncle spoken, when he had said, that more things, beside money, went to make up the *cost* of fashionable pleasure!

That the feelings of Augusta were deeply shocked, that she felt very guilty, and very miserable, when she heard the statement of Rachel Bond, is what we will not, what we dare not deny. She was still very young, and had not wholly lost, (despite of the selfish world's corrupting influence) the tenderness, or conscientiousness of childhood. Perhaps she might have been apathetic, had a greater distance of time elapsed, or her personal knowledge of the sufferer been less, but now she was brought so suddenly in contact with the effects of her sin, that there was no escape; there were neither excuses nor evasions at

hand, to deaden the sound of that still small voice which WOULD make itself heard. And the result was that Augusta Blondeville was completely overwhelmed with shame and remorse.

What stern remark her uncle might have addressed to her, in the depth of his indignation, cannot be told, for, as his eye was kindling, and his countenance assumed that hard, iron-like expression, which those who knew him best most dreaded, the door opened, and the object of this painful conversation entered the room, with slow and feeble step.

She started so much, however, on seeing her visitors, that Gertrude, who had hitherto sat fixed in her chair almost without the power of motion, (so shocked and distressed was she at all she had heard) rose hastily to support her, and it was only when the invalid mentioned her name, and inquired after Lady Blondeville, that blind Rachel became aware that she had spoken in the presence of the very persons before whom she would have most wished to remain silent, and was, consequently, in her turn overwhelmed with confusion.

Meanwhile, Mr. Blunt approached the sufferer,

and taking her hand, looked anxiously in her face, as he led her to a chair. Alas! there was no need for much scrutiny. Consumption is a disease which stamps its name but too legibly on the brows of its victims, and there could not be a moment's doubt on the part of any one who gazed on Lucy Brooke, that ere long she was destined to be its prey. The bright eye, and hectic flush, and sunken cheek, and withered lip, and thin, transparent hands, and stooping gait, would have betrayed the nature of the complaint at once, even had there been no cough to proclaim it.

"I am grieved to find you thus, Lucy," said her kind friend.

"I am better than I have been, Sir," she replied, "and I hope, please God, I shall get about again, as summer advances."

"But how has it happened, Lucy, that you forgot your old friends at Wroxton? Why did you never let even Lady Blondeville know that you were ill?"

"I did, Sir," was the reply.

"I can assure you, Lucy, none of us had a notion of it, till this morning," said Miss Blondeville. "When did you apprise my mother of it?"

"Months ago, Ma'am;" replied Lucy. "I called in September last, and three or four times since, in Belgrave Square. Mr. Dennis told me each time that her ladyship was engaged, but that he would deliver my message."

"I am confident," observed Gertrude, "that he never did deliver it."

"But why did you not write direct to me, or my housekeeper?" asked Uncle Wat.

"I left a letter, on two occasions, in Mr. Dennis's hands, and he promised to forward them."

"They have never been received, I can answer for it. This must be inquired into," said Mr. Blunt. And it was inquired into, and the discovery was ultimately made, that Mrs. O'Rafferty, in the fear of losing Lady Blondeville's custom, if the cause of Lucy Brooke's illness should be found out, had actually persuaded her husband, both to abstain from delivering Lucy's messages, and to destroy her letters. Such are the occasional proceedings of "treasures of servants" in fashionable families! We are happy to be able to add, that, on learning the facts of the case, Lady Blondeville discharged her porter instantly.

"Well, Lucy," continued Mr. Blunt, "I must hear what the doctor says about you, for now that I have found you at last, I must not let you be any longer a burden to your kind friends here. Do you think you could bear a journey to Wroxton?"

The poor girl's face lightened up, as she said "she thought it would cure her at once."

Uncle Wat sighed involuntarily, but added cheerfully, "But, Lucy, you must try and persuade Mrs. Bond to allow your friend Rachel to accompany you; we will take all possible care of her."

The surgeon was consulted. Mrs. Bond was propitious; and by an early train on the following morning, Lucy Brooke, accompanied by Mr. Blunt himself, and her friend Rachel, set forth on her return to the home of her childhood,—there to be affectionately tended,—and there, as seemed but too likely, *to die*.

CHAPTER VI.

ALL IS NOT GOLD THAT GLITTERS.

"The gods are just, and of our pleasant vices
Make instruments to scourge us."

KING LEAR.

THE day, on the morning of which Mr. Blunt returned to Wroxton, was that of the Duchess of Knutsford's fête,—the day to which Augusta Blondeville, and her sister, had looked forward with such eager expectation. But how different, when the day arrived, were their actual, from their anticipated feelings! Thus is it ever with worldly hopes and pleasures; the prospect is everything, fruition nothing; there is in the distance, an abundance of that which is alluring, but, when we would draw nigh, it fares with us as with the thirsty pilgrim, whom the still-retreating mirage wears out with

disappointment, or as with those who have sought to refresh themselves with the Dead-Sea fruit, and have found that a fair outside is but the covering of bitterness and ashes. And even where from novelty, or the light-heartedness of youth, enjoyment of the world's pleasures, is, so long as it lasts, and before speedy satiety comes on, real, what has it in it which will be sweet in after-recollection, when this world and its pomps are passing away? The rose preserves its delicate and goodly scent long after it is withered, but the gaudy flower of earthly vanity leaves no such memorial behind it. It blooms to day, and "to-morrow is cast into the oven," or, when it has shed its leaves, is trampled under foot and forgotten. How far happier,—aye, even in its severity, its strictness, its fasts and vigils, its daily cross, its habitual, systematic self-discipline, and self-denial—is the Church's life of calm, and pure, and peaceful, (because holy) course; that life which She insures to those who follow Her ordinances with self-surrender and obedient minds; wherein the quiet discharge of daily duties brings its own reward, and the daily round of prayer and praise, and the exercise of

Christian love, and the realising of the world unseen, are sweeter and more precious, than all the dazzle, and glare, and splendour, of all that is best in man's estimation.

But these are thoughts and feelings of which as yet Augusta and Gertrude knew nothing. Already, indeed, both had found that there is a bitter drop in the cup of pleasure, but neither had thought of seeking a purer draught elsewhere. Habit, and worldly custom were as a wall to them on the right hand, and on the left, and as yet they understood not that there was danger on the broad and easy road.

Still, as has been said, when the morning of the fête arrived, it found them viewing it with feelings, to which, but a few days before, both were strangers. Gertrude, indeed, was a little vexed that her mother had pronounced her surrender of her dress, and relinquishment of the ball, "Quixotic," and a "being quite unlike anybody else," but still, on the whole, she knew she had done right, and to her amazement she discovered that what, a week ago, would have appeared an overwhelming disappointment, in reality hardly deserved the name. Later in the day when

she saw her mother's and sister's gorgeous dresses, and heard some details of the astonishing magnificence of the preparations, she had a pang or two; but they were wonderfully allayed, when she had written a note to Miss Parker, (the district Visitor, of whom mention was made in a former chapter) and inclosed five of her remaining fifteen pounds, for the use of widow Wade, and such other objects of charity as Miss Parker might select.

Augusta, on the other hand, had a weight of lead about her heart, which she was wholly unable to shake off: and, perhaps, the unexpected kindness of her uncle to her, had rather increased than diminished the feeling. She expected that he would have reproached her bitterly, as the author and cause of Lucy Brooke's declining health; but he did nothing of the kind. Perhaps, he thought the matter so bad that he would not trust himself to speak of it; perhaps, he believed from what he saw, that the events of yesterday were making a permanent impression on his niece,—that "the iron had entered into her soul," and he considered, may be, that it was best to leave it there to rankle for a while, without relief, in

order that she might have time to reflect upon what she had to answer for. Be this as it may, he treated her as though he was sorry for her, and as if he desired, at some future opportunity, to work on her affections rather than on her fears; and so the only allusion he made to the events of the day, was when he desired Gertrude to look out for a music-master who could play well upon the organ.

"We want an organist at Wroxton sadly," said he, ("and an organ too," he might have added;) "and I should like to give this Rachel Bond an offer of the situation. I could make it a maintenance for her, and she seems a decent, tidy girl."

It was with a heavy heart that Augusta went up-stairs that night to dress. The weight that had oppressed her conscience all the day had not been lightened. And lightened it could not be; but excitement might teach her to forget it. And so it was. And when she stood before her looking-glass, almost dazzled with the lustre of her richly-ornamented dress, her dark hair confined with a coronal of diamonds, her cheeks flushed with the conscious-

ness of her radiant beauty, her eye sparkling with satisfaction, in proud, but secret confidence of her pre-eminence over her rival, Adela Boucheret, she ceased to think of the pale victim of consumption, whose face had haunted her since yesterday.

The intense interest which the Duchess of Knutsford's fête had excited among the upper ranks of London society had extended itself to the lower, and crowds were assembled in all the avenues of approach to Knutsford House, long before the time when the evening toils of fashionable life begin. Augusta and her mother left Belgrave Square in time, as they hoped, to escape the long haltings and delays, which they well knew must be the fate of those who fell into the string of carriages at a later period of the night: but they soon found that others were acting upon the same calculation, and they had, consequently, hardly reached Hyde Park Corner before they came to a sudden stop, and ascertained that, for the next hour, they were likely to move forward at the rate of about ten yards per minute, so dense was the crowd, and so long the line of vehicles conveying the visitors to "The Field of Cloth of Gold."

It was a fine summer's evening, and the moon shone brightly, and the mob was in high good-humour, so that, on the whole, the imprisonment was not very intolerable to persons habituated to prefer London to the country, and to go out for amusement at hours when the reasonable portion of mankind go to bed. Beasts of prey, burglars, and ladies of fashion are the only three kinds of nocti-vagous mammalia.

The mob, as has been said, was in high good-humour, and to any one who was walking the streets that night it must have afforded much amusement to listen to their shrewd remarks,—often conveyed in the most plain-spoken and homely terms—upon the dresses and persons of the half-revealed inmates of the carriages. And if to many a youthful beauty, was paid a homage more precious, because, less expected, than that which awaited her in the ball-room, many a rouged and wrinkled dowager, and many an effeminate dandy heard wholesome truths which made their ears tingle, and threw their vanity into the most excruciating tortures.

This same freedom of speech—sadly abused as it

is among us,—is sometimes, it must be confessed, a fine thing in its way; and to gentlemen and ladies who may be in a dangerous condition from a plethora of self-satisfaction, there is nothing more bracing, aye, and searching too, than the shock of that sort of moral shower-bath, which consists in exposure to the remarks and criticisms of a London mob. It has all the advantages of the pillory without the accompaniment of its odorous inconveniences,—the benefits of the cold-water-system without its perils. If you are in the habit of seeing yourself pretty much as others see you, 'tis ten to one that you escape unscathed; but if you do happen unluckily to be purblind with vanity and self-conceit,—why, good luck to you! and may you have sense to profit by what you hear!

But, if, on the present occasion, the crowd criticised their betters, some, at least, of their betters returned the compliment. The evening being warm, Augusta, by her mother's desire, let down the windows of the carriage; and when, in a few minutes, she had become tolerably well inured to the admiration of "the people," she amused herself, during

the long pauses in which the carriage remained stationary, by studying the groups before her.

If London be a wondrous sight by day, it is not less so by night: it is quite as wondrous, and far, far more awful and melancholy to a reflecting mind. We are not now alluding to scenes of vice and profligacy, which would not be tolerated in the broad light of day, but which are rife enough, it is to be feared, when night has thrown her sin-concealing mantle over the Guilty City. We are thinking of the insight which night affords into the habits and character of the bulk of the population. By day, every man seems wrapped up in the business of his calling: the same hard, eager look of care meets you continually; Mammon has stamped his mark on every brow, the brand of money-loving, money-getting, money-worshipping earthliness. But at night, much of this has passed away: business and toil are over. The mechanic, who had been toiling all day at his necessary, but unhealthy trade; and the poor dressmaker, whose constitution is undermined with her sedentary, and almost ceaseless toil, in ministering to the caprices of the rich,

may be seen occasionally sauntering along, inhaling the cold night-dews, and eager to gain from their treacherous freshness some strength and vigour, to meet the labour of the morrow. Then the reckless and ill-conditioned, who have been held in restraint all day by their professional duties, may be seen giving way to their natural licentiousness of tone and manner. Then skulk forth, from lofts and cellars, those dregs of the population who live on plunder: and then, when the professed mendicant has retired, well-satisfied with the easy labours of the day, to his ample repast and comfortable lodging, the poor miserable child of destitution, who has no roof to cover him, hungry and half naked, sits himself down on the steps of some rich man's door, till driven away by the police, and then wanders on through the live-long night, faint and weary, and desperate,—cursing his fellow-men, who let him starve before their eyes, and, perhaps, blaspheming that Providence, which he has never been taught to revere.

O miserable City! O people laden with iniquity! what must be the amount of that tremendous retri-

bution, by which, will one day be repaid, such an amount of sin as no other nation or country was ever yet responsible for? God have mercy upon those who see it, for on them will come the outpouring of His Vengeance! And such an outpouring cannot long be delayed, when hundreds of thousands have neither Churches to go to, nor priests to teach them; and when selfish luxury is come to such a pitch that the discharge of Christian duty, in these respects, is spoken of as impossible, merely because it requires an exertion to make sacrifices, and retrench expenditure, in order to give back to God a portion of His Own!

"Because thou servedst not the Lord thy God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all things; therefore, thou shalt serve thine enemies, which the Lord shall send against thee, in hunger, and in thirst, and in nakedness, and in want of all things; and he shall put a yoke of iron upon thy neck, until he have destroyed thee. ....And he shall besiege thee in all thy gates.... and thou shalt eat the fruit of thine own body in the siege and in the straitness, wherewith thine

enemies shall distress thee.....The tender and delicate woman among you, which would not adventure to set the sole of her foot upon the ground for delicateness and tenderness, her eye shall be evil toward the husband of her bosom, and toward her son, and toward her daughter.... And the Lord shall give thee a trembling heart, and failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind: and thy life shall hang in doubt before thee, and thou shalt fear day and night, and shalt have none assurance of thy life: In the morning thou shalt say, Would to God it were even! and at even, thou shalt say, Would to God it were morning! for the fear of thine heart wherewith thou shalt fear, and for the sight of thine eyes which thou shalt see."*

So it was written, for the warning of them of old time, and how did they receive the warning? Some mocked, perhaps,—and some doubted; but of the rest, even when their national delinquencies were at their height, their language seems to have been, "Tush, God hath forgotten; He hideth away His face and will never see it!" and so (like ourselves) they went on madly and recklessly, eating

* See Deut. xxviii.

and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, till destruction, utter and sudden, came upon them; yea, misery and destitution so great, that the dainty, delicate, mother literally ate the fruit of her womb in the agony of starvation,—and their house was "left unto them, desolate."—*He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

But, to proceed with our story. Lady Blondeville and her daughter contrived, as we have seen, to preserve their stock of patience from exhaustion, by studying the various groups of persons who were watching their progress; but when they had arrived within a few yards of the gates of Knutsford House, the stoppage continued for so long a time, that Augusta began to think they must pass the night where they were. Suddenly, their attention was roused, by seeing the police address themselves to a knot of ill-looking men,—some four or five in number, whom they ordered to move away; the men refused to do so, and some little disturbance arose before the police carried their point.

"What horrible, wicked countenances!" exclaimed Augusta, "they must be pickpockets."

"Oh no, my dear, pickpockets would be better drest, they must be worse than pickpockets;—house-breakers, or something of that kind. You see they are known to the constables. But certainly their countenances are horrible. How they long to strip us of all our finery. They look on us, as Blucher did on London from the top of St. Paul's, and with the same thought on their tongue,—'Oh heavens, what a *plunder!*'"

Here their thoughts were turned into another channel, by hearing a woman's voice, on the other side of the carriage, imploring alms. Augusta turned round and saw, at the window, a female with an infant in her arms. She was young, and had been, probably, good looking, but she seemed worn out with poverty and suffering—her face was livid, and her cheeks sunken, and the poor child at her breast looked dwindled and wasted, and as if nature was unable to provide it with an adequate supply of food. How could it be otherwise? the mother protested that she herself had not broken her fast that day, and she urged her claim for pity with the misery of desperation.

"Indeed, my good woman," said Augusta, "I have nothing with me; I wish, with all my heart, I had."

"Nothing with you," exclaimed the supplicant, with a wild, bitter, scornful laugh, "Why, there's not a stone on your crown, nor a yard of your dress, but would keep me and mine for months. Oh, you've nothing with you? You're too poor, I suppose? But it's the way with you all! Your hearts are iron, and see us starve before your eyes, while you....."

"This is dreadful!" cried Lady Blondeville. "James," (calling to the footman) "have you any money with you?"

"No, my Lady."

"Ask the coachman whether he has."

But before there was time to put the question, there was a sudden move forward along the train of carriages, Lady Blondeville's coachman whipped his horses, and in an instant they were within the gates of Knutsford House,—cut off from those without, by a dense body of police, and rapidly approaching the portico, whence issued a blaze of light, and the sounds of martial music.

It was a glorious scene which opened upon them, when the mother and daughter descended from their carriage. At the extremity of the magnificent entrance hall, lined throughout with Parian marble, was a double staircase of the same material, up which the guests were seen ascending, each in some gorgeous habit of the sixteenth century. And as the light of innumerable lamps fell upon their jewels, and embroidery, and bright coloured robes, the effect surpassed all that the most vivid imagination could have pictured to itself. Hundreds upon hundreds of visitors had already arrived, and when Augusta entered the reception-rooms there were hundreds yet to come. We will not weary the reader with details, how one entire drawing-room was turned into a bower of living roses,—how others were hung with velvet and satin, how picture gallery, succeeded to statue-gallery, and each saloon surpassed the preceding one in the exquisite taste of its arrangements, and ornaments, and colours, in its furniture and hangings, its cabinets and marqueterie, till that last apartment was arrived at, the walls of which (in accordance with the old chronicler's description) were

"embroidered with clouds of blue, and out of the blue the sun rising,—the valence of the same having written thereon, in letters of Gold, 'Dieu et mon droit'," while at either extremity was a pavilion or tent of Cloth of Gold; under which, were chairs of state for the representatives of the Royal Families of France and England,—to each of whom, in turn, the guests, on their arrival, paid their homage.

There stood Lady Isabella Bohun, and her brother, in the garb of our Eighth Henry, and his unfortunate Queen, attended by their parents in subordinate characters,—the Duke of Knutsford as Lord Chamberlain, and the Duchess as Mistress of the Robes,; their stood the proud Cardinal of St. Cecilia, with the silver cross, (alas, what profaneness!) and the silver pillars on either side of him, in full-blown pomp, such as Wolsey himself conld scarce have surpassed; while around them was gathered a glittering retinue, amid which Adela Boucheret, and Colonel Marney, stood conspicuous. And great was the satisfaction of the former, at seeing Augusta Blondeville,—her rival,—approach to witness her triumph.

"How d'ye do, Miss Blondeville?" said she, with a patronizing nod, "You've lost your way, haven't you. You belong to the Court of France, you should be at the other end of the room."

Augusta coloured slightly, and passed on, concealing her vexation under an air of indifference, and perfectly resolved to think no more about the capricious heir to the Marquisate of Wurmeaton, who was evidently carrying on a high flirtation with Miss Boucheret.

But there was not much time for bitter thoughts: Augusta was welcomed as their greatest beauty by the Court of France, and she received the homage as Beatrice of Savoy herself might have done. King Francis, that "goodly prince," as Hall calls him, "stately of countenance, merry of cheer," found a representative, in whom these qualities were still united, and who lavished his gallant courtesies on his fair cousin of Savoy, while gentle Queen Claude placed her at her right hand, where she stood, the admired of all beholders. Meanwhile, a tide of fresh arrivals kept flowing in, till the Presence-chamber, and the whole suite of apartments, were

filled with a company whose apparelling might have rivalled that of the persons whom they represented on the field at Guisnes. Of them might be said, what the chronicler has declared of the real scene, "To tell you the apparel of the ladies, their rich attyres, their sumptuous jewels, their diversities of beauties, I assure you, ten men's wits can scarce declare it."

However, the sight of sights was still to be seen. Up to this time, the business of the evening had been merely that of presentation, but now, after a blast of trumpets, the heralds, in their sparkling tabards, announced that the Royal Procession was about to be formed to the Ball-room. And thither, in due time, it proceeded, through the long suite of rooms, and down the marble staircase, into the noble Conservatory, at the end of which, in the garden attached to Knutsford House, a vast temporary building had been erected for the ball.

It will be in the reader's recollection that such a structure was raised in the Field of Cloth of Gold,—a kind of gigantic tent (according to Holinshed, eight hundred feet in circumference) supported by a

single mast in the centre, its roof decorated with stars of gold foil, to represent the firmament, and lighted by a chandelier in which were a thousand tapers.

This was taken as the model of the ball-room at Knutsford House, the only addition being the introduction of a great many flags and streamers, and the substitution of the two famous trees, the "Aubespine," and the "Framboister," for the royal canopies.* From the extremity of the conservatory already alluded to, ran a short passage, on either side of which was an alcove,—in the one a statue of "the old god of wyne, called Baccus birling the

* "Saterdaie the ninth daie of June in a place within the Englishe pale were set and pight in a fielde, called the campe, two trees of much honor, the one called the *Aubespine*, and the other called the *Framboister*, whyche is in Englishe the Hathorne, whiche was Henry, and the Raspisberry for Fraunces, after the signification of the Frenche; these twoo trees were mixed one with ye other together on a high mountaigne, covered with grene Damaske, the same trees were artificially wrought resemblyng the nature of the same as nigh as could be, the leaves were grene Damaske, the braunches, bowes, and withered leaves of clothe of gold and all the bodies and armes of the same clothe of golde, laied on tymber; thei were in height from the foote to the toppe thirty-four foote of assise; in compasse aboute an hundred twentie and nyne foote, and from bough to bough, fourtie and three foote: on these trees were flowers and fruites wrought in kyndly wise with silver and Venice gold, their beautie shewed fare: on the mountaigne was a place harber wise, where the Herrauldes were; the mountaigne was rayled about, and the rails covered with grene Damaske."

(HALL'S CHRONICLE, 1569.)

wine," with a legend above him, "Faicte bonne chere quy vouldra:" in the other, "an ymage of the blinde god, Cupide, with hys bowe and arrowes of love, redy by hys semynge, to stryke the young people to love." At the end of the passage were some two or three steps, beyond which, under an arch of roses, was the entrance into the ball-room.

And now that music and dancing were to be added to the delights of that gorgeous scene, what had the assembled guests to do, but to take their pleasure and be happy? But were they happy? Were all *really* what they *seemed?* Perhaps, to some few, who, till that evening had never been ushered into what is called the world, the scene was one of absorbing, intoxicating pleasure, and a realization of the fairy-land they had read or dreamed of; and they enjoyed it with the unalloyed enjoyment of hearts as yet uncorroded by evil passions:—

"No sense have they of ills to come,
No care beyond to-day.
Yet see how all around them wait
The ministers of human fate,
And black misfortune's baleful train.

* * * *

These shall the fury-passions tear,
The vultures of the mind,
Disdainful Anger, pallid Fear,
And Shame that sculks behind ;
Or pining Love, shall waste their youth,
Or Jealousy, with rankling tooth,
That inly gnaws the secret heart,
And Envy wan, and faded Care,
Grim-visag'd, comfortless Despair,
And Sorrow's piercing dart."

To the very young, and innocent, that dangerous scene (the more dangerous because it was so) was one of unmingled gratification ; but for the majority of the visitors, each had some heart-ache under his gay attire. One was dissatisfied that she had not enough attention paid to her, another was consumed with hatred of a rival; this one was wearing a dress she could not pay for, that one was disappointed at its general effect. This young girl was already satiated with admiration and excitement; her companion was burdened with the thought how far participation in such a scene was allowable at all;—and there stood Lady Isabella Bohun, the youthful beauty, on whose behalf this fête was given, and to whom all were paying their court, unable to enjoy it, through a

racking head-ache, brought on by nothing else but the weight of the jewels with which her throbbing brows were encircled.—Such is worldly pleasure!

"Well, really this is a splendid affair," said the Duke of Alençon to Augusta, as they stood under the shining foliage of the giant "Framboister," "I question whether the real scene surpassed it."

"There is one advantage on our side," replied Miss Blondeville, "we shall all go back to comfortable beds, whereas, if I remember right, on the former occasion the knights and ladies 'were fain to lie in hay and straw,' and deemed themselves fortunate in many cases if they could procure that."

"I know I wish I were in my bed," said Lady Manby Leatherset. "Did any living creature ever see such a scene of absurdity? dull, plodding, vapid absurdity? They fool me to the top of my bent, and were it not for the fun of laughing at some of the quizzes around me, it would be intolerable."

"We are much obliged to you," said the Duke of Alençon laughing.

"Besides it is so dreadfully hot."

"Every body is not so gorgeously dressed as Lady Leatherset," replied the Duke.

"Ah! Colonel Marney, you are unglued at last I see. I thought you were fastened to the floor behind Miss Boucheret."

"I am flattered by being the object of your Ladyship's observation," replied the Colonel, who then announced to Lady Marmion, the representative of Queen Claude, that if her Majesty was agreeable to it, the entry of masquers would take place, and make their obeisance to her. Queen Claude of course assented, and then amid a crash of martial music, the masquers entered, ten ladies in Genoese habits, ten "after the fashyon of Millayne," and twenty gentlemen, some as heroes and worthies, and some as Paynim Saracens, and some as Christian Princes, and Crusaders.

"It is all very well that Sir Henry Pugsby should think himself like Julius Cæsar, and cut very astounding entre-chats in that capacity," said Lady Leatherset in a loud tone, "but if this crowding up in a corner is to go on much longer, I shall be stifled."

The company, it should be observed, had fallen back to the sides of the ball-room, in order to give as much room as possible for the masquers to perform their fantastic dance, and Lady Leatherset, (albeit not unaccustomed to force her way through a crowd, or scrupulous as to the manner in which she did it,) had found herself suddenly close to the wall with a dense impacted mass of people before her, through which even she was unable to penetrate. Vainly she trod upon Lady Dandlepups' heels, vainly did she give Lady Crutchley such a push that it was a wonder that high-dried and ancient scare-crow did not (as the maids say) "come in two in her hand;" vainly did she nip, and push, and shoulder, and kick, (Mahound, and Termagaunt themselves, might learn a lesson of ruffianism, from the evolutions of some of our *very* fine ladies in a crowd!) but there she was, fixed: her victims would gladly have fled, but they could not.

"My Lord Cardinal," said she addressing herself to the representative of Wolsey, who happened to be standing near her, "you are all-powerful here, can't you prevent people squeezing so?"

"I wish your grace would," cried several of the unfortunates, through whom Lady Leatherset had been attempting to make a passage.

"I!" cried the Cardinal good-humouredly, "were I the veritable Simon Pure himself, I could not do it, in such a crowd. Here's my broad brimmed scarlet hat fallen over my face, so that I can see nothing, and my hands are so wedged in, that I ca'nt raise them to set it right."

"If I *do* go into fits, I'm afraid I shall be very violent," observed Lady Leatherset.—Nobody had a doubt of it, and great was the apprehension of those nearest to her, most of whom felt already that they should be black and blue for a week to come; but there was no retreat.

"My stars!" continued her ladyship, "was ever anything so absurd, as not providing plenty of open windows? Why, there is not a cranny at which fresh air can enter!"

"I suppose," said Augusta Blondeville, "they were afraid of the same misfortune which occurred in the original tent, on the real Field of Cloth of Gold."

"Dear me! what was that?" asked Lady Dandlepups.

"Only they had too much air instead of too little; the wind not only blew out the thousand tapers, but carried off the sun and moon and stars, from the roof,—causing, thereby, severe colds, and dismal prognostications of national trouble and misfortune."

"Ah, ha! Miss Blondeville," said Lady Crutchley knowingly, "you found all this in Froissart, I suppose."

"I should have been clever if I had," thought Augusta to herself, "for Froissart, like your ladyship, had been dead for a century before the tent was erected."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Lady Dandlepups once more in her sleepy, twaddling way, "I do wonder what this is, that is running so hard into my back. I do think it must be the handle of a door."

"Where? where?" cried Lady Leatherset—"I see no door."

"Behind all this fluted white muslin," answered the Dowager. "I dare say it goes into the gardens, and was put for convenience during the preparations

for the fête, and then concealed, when they finished the pink and white draperies."

"What a lucky discovery!" said Lady Leatherset eagerly. "Let me come there, and I'll set it open."

"Oh! pray don't;" cried Lady Dandlepups—"We're all so hot, and a strong east wind has sprung up, within this hour; we shall catch our deaths of cold!"—

Lady Leatherset did not condescend to answer, but forcing the old lady from where she stood, ascertained that a door really existed, and then tearing aside the long strip of muslin, which, stretching down from the roof, had been fastened at its lower extremity to the floor, pushed back a bolt, and threw open the concealed door.

On what trivial events do the most important circumstances hinge, and what frightful consequences may result from one thoughtless and apparently unimportant action!

No sooner was the door thrown open and the external air admitted, than a gust of wind wafted the long light fabric of the muslin high above their

heads, and then drove it directly down upon the pyramid of burning tapers. The whole thing was the work of a moment. Ere an arm could be stretched out to stop its progress, the thin material was in flames; ere a sentence could be spoken, it had communicated to the banners and streamers, which, far out of reach, were suspended in the roof. In less than three minutes, the building, (if anything so slight deserved the name) was on fire, and from its highly combustible nature all chance of extinguishing it, even had immediate help been at hand, seemed taken away.

Who shall describe the awfulness of the scene that ensued? the wild cries of terror that stopped the music,—the stupified, upturned gaze of the merry masquers, whose mirth was thus suddenly changed to deadly fear,—the loud calls of parents for their children, and children for their parents,—the crackling of the flames,—the glare, the smoke,—and then, the thronging, crushing press of those who were struggling to escape from their fiery sepulchre? Never, perhaps, was witnessed so horrifying a scene, since that yet more awful one (recorded with such painful

truth by Madame de Staël*) when, on a like occasion, the Princess Pauline of Schwartzenberg, and her daughter, perished in the flames.

Happily, on the present occasion, all the guests escaped, and no life was lost, though a sad, afflicting misfortune occurred to one who has borne some part in the progress of our tale. Adela Boucheret, she, to whom the evening had hitherto been a scene of gratification and triumph, she, whose triumph over her rival had not (to say the least) been worthily gained, was one of the last who effected her escape from the ball-room; a fortunate circumstance for her, as otherwise she must have been crushed to death. In her fright and hurry, she forgot the flight of steps at the entrance of the tent, missed her footing, and fell violently to the ground. Those who were thronging behind her, pushed forward by those in the rear, were unable to stop themselves; some few trampled on her, one or two fell over her, and when she was raised from the ground, in a state of insensibility, it was discovered that she had a compound fracture of the leg, which lamed her for life.

* De L'Allemagne. Vol. iii. Ch. 6. ("De la douleur.")

One other catastrophe occurred; among those who stood near the door of entrance from the garden, and who made their escape that way, was Lady Crutchley. In the confusion which ensued, when the garden-gates were set open for the admission of the fire-engines, some of those bad characters whom we have already mentioned as having been once driven from the spot by the police, contrived to procure admission, and finding the hapless old woman wandering by herself, threw her down, tore her diamond ornaments by main force from her ears, cut many more from her dress, and would have probably have left her without one of the jewels she so dearly prized, had they not been disturbed by the poor starving woman, who had asked alms of Lady Blondeville, and who, instead of aiding the thieves, called in the assistance of the police;—but, ere they arrived, two-thirds of the Crutchley diamonds had disappeared.

Meanwhile, the unsubstantial ball-room, (which was in fact scarcely more than an enormous tent) was reduced to ashes, but being separated from the main building, and the fire engines arriving in good time, the flames spread no further.

Thus ended, as all the world knows, the memorable fête at Knutsford House; and, perhaps, calm reflections on the circumstances which attended it, may have suggested to some who participated in it, the questions which now we propose to the reader. *Is worldly pleasure worth its cost?* Is worldly pleasure HAPPINESS?

CHAPTER VII.

LOOK BEFORE YOU LEAP.

"With mirth in funeral, and with dirge in marriage,
In equal scale weighing delight and dole."

HAMLET.

THE reader has witnessed an arrival at Lady Blondeville's; he is now invited to be among the spectators of a departure from the same mansion.

Two months had elapsed since the events recorded in our last chapter, and the London season was fast drawing to its close, when, one fine morning, Belgrave Square, which, for some weeks, had appeared too hot, and too dusty, to be habitable, and had been very generally abandoned to the housemaids and upholsterers, was enlivened by the successive arrivals of a crowd of carriages at Lady Blondeville's house. Her ladyship was giving a wedding breakfast in honour of her daughter Augusta's mar-

riage to Colonel Marney, an event which it is probable would never have occurred but for the catastrophe at Knutsford House.

It has been mentioned that that gentleman, had, after a great deal of hesitation, condescended to select Miss Blondeville and Miss Boucheret, as the permanent objects of his attention. Both ladies were beautiful; Adela exquisitely so, but she was penniless, whereas Augusta had a fair fortune, as well as a fair face; and therefore those who knew the selfishness of the man made no doubt that his affections and his covetousness would go hand in hand. However they were wrong: for he entered Knutsford House with the full intention of proposing to Adela before the evening was over. Luckily for himself, as he more than once afterwards was heard to exclaim, he did not commit himself prematurely, and up to the time when the poor girl's accident occurred, he had said nothing which had actually compromised him.—No doubt he was greatly shocked at her terrible misfortune, and he felt it as acutely, perhaps, as he could feel anything. But he was by no means the victim of sensibility, especially where

sympathy and personal interest were opposed to one another. He liked, as he said, to view a case in all its bearings; people only made fools of themselves, when they acted on the spur of the moment. And so he determined to make his further advances contingent on the surgeon's report. When, therefore, at the end of a fortnight Sir Benjamin Botcher and Dr. Loddenham both assured him that their unfortunate patient would have a slight limp to her dying day, the gallant Colonel immediately turned his horse's head towards Belgrave Square, and there made such violent love, that in ten days Augusta surrendered at discretion.

We have heard of an old gentleman, who riding over to a neighbour's house found nobody at home, but was intreated by the butler to remain, because "they were all sure to be home from the wedding directly, and his master would be so disappointed not to see him." "No, no," replied the gentleman, "not to day. Give my kindest regards and good wishes, and say, if they ever want me for a funeral, I will obey the summons,—but I really have not spirits for a wedding."

We are ourselves so entirely of the same opinion, that we must beg the reader to picture to himself, without any farther details of our's, the principle events of a fashionable marriage;—how the bride looked in her veil and orange wreath, and what the bridegroom said to the Bishop of Nottingham, in that dismal vestry-room of St. George's, Hanover Square,—how the galleries of the church were filled with admiring ladies'-maids, and reporters from the Morning Post and Court Journal.—How sixteen brides-maids, eight having pink roses in their bonnets, with blue ribbons, and eight with pink ribbons and blue roses, stood, sobbing their hearts out, with very red noses, and very highly embroidered handkerchiefs;—how there was a very handsome breakfast, and a great many people, with smiles, and favours, and new pelisses, and a prodigious wedding cake, stuck all over with hearts and darts and torches, and squabby doves, and squabbier cupids; how a plateful of white soup was administered to Lady Dandlepups, externally instead of internally,—visiting her lap, and not her mouth;—how the Marquis of Wurmeaton setting his doctors and his daughters at defiance,

insisted on attending his nephew's wedding, and (greatly to that nephew's satisfaction) with a strong tendency to gout in his stomach, ate of every dish which was offered to him, beginning with pine-apple ice, and ending with lobster sallad; these, and many such like things, the gentle reader may imagine to himself, and accompany us to Gertrude Blondeville's dressing room, whither our old acquaintance, Lady Dandlepups, had retired upon the catastrophe of the Potage à la Reine, with Miss Knypersley, a dear friend of Lady Blondeville, who had volunteered her services on witnessing the Dowager's mishap.

"Thank you, Ma'am a thousand times," said her Ladyship to her assiduous companion, who rubbed and scrubbed the damaged silk with as much anxiety, and with about the same success, as Blue Beard's wife exhibited towards the blood-stained key of the forbidden chamber.

"That will do very well: it ca'nt be helped; I must have a new breadth in front that's all. Pray don't trouble yourself further," continued her Ladyship sidling away from Miss Knypersley, who was still on her knees, and held one extremity of the

gown fast, while her ladyship endeavoured to escape towards the open window. "Oh! dear, I declare they are just going!"

"Who?" cried Miss Knypersley, beginning to rise.

"Why, the bride and bridegroom. Well, I must say, the Colonel has a very good taste in his equipages," observed the Dowager, as she looked down upon the well-appointed travelling carriage, "but I wonder they have not four horses."

"What, to go to the Euston Station?"

"Oh dear, I thought they would, of course, spend the honey-moon at Mummyglum Abbey."

"No, Lord Wurmeaton offered it, but dear Lady Blondeville wished her daughter to go to Wroxton Court,—old Mr. Blunt's,—where she spent her own honey-moon."

"Very natural," observed Lady Dandlepups, "and I hope they'll have a pleasant expedition. If young people arn't happy when they're married, I don't know when they can expect to be so."

"A great deal depends upon circumstances," replied Miss Knypersley with a short cough, as much

as to say that at five and forty her own views on the comparative merits of matrimony and celibacy were yet unsettled.

"But at any rate," said the good-natured old lady, "this couple set out with a fairer prospect of happiness than most people. She seems a sweet, charming girl, and what a handsome man he is! and what a property he will come in to, by and by."

Miss Knypersley was again troubled with bronchial irritation.

"You don't agree with me, Ma'am?"

"Why, Lady Dandlepups, you know I have been such an intimate friend of the family for years, that I don't like to say anything, but Augusta had a very imperious temper even in the nursery; and then Colonel Marney, for all he is so handsome, has a something in his eye that I don't much like. And I do believe he has used Miss Boucheret shamefully, —jilted her because she broke her leg, poor thing."

"Oh dear! that's very bad—'tis good to be off with the old love, before you be on with the new.' I'm sorry to hear this. I should be afraid the Colonel is rather fickle."

"Oh! he is a sad rake, you may rely upon it," observed Miss Knypersley.

"But he has sown his wild oats by this time," replied the old lady. "Many a rake turns out a good husband,—though, to be sure," added she, as she reflected on the choice specimen of morality to which she had given vent, and felt a little ashamed of it,—"I believe such cases are rather the exception than the rule: the experiment is a dangerous one. But are you so sure that Colonel Marney is a roué?"

"Don't you remember that dreadful story, three or four years ago, about a young dress-maker drowning herself in the Serpentine? Well, I believe he was deeply implicated in that affair. And I know he's a gambler. So that after all, I'd rather be poor lame Adela Boucheret, than our young bride, with a marchioness's coronet, and the Mummyglum estates in prospect: but I see your ladyship's own carriage drawing up, perhaps you would like to go down stairs."

And the ladies descended, and after apparently hearty congratulations to Lady Blondeville, took

their leave, each to disseminate, as quickly as possible, their ominous forebodings as to the results of this last match of the season.—So goes the world!

And the worst was that it was all true. Augusta had a proud, imperious temper, such as must be incompatible with domestic peace; and the man she had married (dazzled by his name, his worldly prospects, his good looks, and with no more knowledge of his real character than could be gained in a ball-room) was profligate, and unprincipled, and selfish, and a gambler; and though, for the present, the bad points of his character lay in the back ground, there they were, sure, sooner or later, to be brought out, and to work the misery of his unfortunate companion. Oh! what madness it is for women to suppose that they can know *anything* of a man's real character, unless they have had some better opportunities of judging of it than they *can* have in the glare and dissipation of fashionable life! Under any circumstances it is hard for a woman to know a man's true habits and disposition, but under these it is *impossible*.

It was late in the afternoon of a bright summer's

day before Augusta and her husband arrived at Wroxton Court, which, as has been already mentioned, had been lent them by Mr. Blunt for the honey-moon. The old man himself, had, on his return from London, been seized with an alarming illness, from which he had only so far recovered, as to be able to move to Leamington. Of course, therefore, he had been unable to attend his niece's wedding, (much it must be confessed to that niece's relief) but so far as kind letters, and generous presents were concerned, Augusta had no reason to fear that Uncle Wat's affections were alienated from her. And when the carriage, having entered the park, approached the grey towers of the Court, it became evident that Mr. Blunt had not left it uncertain whether he wished his niece to have a hearty welcome or no, on her arriving, under such circumstances, at the seat of her maternal ancestors. There were not a few of the tenants of the estate drawn up on either side the road to cheer the bride and bridegroom as they passed, and the children of the village school in their Sunday clothes, with their healthy smiling faces, had their nosegay to present as the

carriage passed the gate-house, and the church bells (the church almost joined the mansion) struck up their most joyous peal, while the old butler and housekeeper stood ready in the porch to receive and congratulate the new-married pair.

Augusta and her husband were too well used to public life, not to be ready to bear their part gracefully and kindly; and when, leaving their carriage, the doors of the Court closed upon them, those on the outside declared, as with one voice, that no amount of happiness could be more than such a handsome, affable, pleasant-spoken couple deserved.

All was bright and cheerful—the park, with its hills and valleys, clothed in the rich foliage of summer,—the solemn oaks, the feathery birches, with their weeping boughs and silver stems,—the heath, the tall fern,—the short, thymy turf on which the deer were gazing,— the clear sparkling waters of the rapid stream, presented the very beau ideal of forest scenery, while round the windows, the flower-beds of a thousand dazzling hues, and almost overwhelming fragrance added the only charm that was wanting to the scene.—Augusta was not such a lover of Lon-

don, but that she could fully appreciate the beauties of the country; and at another time she would have both felt and expressed herself rapturously, as she contemplated scenes which she really loved, and which had the associations of childhood to hallow them. But some how or other, she knew not why, she now felt depressed and sad. She was not weary; she was not overwhelmed with contemplating the step she had that day taken;—no, it was something else, an undefined sense of anxiety, the burden of a conscience deadened, but not dead. Everything she saw reminded her of her last parting with her uncle, and of the fact, that, perhaps, she was in the same house with Lucy Brooke. She longed to inquire after her the moment she arrived, but she had not courage, and besides her husband was in the room. At length, when the housekeeper was shewing her to her apartment, Augusta summoned up resolution to say, "My dear Mrs. Hervey, I have not had an opportunity before of asking you after poor Lucy Brooke. Is she here, in this house?"

A momentary flush passed over the good old woman's face, and there was a momentary hesitation

in her manner, and then she answered, "No, Miss;—I beg your pardon, Ma'am," she added, "but I am so used to think of you as Miss Blondeville, that I forget you are Mrs. Marney."

"Well, my good Hervey, call me what you will, so that you love me as you did when I was a child. But about poor Lucy—have you seen her lately?"

"I saw her three or four days ago, Ma'am."

"I trust she is better now, than she was when I saw her last?"

"I have no doubt of it, Ma'am," answered the housekeeper.

"Is her cough better?" inquired Mrs. Marney.

"She never coughs," was the reply.

"And I trust she does not suffer in any other way?"

"She did not when I last saw her. It is very kind of you to inquire."

"I hope this ringing the church-bells will not disturb her?"

"Oh dear no, Ma'am; besides, I suppose they will stop almost directly."

"Well, I am so glad to hear that Lucy Brooke is

better, observed Mrs. Marney, "I hope in a day or two to pay her a visit."

The housekeeper made no reply, and the conversation dropped. Augusta hastened to meet her husband at dinner.

"You will find me in the flower-garden, love," said the bride, as she rose from dessert, "and don't be an age over your wine, for I really must take you to the end of the terrace before sunset."

"How long will you give me?" asked the Colonel, whose admiration was not so blind as to make him care to forego his claret.

"How *long*, Henry? I never heard so ungallant a question. Why, ten whole minutes."

"Say you so, Augusta?" answered her husband laughing, "then all I can do is to reply with Shakspere, 'It is excellent to have a giant's strength, but it is tyrannous to use it like a giant'."

"Do you mean that I am a tyrant, or a giantess?" asked Augusta gaily, and so saying, she threw open the glass doors, and strolled out upon the lawn.

It was one of those sweet calm evenings in which all nature seems chastened into harmony. The

light was softer, the air less oppressive, the shadows broader, the colours of earth and sky more intimately blended, than had been the case while the sun was yet high in the heavens; and almost involuntarily, that thought rose in Augusta Marney's mind, which suggests itself alike to the religious and the careless, that, *but* for man, and his rude, bad passions, and evil tempers, this world of our's would still be a Paradise. The tone of reflection being once taken, all her other thoughts seemed sobered in their hue, and she found leisure to contemplate the realities of a day which had passed before her like a dream.

There was abundant matter for grave and serious reflection, and the more she reflected, the more absorbed she became, and wandered on in a state of pensive abstraction, scarce knowing whither she went. Thus she passed along the flower-garden, and down a short avenue of limes, at the end of which stood the Village Church. The bells had ceased ringing their joyous peal before she went down to dinner, and now, as she approached the church-yard, all was silent. She looked back to see if her hus-

band had left the house, (which was not above a hundred yards distant) and not observing him, proceeded till she came to the private gate by which her Uncle's family were wont to enter the churchyard. Within the sacred precinct all seemed silence and solitude, so she wandered on till she reached the porch, when, in an instant, the joyous peal struck up once more, and the old sexton issued forth with a spade in his hand.

He immediately recognised her, and, in his rustic way, apologised for the pause which had taken place.

"Muster Blunt," he said, "had given special orders that a peal should be kept up for six hours,—and so there would have been, but for the burying, and then Madam Hervey said they had better leave off for an hour: he hoped her ladyship had'nt minded the short toll,—it was but a short one, and now they were ready to ring all night, if her ladyship pleased; and he made bold to wish her ladyship health, and happiness, and all manner of blessings."

Augusta thanked him, and was about to return the way she came, but the old man stopped her. "Perhaps her ladyship would rather not meet the

mourners; would she step this way? They would be gone directly."

Accordingly, Mrs. Marney followed him, as he turned the angle of the tower; and, at the same time, caught a glimpse of the retiring mourners, and found herself by the brink of the fresh dug grave, which the sexton was about to fill in.

"Poor thing!" he exclaimed, as he threw down a shovel-full of mould, "when she left us, a year ago, for a grand situation in London, we none of us thought what the end of it would be. They have a deal to answer for who have brought her here!"

Augusta trembled from head to foot: she did not speak, for she could not: but she gave one terrified, agonized look into the deep, dark grave, and saw at once the whole dreadful truth: the gilded letters on the coffin-plate revealed it.

"LUCY BROOKE:
AGED EIGHTEEN YEARS."

It was even so. Thus met once more the VICTIM and the DESTROYER. Ah! who can forget that they are destined to meet *again*?

Our tale is told, kind Reader, and it would be

impertinent, because unnecessary, to linger in your presence, for the purpose of pointing out its obvious moral, or for reminding you that where our task ends, your duty begins.—Yet, ere we lay down the pen, we would make a few brief remarks with reference to some of the practical bearings of the subject, upon which we have endeavoured to excite your sympathy.

That there are many excellent, unselfish, tender-hearted persons, among those who are more or less frequently to be seen in the dissipations, (we cannot honestly use a milder word)—the dissipations of fashionable life, we do not deny.—Were it not for their presence and countenance, (and this is a subject, on which they will do well to reflect) the whole system would, it is to be hoped, become intolerable to all who are well disposed: and further, we are quite ready to admit, both, that for much of the suffering described in the foregoing pages, the higher classes are not altogether and solely responsible, and likewise, that after all, there are trades and professions in which far greater cruelties are exercised than is the case with the unfortunate dress-makers.

We have endeavoured to avoid exaggeration.

We have not made Lucy Brooke an interesting heroine, nor clothed her with the graces of suffering excellence. We have tried to represent her as an average sample of the many hundreds of young women, who, every year, unheard of, and unpitied, are brought by over-exertion in that particular profession, to an untimely grave. And so on the other hand, it has been our object to depict the votaries of the world as they are, not deliberately hard-hearted, not unwilling to act kindly where a clear case is set before them, but careless, thoughtless, frivolous, and with that ever-growing tendency to selfishness, which *must* result from a state of mind in which habits of self-denial are never thought of as indispensible, and a *daily* cross as the *necessary* accompaniment of the Christian Life.

In short, we have laboured diligently to depict things as they are; and having done so, we leave it to the reader's consideration, how far it is possible that such a state of society can be otherwise than utterly hateful and abominable in the sight of God.

"But what is to be done?" asks some one, who, thus far, is not indisposed to agree with us; "Ladies must have their dresses, and from time to time there

must be a heavy stress of work on the hands of the milliners?"

These facts are, of course undeniable, and with respect to the amount of labour to be done, *that* under any circumstances must continue much the same. Ladies may clothe themselves less expensively, the materials may be less costly, but still it must be made up, and probably there is not much more time consumed in making up the richest velvet, than the cheapest cotton. The only question here, for right minded persons to decide, is, first, whether they allow sufficient time to their dress-makers for the execution of their orders (as the *impatience* of customers presses more heavily on the work-women than the extent of the work,) and secondly, whether they need as *many* dresses, as modern habits seem to require. It is one of the worst signs of the times ,that there is among all classes a selfish rivalry of rank. Each desires to be thought more of than his neighbour, to be better housed, have a larger establishment, and be more expensively clothed. We look on wealth as virtue, and punish poverty as a crime. Hence, though all cannot be rich, all desire to appear so. The imprudent live beyond their incomes; the pru-

dent (in the worldly sense of the term) pinch and starve themselves, in things which are removed from observation, forego alms-deeds, inculcate cheap charity, and make their display from that class of articles which produce most effect at the least outlay.—Of course, there can be but one termination of all this. It might be proved almost mathematically, that the present system of competition and underselling *(all, be it observed, at the cost of the poor operative,)* must end, sooner or later, in the complete ruin and break-up of our avaricious commercial system.—But all this by the way: our business is, at present, with one particular branch of luxury, *dress;* and we think ladies will do well to consider whether they could not content themselves with less *variety* of apparel than is the case at present. The *cost* of dress is another, and very fearful subject.

As regards the sufferings of the young work-women in the large millinery establishments, we have no hesitation in saying, that this might be put a stop to, first and most effectually, by a voluntary arrangement among the heads of those establishments; and secondly, by a determination, righteously adhered to on the part of upper classes, not to deal

with any house in which the working hours exceed *ten* or twelve per diem. We have reason to believe that many respectable dress-makers would gladly adopt this rule; and we have great hopes that a Society, which has been recently established for the protection of milliners' apprentices and workwomen, will be able to put an effectual check to such horrors as are related in the evidence of the Parliamentary Commissioners.

But while we urge upon those, who can, in any way, contribute to the removal of the many evils to which this friendless and helpless class have hitherto been exposed, that the use of every exertion is a bounden duty on their part, we must still bear in mind the melancholy and appalling fact, that there is hardly a trade in which the labours of children and young persons can be used, at which their lives are not being recklessly and mercilessly sacrificed. So that we have our luxuries we care not. We count not the cost of human life, we reflect not upon the miseries of infant labour: all that we give ourselves time to consider, is whether the article purchased pleases the senses, and is sold at the lowest possible price.

Meanwhile, of the thousands of children whose lives we sacrifice, perhaps not one in a hundred has been taught that it has an immortal soul, not one in many, many hundreds has been taught to pray.* Miserable children so to die! yet happier far than they who live! who, young in years, grow old in debauchery,—who fill the prisons and the hospitals of our manufacturing districts,—who own no God, who can call no man instructor or friend,—whose hand is against every man, and every man's hand against them,—who live in filth and pestilence, and in the very abyss of moral degradation,—whose days are past in exhausting labour, with only the relaxation of brutalizing profligacy,—to whom life is all a burden, and death brings no hope. And these, *but for our heartless indifference*, *might* be made valuable members of society, these *might*, (could we only make up our minds to part from those accursed luxuries, or that still more accursed covetousness which is plung-

* "Many of the children," says Mr. Horne, in his Report on the town of Wolverhampton, (Report p. Q. 18. 3. 215) "told me they always said their prayers at night, and the prayer they said was, 'Our Father.' I naturally thought they meant that they repeated the Lord's Prayer, but I soon found that few of them knew it. They only repeated the first two words: they knew no more than 'Our Father!' These poor Children, after their laborious day's work, lying down to sleep with this simple appeal, seemed to me inexpressibly affecting. Having nothing but harsh task-masters in this world, or 'working under their father,' it was probably the only true sense in which they could use the words."

ing us in perdition!) these *might* be brought to know and love the truth, these *might* be made our own crown of rejoicing in the day of account,—these *might* be the companions of our glory in that hour when they that turn many to righteousness shall shine as the stars for ever and ever!

But we care for none of these things! *We* must have our houses, and our furniture, and our equipages, and our dress of the most luxurious description: but our poor may starve, our ignorant may continue in their ignorance, our once Christian country may become a heathen one! Warning may be added to warning, and judgment to judgment, but all in vain. Our heart is waxed gross, and we have closed our eyes, and shut our ears, though the voice of our brethren's blood is crying from the ground, and the uplifted arm of vengeance still pauses ere it strikes.

"How long, O Lord, how long?"

THE END.

APPENDIX.

APPENDIX A.

As it is very desirable that the public should know on what grounds the statements given in the text rest, it has been thought advisable to print at length the evidence of three witnesses, (out of one hundred) as collected by R. D. Grainger, and appended to the Parliamentary Report already alluded to.

"No. 525.—February 9, 1841. *Miss H. Baker.*

"Is in business as a milliner, and has been altogether acquainted with the business several years. Came to London at the age of 16 as 'an improver,' having previously learnt the business in the country. The young women who come as improvers are generally 16 or 17 years of age; they have, in most cases, served an apprenticeship previously either in London or the country. The apprenticeship is usually for 2 years; for this, if board and lodging are included, £30 or £40 are paid. There are many young women employed after their apprenticeship as journeywomen, receiving from £15 to £50 a-year, and board and lodging. The journeywomen and improvers

are worked the longest; the apprentices, being beginners and not knowing the business so well, are sent to bed earlier. Has been herself in several houses in London. In some of the establishments the hours of work are regulated; in others not. The common hours, where they are regulated, are from 8 A. M. to 11 P. M. The breakfast is eaten as quick as possible, at about half-past 8; about 20 minutes are allowed for dinner, which is also taken as quickly as possible, the hour being half-past 1. For tea, at 5, no time is allowed; it is taken as quick as the other meals. Supper is at 9 or 10. In the houses which are regulated, by which is meant those which do not make a practice of working all night, it happens that if any particular order is to be executed they go on later than 11, often till 2 and 3 in the morning, and, if requisite, all night. In those houses which are not so well regulated they often work all night; in the season they usually go on till 1 or 2 in the morning. In the summer it is common to commence at 5 in the morning. In one establishment where witness formerly worked, during 3 months successively, she had never more than 4 hours' rest, regularly going to bed between 12 and 1, and getting up at 4 in the morning. On the occasion of the general mourning for His Majesty William IV. witness worked without going to bed from 4 o'clock on Thursday morning till half-past 10 on Sunday morning; during this time witness did not sleep at all: of this she is certain. In order to keep awake she stood nearly the whole of Friday night, Saturday, and Saturday night, only sitting down for half an hour for rest. Two other young persons worked at the same house for the same time; these two dozed occasionally in a chair. Witness,

who was then 19, was made very ill by this great exertion, and when on Sunday she went to bed, she could not sleep. Her feet and legs were much swelled, and her feet seemed to overhang the shoes. No difference is made as to the time of beginning in the morning, when the work has been carried on very late the night before. In some houses they work on the Sunday. The young persons are often so much fatigued, that they lay in bed so late on Sunday as not to be able to go to church. In some few houses the work is not carried on so late at night, and the young women go to church. Generally speaking, the hours are longer in London than in the country; but there are many exceptions, some country houses working very late. Nothing is paid for extra work.

Witness's health was seriously injured by the long hours of work and sitting so long. When she first came to London she often fainted once or twice in the day. Is short-sighted, and at night sees very indifferently. Working with black articles, especially black velvet, tries the sight very much. It often happens from the present fashion that young women are employed for many weeks in succession at black work. It was more common than not that the young girls and women were subject to fainting fits. When they first come their health is more liable to suffer than afterwards. Pain in the side and between the shoulders is very common; has sat so long in one position as to suffer great pain in the back. Various other complaints are caused. Some suffer from the coldness of the workshop; knows a young girl who was obliged to leave in consequence of rheumatism.

There are always plenty of workwomen who go out, and who might be procured to assist whenever any par-

ticular order is to be executed, so as to relieve those belonging to the establishment. Although these persons are, in general, inferior milliners and dressmakers, yet there are in every dress plainer parts which they could execute. Thinks certainly, that if it were the custom on sudden emergencies to employ these extra hands, that the hours of labour might be very much shortened. Is decidedly of opinion that by proper regulations, applicable to all, there is nothing connected with the business itself which requires longer hours than other occupations. Knows it would be a great boon to a large number of young persons, now totally unprotected, if the hours were shortened, and night-work prohibited. If any become sick, they must either go on with their work, or leave the house. 'They often sit at work when they are so ill as to be scarcely able to stick to their needle.' Employers in general pay little or no attention to the health of the young people who work for them.

(Signed) HARRIET BAKER."

"No. 526.—February 12, 1841. *Miss O'Neil*, Welbeck-street.

Has been a dress-maker and milliner several years, and has been employed in several of the London houses. Is now in business for herself. The hours of work in the spring season are longer than those in the autumn season; in the former they are unlimited. The common hours are from 6 A. M. till 12 at night; sometimes from 4 A. M till 12. Has herself often worked from 6 A. M. till 12 at night for 2 or 3 months together. It is not at all uncommon, especially in the dress-making, to work all night; just in 'the drive of the season' the work is occasionally continued

all night, 3 times a-week. Has worked herself twice in the week all night. 'In some houses which profess to study the health of their young people, they begin at 4 A. M., and leave off at 11 P. M., never earlier.' Has heard there are houses in London which work on Sundays. In some houses to prevent late hours on Saturday they work all night on Friday; they frequently lay in bed on Sunday to rest themselves. Sometimes the young persons are are called up at 2 on Monday morning, and continue till the usual hour, 11 or 12 at night. The hours are considered short if they do not exceed from 7 A. M. till 11 P. M. The time for meals is very short; 10 minutes for breakfast, 15 for dinner, and 10 for tea; in most houses there is no supper till the work is finished, although that is not till 11 or 12 at night. In some establishments the food is insufficient in quantity and inferior in quality; salt beef is frequently used and hard puddings. Has been obliged to buy food in consequence of the insufficient allowance, and has known others who have been obliged to do the same.

The hours of work are decidedly longer in the fashionable houses than in any others. It is very common in those to work all night. There are no relays on these occasions; the same who work by day work by night, Thinks that if it be possible the French houses are worse than the English; the work people are of both nations. In some of the French houses believes there are relays, night and day workers, and that they go on night and day. If they get very sleepy they lie on the floor, 'on the cuttings if there are any.' This indulgence depends on the kindness of the head of the room.

The business is conducted by a forewoman; the em-

ployer, having little to do with the work-room, has regular hours of rest.

Has known two young women, one not more than 16, who fainted generally once or twice in the day: one of these left the house in a deep decline, and witness believes she afterwards died.

The usual age at which young girls begin to work is from 14 to 16 years. They very frequently come from the country, and are then healthy and strong, The effects upon the health are, in the first place, lassitude and debility, with loss of apetite; pain in the back, either between the shoulders or in the loins, is universal; should think there is not one in 20 who does not suffer from this affection. Indigestion is very common. Pulmonary affections, such as cough and tightness in the breath are also frequent. Head ache is very common; 'you would never be in a work-room half an hour without some one complaining of that.' If they become ill, unless it be dangerous, they must continue at their work; they do this for months together; the employers taking very little care of the health of the young women. If they are seriously ill they must go home; it is a very rare thing for them to remain in the house. Many go into the country in a state threatening a fatal result and 'never return.' Out of all the young women known to witness, has only known one who had retained her health; believes that this one began later in life than general, at 20. Does not think it would be possible to keep up the system which is adopted in the dress-making establishments in London, if there were not a constant succession of fresh hands from the country. Does not think that men could sustain the labour which is imposed on these young and

delicate women. Witness can only account for these young persons submitting to such labour from the fact of their bread depending on their having employment; this applies to the journeywomen. As regards the apprentices, they have no chance, because if they complained, 'their indentures would be brought against them.' Has known the indentures to be so brought against apprentices who have objected to working on Sunday; 'the principal saying the time of the apprentice was their's.' A case of this kind happened some years ago in Maidstone. Thinks that in the principal houses in a country town there is frequently as much hardship as in London.

If any general regulations for ordering the hours of work were enforced, considering that there are always an abundance of hands to be had in London, no interruption to the efficient carrying on the business could arise. Such regulations would tend to the employment of some hundreds of workwomen who now are out of work. A restriction of the hours of labour would be a blessing to thousands of girls and young women, who are now utterly taxed beyond their health and strength. Witness's health is seriously affected, and she has been under the treatment of a physician for 3 months. Has bad sight; it is common for the eyes to become affected. Feels that as the young men employed in linen-drapers and other shops have their hours regulated, not exceeding 12, in the busiest time of the year, that young women have a stronger claim to protection, their occupation being so much more unhealthy.

(Signed) MARGARET FOULKEN O'NEIL."

(*Note.*—I saw Miss O'Neil at the suggestion of the

physician under whose care she was, in consequence of illness brought on by long continued application. She is in a very delicate state of health, and her constitution is permanently and seriously impaired.)

"No. 590.—May 9, 1841. *A, Z.*, 21 years old.

(*Note*,—This evidence is inserted as I took it from the witness. Although I have had no opportunity of verifying the statement by enquiry at the establishment referred to, I have no doubt it is substantially correct.—R. D. G.)

"Is now at a French house, at the west end of the town, where English and French young women are employed. There are at this time 65 in the establishment. The hours are so long that witness's health has seriously suffered. She is never well, and the medical man whom she has consulted, says she must leave the situation, or her health will be endangered. They do not begin before 8 A. M., but they continue generally till 2 in the morning; never earlier; often later. Did not leave till 3 this morning; 2 or 3 young women were at that time working, and would do so nearly the whole of this day (Sunday.)

The food is very insufficient in quality and quantity. Although there are 65 persons to dine, there is often only one piece of meat—a leg of mutton, a leg of pork, or a piece of beef: would make an affidavit of this if required. The only vegetables are potatoes, and those so small in quantity that they have only one for each person. They are not stinted as to bread and butter at other meals. However late they work at night, there is no refreshment after 9 P. M. It is very common for the young persons to buy food for themselves.

The sleeping-rooms are built over stables, and they are damp, and many have caught cold. In one of these rooms 18 sleep; in another, with only one window, there are 10 persons. Since witness has been there 1 young person has died and 2 have left, in a decline. Some medical men who had attended those who had been ill have remonstrated against the treatment. It is very common for the young women to faint, especially at the end of the week. These attacks are not like common fainting-fits; they are very alarming. The week before last one young person was in such an alarming state that a medical man was called in. They expect it will be much worse soon, as they will be more busy, and the hours will be later.

No attention is paid to the religious conduct of the young persons. On Sunday many of them are too tired to get up.

On Sunday no breakfast or dinner are provided for the English.

Knows that the young persons in this house were afraid to give evidence to the Sub-Commissioner. Thinks this is a feeling entertained by many of the apprentices: knows this has been the case in several establishments.

Is engaged for a year; but she has heard that at the end of the season the proprietor turns off many, and that no dependence can be placed on the agreement. Those who work very hard do not get on an average more than 20*l.* a-year, or one-third of that sum for the 4 months.

Since she has been there the proprieter wanted to take 2 apprentices, but finding the house was quite full, he called down two of the younger workwomen, girls about 14, and told them they must leave, as they were not sufficiently good hands. On these girls returning to the workroom crying, as they were afraid of being sent home on

such a complaint, the first hand inquired what was the cause of it; aud upon being informed, went to the proprietor and remonstrated against his conduct, as it was merely a pretence to make room for the 2 apprentices. On this the 2 girls were allowed to remain, provided they would sleep out of the house, showing what object was to be attained."

APPENDIX B.

At one infamous establishment, (the name of the principal of which is most improperly concealed in the Parliamentary Report), the workwomen were prevented by the principal from giving any evidence to the sub-commissioner. He, however, obtained it from several of them elsewhere. No wonder there was an effort made to hide such damning facts. "Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved."

"No. 529.—Miss———.

"Has been for several years in the dress-making business: has been 10 years "a first hand," which signifies the party who takes the superintendence of the business, as overlooker of the young persons, cutter out of the work, &c. The common hours of business are from 8 A. M. till 11 P. M. in the winter; in the summer from 6 or half-past 6 A. M. till 12 at night. During the fashionable season, that is from April till the latter end of July, it frequently

happens that the ordinary hours are greatly exceeded: if there is a drawing-room or grand fete, or mourning to be made, it often happens that the work goes on for 20 hours out of the 24, occasionally all night. Every season, in at least half the houses of business, it happens that the young persons occasionally work 20 hours out of the 24 twice or thrice a week. On special occasions, such as drawing-rooms, general mournings, and very frequently wedding orders, it is not uncommon to work all night: has herself worked 20 hours out of the 24 for 3 months together; at this time she was suffering from illness, and the medical attendant remonstrated against the treatment she received. He wished witness to remain in bed at least one day longer, which the employer objected to, required her to get up, and dismissed the surgeon. At this house the hours are shorter, and altogether more comfortable than any other witness has been in.

The meals are always taken as quickly as possible, no fixed time being allowed in any house that witness knows. The general result of the long hours and sedentary occupation is to impair seriously and very frequently to destroy the health of the young women. Has seen young persons faint immediately after the work was over, the stimulus or excitement which had sustained them having ceased. The digestion especially suffers, and also the lungs: pain in the side is very common, and the hands and feet die away from want of circulation and exercise, "never seeing the outside of the door from Sunday to Sunday." It commonly happens that young persons who come from the country healthy and well, become so ill that they are obliged to leave the business, either returning to their friends or going to other occupations, especially as ladies'

maids. Her own health is so much impaired that she has spit blood during the last 6 years.

The two causes to which the present evils are to be referred are—1. The short time which is allowed by ladies to have their dresses made. 2. The disinclination of the employers to have sufficient hands to complete the work. Thinks there would not be the slightest difficulty in procuring any additional assistance that might be required whenever emergencies arose. The plain parts of the work could always be put out, and the remainder could always be finished at home with ease. Is sure there are some thousands of young women employed in the business in London and in the country. If one vacancy were to occur now there would be 20 applicants for it. The wages for the generality are very low: the general sum for journeywomen is from 10*l.* to 20*l.* a-year, board and lodging being provided. Thinks that no men could endure the work enforced from the dress-makers.

(Signed) ———"

"No. 532.—February 14, 1841. *M. D.*, 25 years old.

"Has been in the business altogether about 7 years; was formerly apprenticed at Birmingham to Mrs. ——— Paid 50*l.* for 2 years. At this house the hours in the summer were from 5 A. M. till 12, 1, and 2 in the morning: these were the regular hours. In the winter from 8 A. M. till 11 P. M. In consequence of Mrs. ——— having a large connexion, the busy season was longer than the spring season in London; indeed they are, in a house like this, always busy. On Saturday night, during the 2 years witness was there it frequently happened that the work

was carried on till 7 o'clock on Sunday morning. If any particular order was to be executed, as mournings or weddings, and they left off on Saturday night at 11, they worked the whole of Sunday: thinks this happened 15 times in the 2 years. In consequence of working so late ou Sunday morning, or all that day occasionally, could very rarely go to church, "indeed it could not be thought of, because they generally rested in bed."

Sufficient time was allowed for meals, and the food was excellent. Never had any refreshment if they sat up all night. This business was principally carried on by apprentices who paid premiums: when witness was there, there were 12 apprentices, principally under 18 years of age. In consequence of the severe labour witness underwent at Mrs. ———'s, her health became seriously affected, and she was entirely from this cause obliged to remain at home 2 years. She became extremely thin, and has never recovered flesh. Her sight was seriously injured, and has never been good since: at this time suffers very much from her eyes; if she works after 9 at night they become red and much swollen, and the tears scald dreadfully. When she went home from Birmingham she could not sleep for several nights; for 2 or 3 months she laid on the bed and could scarcely sleep at all, so that when her mother came she said her eyes were always open. Thought herself she would never recover; 'she had lost all her strength, and her spirits were quite sunk.' Witness did not learn at Mrs.———'s the millinery department, to be taught which she paid a premium of 50*l.*; was principally employed in plain work; did not complain, but 'took anything that was given, because her spirits were broken, which she has never regained.' In consequence

of these 2 years of illness, and of not having been properly taught the business, witness has been obliged to come to town to perfect herself, and is at this time from this cause working without wages. Several of the young persons at Mrs. ———'s suffered in their health; one young woman died of consumption, and witness believes from the work. Has never heard that any of the young person's friends complained: witness did not like to complain because she had paid a premium.

Since witness has been in town has worked from 6 A. M. till 12, 1, and 2 in the morning: has worked till 3 on Sunday morning. The meals are generally very much hurried, and sufficient time is not allowed.

In some houses is certain the food is very bad, and not sufficient in quantity.

Has known several young persons so much exhausted that they were obliged to lay down either in the work-room or in their bed-room for an hour before they could undress; they also rise in the morning tired and exhausted. Since witness has been in town a young woman, who had been in a first-rate house 4 years, died in the same house with witness of consumption. Has known one case of catalepsy; the subject of it has been obliged to go home to her friends in the country. Impaired sight and weakness of the eyes are very common: loss of appetite and indigestion are very general; in fact, they are always more or less consulting the doctor. 'Thinks the fashionable houses are the worst, and that they work longer hours. In some of the country houses the hours are very long and oppressive, and the food often bad.'

(Signed) M. D."

Additional evidence of *M. D.*, March 17.

"In consequence of witness's employer having heard of her making the above statement, she was grossly abused before 3 or 4 persons; was accused of improper motives in meeting the Sub-Commissioner to give evidence, and was, at a moment's notice, turned out of doors without a character. Has reason to believe that her employer has made false representations to witness's relations. These circumstances have caused witness deep mental suffering and anguish, and have also most seriously interfered with her future prospects in life. She is at this time out of a situation. Witness also knows that X. Y. was dismissed in consequence of having given evidence to the Sub-Commissioner; and that Miss ———, who being under an engagement could not be discharged on the instant, received a month's warning, at the end of which time she left her situation. Is ready to corroborate the truth of the whole of these statements on oath.

(Signed) M. D."

"*(Remarks.)*—Having been informed by M. D. that she, and X. Y. had been discharged by their employer in consequence of having given me their evidence, I thought it right to call on their employer, and to offer to receive any statement she might wish to make: this offer was declined. At this time, June 28th, the witness (M. D.) has not been able to procure a situation.—R. D. G."

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