

scarcely be said, indeed, to have complied with the conditions of his membership. In point of fact, I saw him only last week in Paris."

"In Paris?—At the Morgue?" suggested one of the company.

"No, not at the Morgue. He was alive—very much alive. The subject is one of some delicacy. I may say, however, that in his case there had been talk of his suffering from what our great poet—if I may again refer to him—has ingeniously called 'the pangs of despised love.' But I found him married and apparently happy. He was, in point of fact, spending his honeymoon in Paris."

This statement was received with amazement and evident perplexity.

There was a general feeling that something should be done; that the member in question should be made to understand that he had acted most improperly. He was alive, whereas he was bound to be dead. It was even suggested that legal proceedings should be taken against him. Illegal proceedings were also proposed. Mr. Serjeant Fell was appealed to. He occupied the office of honorary standing counsel to the club. But the learned gentleman was hardly in a position at that moment to offer advice of much worth. His appearance was disordered and inflamed; he had flung open his waistcoat and torn off his white cravat: he had been drinking deeply. He was understood to say, that although there had been a clear breach of contract, he did not think an action would lie; that a man was not bound to criminate himself; that it might be held that the objects of the club were, if not immoral, at any rate, opposed to policy; that it was questionable whether the club could be legally viewed as a corporate body and able to sue or be sued. Still, he thought a court of equity might possibly give relief, and decree specific performance, or award damages in default. In any case, he opined—dropping into a very intoxicated tone—that the devil would have the honorable gentleman all in good time, with a good many other people, including every member of that eminent society! Thereupon it was whispered that upon such a subject the learned serjeant was very likely to be particularly well informed. The chairman again rose.

Lord Melgrave, avoiding all reference to the remarks of the learned serjeant, observed that this was the first case of the kind that had ever occurred since the foundation of the club. There was no need for them, however, to arrive at an immediate decision: they might well adjourn their discussion of the matter until a future occasion. Possibly, the member who seemed to be in default did not really contemplate any breach of faith with the club, but merely desired a little more time for the adjustment of his affairs. That was unusual and, as a rule, undesirable. His lordship had been, he said, an advocate of promptness and punctuality in all matters throughout his life. Still, it was not expedient to apply a hard and fast rule to a case that might prove to have something exceptional about it. "It has been said," his lordship observed, in conclusion, "that love brought our absent member here in the first instance, and that he is now married. Well, we know that marriage also brings us recruits—perhaps even more than love. I make no doubt that we shall have good news of our friend before very long. He has deferred payment of his debt; but he will certainly pay it. Let us pass to the business of the evening."

V.

It was a nervous business, there could be no doubt about that, albeit attempt was made to disguise the fact. But there was an end now of laughing and jesting. Faces wore a serious look, smiles vanished, brows were knit even fiercely, lips were closely compressed; uneasy glances darted hither and thither.

"Is not the room very hot?" asked some one.

"Infernally hot. It's a bitterly cold night, too. But this room is perfectly stifling. I can scarcely breathe. It's the candles, I suppose."

"Or the punch," suggested Serjeant Fell. With a trembling hand he emptied his glass and refilled it.

Lord Melgrave was shaking the vases, that the cards they contained might be well shuffled.

"Mr. Vane, our youngest member, will kindly draw for us," said his lordship. "With a view to absolute fairness in the matter, he desires to be blindfolded. It is an unnecessary form; we have all of us, I am sure, the most perfect confidence in Mr. Vane; but it is his wish, so I hasten to comply with it." And he bound a handkerchief over Mr. Vane's eyes.

"Is there not a strange rumbling sound?" asked the member who had before complained of the heat of the room; "or am I troubled with a singing in the ears?"

"It's the wind getting up, perhaps."

"Or a market cart jogging along to Covent Garden."

"Or the punch, perhaps," Mr. Serjeant Fell again suggested.

"Hush!"

Mr. Vane was about to draw the cards from the vases.

As he drew the cards, he handed them to Lord Melgrave. There was absolute stillness in the room. Everyone held his breath. All eyes were turned upon Mr. Vane.

"Mr. Serjeant Fell," his lordship read aloud, and then threw the card upon the table, for anyone to inspect who listed. The number drawn to correspond with the card was twelve.

The second card bore Mr. Feverell's name; the third, Mr. Vane's own name. The numbers were five and nine respectively.

"Lord Melgrave,"—his lordship in firm tones pronounced his own name. He next read the number: "Thirteen."

No one spoke.

"At last!" said his lordship very quietly. "I have usually met with ill luck at games of chance. Fortune favors me to-night. I rise a winner. Congratulate me, gentlemen." He smiled pleasantly as he took a pinch of snuff from his superb box.

It was certain that a very strange noise was filling the house. A footman hurriedly threw open the door.

"Gentlemen," he cried, "we are in the greatest danger. The house is on fire! The room below is in flames; the staircase is threatened. It is necessary to escape immediately, or we shall be all dead men."

Having thus delivered himself, the footman vanished.

Volumes of dense smoke poured into the room. It was thought well to close the doors again.

VI.

All rose from the table. Much confusion prevailed; there was something of paniceven, with much uncertain hurrying to and fro. Various cries were heard: "Order, order!" "Adjourn the meeting!" "Disperse!" "Silence for the chair!" &c., &c. Lord Melgrave attempted to speak; but for some moments he could not make himself heard, the hubbub was so great.

Mr. Feverell proceeded to lock the doors, in the cause of order, as he said, and in support of the chair.

"Madman! What would you do?" cried several of the members. Mr. Feverell drew his sword.

"I act with my friend," said Mr. Vane. "I beg you to stand back, gentlemen," and he took up his position by the side of Mr. Feverell. The smoke was now stealing beneath the door and through the crevices of the floor, filling the room.

"What is your pleasure, gentlemen?" Lord Melgrave was heard to demand. "Is it the general wish that the meeting should stand adjourned *sine die*?"

"I move that the club be dissolved, cried one of the company."

"Let us proceed in order," said Lord Melgrave, as he took snuff. "I appeal to you to preserve the peace of the meeting, to check all tendency to confusion. It is moved that the club be dissolved. Indeed, its dissolution appears imminent, hardly to be avoided upon any terms. But I am in the hands of the meeting. Gentlemen, I entreat you to be orderly, to recollect yourselves. At such a juncture, it is most necessary that we should show ourselves calm and composed—superior to the emotions of the moment, above the follies and weaknesses of the herd. Gentlemen," he cried, raising his voice as the uproar increased on all sides of him, "it cannot be that the members of the Cato Club fear to die!"

He was listened to no more. With a quiet smile he resumed his seat. He drew a small box from his pocket, swallowed two opium pills, and helped himself to a glass of wine.

A rush was now made to the doors. The two friends defended themselves, valiantly; but overpowered by numbers, exhausted and bleeding, they were presently hurled inside. Mr. Feverell had possessed himself of the keys, however, which he tossed through the window into the street. Endeavors were made to force the locks; failing this, by employing chairs as battering-rams, the panels were splintered and battered out. But the smoke poured in thick columns through the apertures: clouds of sparks filled the room. A terrible crash was heard: the staircase had fallen! The house seemed now a mass of angry flame.

Escape was still possible—just possible—by the windows. These looked towards the street. It was perceived that an excited crowd had assembled without; there were the sounds of many voices, of strange cries, of the springing of watchmen's rattles. Someone had gone, it was said, to try and find the beadle, who was believed to have custody and control of the parish fire-engine.

Still, it was a dangerous leap from the windows to the pavement below, with an ugly iron palisade to escape. Hurriedly the damask cloth was dragged from the supper table; a wreck of food and flowers, plate and glass, wine and punch strewn and soiled the floor—the white death's head, the club's emblem, grinning in the midst. The table-cloth, twisted rope-wise, was fastened to the balcony, offering a means of descent into the street.

But some had been unable to wait the completion of this proceeding. Urged by the crowd, who were holding out their arms invitingly, the poet had leaped from the balcony, to fall a contused and shattered mass in the road-way.

"His muse never soared very high," observed Mr. Feverell. "She will mount now, if ever again, upon a very broken wing."

The traveller followed the poet; the dandy, the traveller; the soldier, the gambler. Then came a great roar from the crowd: Serjeant Fell, in his clumsy attempt to descend, had struck violently against the iron palisades.

"You are bleeding, Feverell, said Mr. Vane to his friend. Mr. Feverell was holding to his lips a white handkerchief blotched with crimson.

"It's over with me, Vane. I received somehow an awkward sword-thrust in the left breast." As he spoke, his mouth filled with blood.

"Gentlemen," said Lord Melgrave, "I entreat you to save yourselves. There is not a moment to be lost. The floor is yielding beneath our feet. I certify that you have acted most gallantly. But enough has been done for honor. Save yourselves, I implore."

"And yourship?" asked Mr. Vane.

"You forget. My position is not the same as yours. I am number thirteen. I remain."

"I shall not quit your lordship."

"Vane, I add my entreaties to his lordship's," said Mr. Feverell. "Save yourself. I am dying. Believe me when I say that, after all, life is worth living."

"I remain here," said Mr. Vane firmly, as he took up his position at the window. But he had scarcely spoken when, exerting all his strength, by a sudden effort Mr. Feverell seized him by the waist, lifted him in the air, and fairly tossed him over the balcony. He was caught by a hundred hands. He had escaped altogether uninjured.

When Mr. Feverell was last seen, his face wore a strangely radiant look. He waved his hand as though bidding adieu to his friend and to the world. A moment after, and huge puffs of smoke hid him from sight. Then came the flames bursting through the windows, crunching the wooden frames, and licking and blackening and blistering the brick-work and stone coping. The floor had fallen in. The total destruction of the house was inevitable.

There was an absolute end of "The Cato Club."

DUTTON COOK.

ANECDOTE OF THE PARISIAN POLICE.

Previously to the year 1789, but at what precise date I cannot say, the city of Paris possessed as guardian of its safety, and chief minister of police, a man of rare talent and integrity. At the same period, the parish of St. Germain, in the quarter of the Rue St. Antoine, had for its curé a kind, venerable old man, whose whole life was spent in doing good to both the souls and bodies of his fellow creatures, and whose holy consistency and dignified courage caused him to be loved by the good, and respected by even the most abandoned characters. One cold dark winter's night, the bell at the old curé's door was rung loudly, and he, although in bed, immediately arose and opened the door, anticipating a summons to some sick or dying bed.

A personage, richly dressed, with his features partly concealed by a large false beard, stood outside. Addressing the curé in a courteous and graceful manner, he apologized for his unseasonable visit, which, as he said, the high reputation of monsieur had induced him to make.

"A great and terrible, but necessary and inevitable deed," he continued, "is to be done. Time presses; a soul about to pass into eternity implores your ministry. If you come, you must allow your eyes to be bandaged, ask no questions and consent to act simply as spiritual consolers of a dying woman. If you refuse to accompany me, no other priest can be admitted, and her spirit must pass alone."

After a moment of secret prayer, the curé answered, "I will go with you." Without asking any further explanation, he allowed his eyes to be bandaged, and leant on the arm of his suspicious visitor. They both got into a coach, whose windows were immediately covered by wooden shutters, and then they drove off rapidly. They seemed to go a long way, and make many doublings and turnings ere the coach drove under a wide archway, and stopped.

During this time, not a single word had been exchanged between the travellers, and ere they got out the stranger assured himself that the bandage over his companion's eyes had not been displaced, and then taking the old man respectfully by the hand, he assisted him to alight and to ascend the wide steps of a staircase as far as the second story. A great door opened, as if of itself, and several thickly-carpeted rooms were traversed in silence. At length, another door was opened by the guide, and the curé felt his bandage removed. They were in a solemn-looking bed-chamber; near a bed, half veiled by thick damask curtains, was a small table, supporting two wax lights, which feebly illuminated the cold death-like apartment. The stranger (he was the Duke de —), then bowing to the curé, led him towards the bed, drew back the curtains, and said in a solemn tone:

"Minister of God, before you is a woman who has betrayed the blood of her ancestors, and whose doom is irrevocably fixed. She knows on what conditions an interview with you has been granted her; she knows too that all supplications would be useless. You know your duty, M. le Curé; I leave you to fulfil it, and will return to seek you in half an hour."

So saying he departed, and the agitated priest saw lying on the bed a young and beautiful girl, bathed in tears, battling with despair, and calling in her bitter agony for the comforts of religion. No investigation possible! for the unhappy creature declared herself bound by a terrible oath to conceal her name; besides, she knew not in what place she was.

"I am," she said, "the victim of a secret family tribunal, whose sentence is irrevocable! More, I cannot tell. I forgive my enemies as I trust that God will forgive me. Pray for me!"

The minister of religion invoked the sublime promises of the gospel to soothe her troubled

soul, and he succeeded. Her countenance after a time became composed, she clasped her hands in fervent prayer, and then extended them towards her consoler.

As she did so, the curé perceived that the sleeve of her robe was stained with blood.

"My child," said he, with a trembling voice, "what is this?"

"Father, it is the vein which they have already opened, and the bandage, no doubt, was carelessly put on."

At these words a sudden thought struck the priest. He unrolled the dressing, allowed the blood to flow, steeped his handkerchief in it, then replaced the bandage, concealed the stained handkerchief within his vest, and whispered:

"Farewell, my daughter, take courage, and have confidence in God!"

The half-hour had expired, and the step of his terrible conductor was heard approaching.

"I am ready," said the curé, and having allowed his eyes to be covered, he took the arm of the Duke de —, and left the awful room, praying meanwhile with secret fervor.

Arrived at the foot of the staircase, the old man succeeded, without his guide's knowledge, in slightly displacing the thick bandage so as to admit a partial ray of lamplight. Finding himself in the carriage gateway, he managed to stumble and fall, with both hands forward, towards a dark corner. The Duke hastened to raise him, both resumed their places in the carriage, and after re-passing through the same tortuous route, the curé was set down in safety at his own door.

Without one moment's delay, he called his servant.

"Pierre," he said, "arm yourself with a stick, and give me your support; I must instantly go to the minister of police."

Soon afterwards, the official gate was opened to admit the well-known venerable pastor.

"Monsieur le curé," he said, addressing the minister, "a terrible deed will speedily be accomplished, if you are not in time to prevent it. Let your agents visit, before daybreak, every carriage gateway in Paris; in the inner angle of one of them will be found a blood-stained handkerchief. The blood is that of a young female, whose murder, already begun, has been miraculously suspended. Her family have condemned their victim to have her veins opened one by one, and thus to perish slowly in expiation of a fault, already more than punished by her mortal agony. Courage, my friend, you have already some hours. May God assist you—I can only pray."

That same morning, at eight o'clock, the minister of police entered the curé's room.

"My friend," said he, "I confess my inferiority, you are able to instruct me in expedients."

"Saved!" cried the old man, bursting into tears.

"Saved," said the minister, "and rescued from the power of her cruel relations. But the next time, dear Abbé, that you want my assistance in a benevolent enterprise, I wish you would give me a little more time to accomplish it."

Within the next twenty-four hours, by the express order from the King, the Duke de — and his accomplices were secretly removed from Paris, and conveyed out of the kingdom.

The young woman received all the care which her precarious state required; and, when sufficiently recovered, retired to a quiet country village, where the royal protection assured her safety. It is scarcely needful to say, that next to her Maker, the curé of St. G. — was the object of her deepest gratitude and filial love. During fifteen years, the holy man received from time to time the expression of her grateful affection; and at length, when himself, from extreme old age, on the brink of the grave, he received word that she had departed in peace. Never until then had a word of this mysterious adventure passed the good curé's lips. On his deathbed, however, he confided the recital to a bishop, one of his particular friends, and from a relation of the latter I myself heard it. This is the exact truth.

HUMOROUS.

A MAN of no principal.—A bankrupt

PASSING STRANGE.—Cutting a friend in the street.

THE most likely thing to become a woman.—A little girl.

A POSTMASTER, by the name of Goodale, when he is in a hurry, signs himself XX.

WHY should the letter "a" be good for a deaf woman?—Because it makes her hear.

A LADY, last week, had her photograph taken. It was executed so well that her husband prefers it to the original.

NEARLY all the post-offices in Texas are in charge of females. It works so well that the males now arrive every hour in the day.

EVEN if a boy is always whistling "I want to be an angel," it is just as well to keep the preserved pears on the top shelf of the Pantry.

A MANUFACTURING wire-worker, in an advertisement, invites the public to come and see his invisible wire fence.

"My daughter," declared a fashionable mother, "is innocence itself. You can't say anything in her presence that will make her blush."

EVE was the only woman who never threatened to go and live with mamma; and Adam was the only man who never tantalized his wife about "the way mother used to cook."