

try, and was now his own principal. Seeing Gracie glance at his boot-heels, he casually remarked that his business entirely prevented indulgence in horse-exercise. He then inquired if we had heard lately from—from "Emma," was it?—our nurse, we knew?

Being informed that she was in the service of Miss Hollabone—"Dear me!" said Mr Slithers. "Upon your word now? You don't say so! Why, how incredibly remarkable! I really should—if Miss Hollabone will permit—like to avail myself of this very extraordinary circumstance, and say how-de-do to Emma."

Our mistress recognising nothing objectionable in the proposed observation, Emma made her appearance, blushing like a rose—her brown rings of curls vibrating in all directions, as if they were ringing a peal of welcome to our friend.

The five-minute bell before dinner, at this instant, compelled Gracie and me to skip away. What Emma replied to "How-de-do?" was never distinctly reported. I only know that she waited at dinner with the traces of tears visible upon a very happy face—and that, three months later, Emma Rusbridger—certain that Providence had raised up for us friends as true and loving as herself—resigned office with many tears, and became Mrs Septimus Slithers, solicitor, of Newton Collop.

My story must have its end. Out of the warm red sunshine to the gloomy winter of Goldstone Towers.

You will find Gran Morfew and Mr Pinkerton sitting in council, before a mighty fire—Gran folded in shawls and furs; Mr Pinkerton, with his cravat loosed and his waistcoat opened as far as punctilio permits, in a condition of incipient broil. Mrs Morfew is older than she was nearly five years since, and no warmer; but the heart, accustomed from birth to the lowest temperature, holds out bravely against outward rigours, and throbs fiercely with hate and disappointed rage.

There is an open letter in her hand, and she beats it with fury, to emphasise her bitter words.

"It comes to *this*—either this woman has lied to me, or you. You need not start, man. I shall not mince words with you—you, my clerk, my hired servant, who, but for me, would be starving in your clientless chamber, or rotting in jail! Look, you! I will read again: "Florence Lowe, the little orphan whom, at my dear husband's express desire, we have taken to our home, could hardly reconcile herself to parting with her generous protectors. These people must be a marvel! Their school-keeping, it seems, is a mere pretext for obtaining the care of friendless and neglected little ones, their own means being ample for this and other benevolent purposes. Their names are strange, but they are written, notwithstanding, in the book of life, and should be musical in every Christian's ear. I enclose them."—Cant! Sickening humbug! The woman is as great an idiot as themselves!"

She crumpled up the letter, and flung it into the fire.

"Marvels," she calls them. Marvels of lying and swindling! I sent those brats to a place where, you taught me to believe, they would be trained to the duties and the hardships of the station in which I have sworn to keep them. They should have learned to starve—to freeze, as I do—to endure blows and buffets, and heavy toil; and, thanks to your treachery, they have been bred in luxury—pitied, pampered—But my madam shall feel the difference; henceforth, *this* shall be their home!"

Mr Pinkerton noticed the boding snarl, and his heart swelled, but he temporised. "I will take measures," he said, rising, "for their removal—but!"

"I will not trust you," retorted Gran, hissing it through her great false teeth. "You have lied to me—lied to me in a thing nearest my—my heart." Her voice failed, and she pressed her hand on the organ named, as if the mention of it had brought a spasm. "I have sent for them myself. A solicitor, lately settled in that neighbourhood, has been instructed to pay the women,

and prevent the further exercise of their uninvited charity. I sent for you, because I knew it would gratify you to witness their reception. But I trust you no more. You may know something of the law—you have been a decent agent and steward of my property, and may continue to act for me in that capacity, at least for the present—but in other matters, Pinkerton, it strikes me you are a fool—not such a fool, however, as to forfeit five hundred a year. So take warning."

"I will, madam," replied Mr Pinkerton very quietly; "and, since you have done me the honour to speak frankly, I will do the like. I have been a decent agent, inasmuch as my attention to your interests has added to your annual income no less than four thousand pounds. All that you have bestowed on me has been fairly, faithfully earned. My chambers, however, are no longer "clientless." My professional income is thrice the amount I hold at your pleasure; but for thrice *that*, I would not serve you for another day. Yes, you unhappy lady, these wages, as your pride would call them, that I now resign, leaves still an account unsettled between us. I will pay myself *thus*: maltreat these innocent children of the daughter your brutality drove from her home, and I will give them shelter; cast them off, and I will adopt them."

He rose. Mrs Morfew turned her white spectral face, distorted with pain and malice, towards the speaker, and lifted a bony finger. "Hark!" she said listening. "The wheels! At least remain to see me embrace our darlings."

She neither stirred nor spoke again, until the double doors swung open, and Gracie and I, attended by Mr and Mrs Slithers, entered the room. I saw the bony hand fly to her heart, as if to quiet some convulsive action, as she gasped out: "I—I cannot—bear your presence—but for this—for this!"

She clutched at a paper on the table. Mr Pinkerton placed it in her hand. She thanked him with a malignant smile.

"When you—fools—made me believe I was dying—and that—for my soul's health—if nothing else, I should not leave those creatures to beg their bread—I, weaker fool than any, bequeathed them each one hundred pounds. I am—well—now, and wiser—and thus I—I pay—the legacy." She tore the will across and across. "Take notice all: I cancel!"

Again the hand went to her heart. A frightful stare came upon her face, and her mouth opened, like one uttering a prolonged scream, but there was no sound at all. For half a minute, we watched the appalling figure, sitting there, motionless, as if changed to stone; then Mr Pinkerton made a step forward, but instantly turning, caught our hands, and led us away.

"Gran Morfew is gone," he said solemnly. "God help and pardon all. He has cared for the orphan. *All this is now yours.*"

STAGE THUNDER.

IT must have been an early task of the theatrical machinist to devise a method of simulating the sounds of rain, and wind, and tempest. Audiences have always suffered themselves to be impressed by storm-effects, however inadequately represented. Thunder and lightning, like Mr Puff's favourite expedient of a clock striking, have seldom failed to "beget an awful attention in the audience." Shakspeare himself, though he reprobated the groundlings who for the most part, were "capable of nothing but inexplicable dumb-shows and noise," was fond of enlisting the strife of the elements in the service of his plays; probably following the example of elder dramatists in his frequent recourse to the functionary behind the scenes, whose duty it was to "ride on the whirlwind and direct the storm." Thus the "Tempest" and "Macbeth" both open with thunder and lightning; there is "loud weather" in the "Winter's Tale"; there is thunder in the "First Part of King Henry the Sixth," when *La Pucelle* invokes the fiends to aid her enterprise; thunder and lightning in the "Second part of King

Henry the sixth," when *Marjery Jourdain* conjures up the Spirit; thunder and lightning in "Julius Cæsar," a sea storm in "Pericles," and a marvellous hurricane in "King Lear." The post-Shaksperian play-wrights introduced storms into their dramas with a frequency that drew upon them Pope's memorable rebuke in the "Dunciad:"

Now turn to different sports (the Goddess cries)
And learn, my sons, the wondrous power of noise.
To move, to raise, to ravish every heart,
With Shakspeare's nature or with Jonson's art,
Let others aim; 'tis yours to shake the soul
With thunder rumbling from the mustard-bowl.

Further esteemed stage tricks being censured in the subsequent lines—

With horns and trumpets now to madness swell;
Now sink in sorrow with a tolling bell!
Such happy arts attention can command
When fancy flags and sense is at a stand!

A note to Warburton's edition of the "Dunciad" explains that the old ways of making thunder and mustard by means of grinding and pounding in a bowl, were the same, but that of late the noise had been more advantageously represented by troughs of wood with stops in them; doubt being expressed as to whether this was the improved thunder of which Mr. Dennis claimed to be the inventor. In our days John Dennis is more remembered by the well-known story about his thunder, and by the stupid virulence of his attacks upon the great men of his epoch, than by anything else. His thunder first made itself heard on the production, at Drury Lane, in 1709, of his "Appius and Virginia," a dull tragedy, which not even the combined talents of Booth, Wilks, and Betterton (in the last season of that great actor's performance) could keep alive for longer than four nights. But although the play died, the thunder survived, a favourite appliance of the theatre; and upon its peals resounding on a later occasion,—some say at a performance of "Macbeth," others, at the production of a play of a rival author,—Dennis, who was present, rose from his seat in a violent passion, exclaiming with an oath,—"See how these villains use me! They will not let my play run, and yet they steal my thunder!" The "Dunciad" did not appear until nearly twenty years after the performance of Mr. Dennis's tragedy. Pope either purposely ignored the merits and method of Mr. Dennis's thunder, or did not really know that the old mustard-bowl style of storm had gone out of fashion.

When Do Louthembourg, who was for a time scene-painter at Drury Lane under Mr. Garrick's management, opened his dioramic exhibition, which he called the "Eidophusicon," we learn that the imitation of thunder with which he accompanied some of his pictures was very natural and grand. A large sheet of thin copper was suspended by a chain, and being shaken by one of the lower corners, produced the sound as of a distant rumbling, seemingly below the horizon; and as the clouds rolled over the scene, approaching nearer and nearer, the thunder increased, peal by peal, "until," says an enthusiastic eye-witness, "following rapidly the lightning's zigzag flash, which was admirably vivid and sudden, it burst in a tremendous crash immediately overhead." Tubes charged with peas, and gradually turned and returned on end, represented the fall and patter of hail and rain; and two hoops, covered with silk tightly strained, tambourine fashion, and pressed against each other with a quick motion, emitted hollow whistling sounds in imitation of gusts of wind.

Appliances something similar to these are still in use at the modern theatres when a storm has to be represented. The noise of storm has been simulated, however, by other methods: notably by rolling to and fro a large empty cask on the floor of the room above the ceiling of the theatre; a plan rather calculated to excite the anxiety of the spectators lest the thunder should come down bodily, crashing through the roof into the pit. Another ingenious device, once adopted at the Edinburgh Theatre, brought with it rather ludicrous results. The manager, bent on improving the tone and volume of his storms, procured a parcel of nine-pound cannon-balls; these were placed in a strong wheel-barrow, and