

position of respectability must hold for every woman, and believed that, as soon as she had got the better of her illness, the advisability of his proposal would strike her in its true light. He had not the least idea that she was dying; and her subsequent death seemed to kill at one blow both his ambitions. He could neither make her his wife, nor see her made the wife of the man who had deserted her. And there seemed to him but one thing left to be done—to exchange the blows, alluded to above, with the author of all this misfortune, even though they were to death.

"If I can only see that there 'Amilton," he thinks savagely, as he journeys from Priestley, "and break his dorned head for him, I shall bide perhaps a bit quieter. Wherever I meet him, though, and whenever it may be, it will be a stand-up fight between us. And if he won't own his child and provide for it as a gentleman should, why there'll be another. And small satisfaction, too, with my poor girl a-lying cold in the churchyard." And here, hurried by retrospection beyond all bounds of propriety, he begins to call down the curse of the Almighty upon the luckless head of his unknown enemy.

He quits Priestley at the very time that Eric Keir is trying to drown his disappointment by running over the United States with his friend Charley Holmes, until the fatal letter announcing his elder brother's death shall call him back to England. Had it not been so, there would have been small chance of his being encountered in the streets of London during the shooting season by our poor friend Joel. But what should a country lout know of such matters? It is to London that he works his way, feeling assured that in that emporium of wealth and fashion and luxury, sooner or later, he must meet his rival. So far he has reason, and by slow degrees he reaches the metropolis, journeying from farm to farm, with a day's job here and a day's job there, until he has gained the site of a suburban railway, on which he gets employment as a porter.

Here, seeing no means of bettering himself, he rests quietly for several months, more resigned and disposed to take interest in life again perhaps, but still with that one idea firmly fixed in his mind, and eagerly scanning the features or following the footsteps of any one whose face or figure reminds him, in ever so small a degree, of the hated "Amilton." Perhaps it is fortunate for Joel's chances of retaining his situation that he cannot read, else the times he would have been seduced from his allegiance by seeing the mystic name upon a hat-box or a portmanteau would have been without number. How many Hamiltons journeyed up and down that line, I wonder, and embarked or disembarked at that station during the three months Joel Cray was porter there! But personal characteristics were all the guides he followed after, and these were often sufficient to insure him a reprimand. At last he heard of a situation as pot-boy in the West End of London, and resigned half his wages to increase his chance of meeting Muiraven.

But Muiraven spent his Christmas and his spring at Berwick Castle, and did not leave home again until he went to Glottonbury and met the Mordaunts.

Meanwhile poor Joel, much disheartened at repeated failures, but with no intention of giving in, searched for him high and low, and kept his wrath boiling, all ready for him when they should meet, by a nightly recapitulation of his wrongs.

Muiraven leaves Priestley, and embarks for India. The unfortunate avenger is again baffled.

The season passes, and he has ascertained nothing. Amongst the "Amiltons," he has met or heard of, he can trace no member answering to the description of Myra's betrayer. Many are tall and fair, and many tall and dark; but the white skin, and the blue eyes, and the dark hair come not, and the poor, honest, faithful heart begins to show signs of weariness. "Who knows?" so he argues—for two years and more Myra had heard nothing of him—"perhaps he may have died in the interim. Oh, if he could only ascertain that he had!"

But this search is as futile as the first. By degrees Joel confides his sorrow and his design to others—it is so hard to suffer all by oneself—and his acquaintances are eager to assist him, for there is something irresistibly exciting in a hue and cry; but their efforts, though well meant, fall to the ground, and hope and courage begin to sink away together. During this year, Joel passes through the various phases of pot-boy, bottle-cleaner, and warehouse porter, until he has worked his way down to the Docks, where his fine-built muscular frame and capabilities of endurance make him rather a valuable acquisition. He is still in this position when Lord Muiraven returns from the East Indies.

Muiraven left Fen Court in a strangely unsettled state of mind. He did not know if he were happier or more miserable for the discovery he had made. After an awkward and unsatisfactory manner, he had cleared himself in Irene's eyes, and received the assurance of her forgiveness; but how was his position bettered by the circumstance? Love make us so unreasonable. A twelve month ago he would have been ready to affirm that he could bear anything for the knowledge that the girl whose affection he had been compelled to resign, did not utterly despise him. Now he knows that it is true, and thinks the truth but an aggravation of the insurmountable barriers that Fate has raised between them.

"If I were only a worse fellow than I am," he thinks impatiently, as he travels back to

town—"if I were as careless as half the fellows that I meet, I should scatter every obstacle to the wind, and make myself happy in my own way; but it would break dad's heart; and on the top of losing dear old Bob, too!"

The question, whether the woman by means of whom he would like to be "happy in his own way" would aid and abet his unholy wishes does not enter into his calculations just then. Had there been any probability of their fulfillment, she might have done so, and Lord Muiraven would have found his level. But it flatters him to think that Irene's virtue and respectability are the magnanimous gifts of his powers of self-control. He forgets that she even forbade his speaking to her on the subject, and feels quite like Sir Galahad, or St. Anthony, or anybody else who was particularly good at resisting temptation (Heaven knows, a place in the Calendar is small enough reward for so rare a virtue!), as he reviews the circumstances of his visit, and wilfully consigns poor old Colonel Mordaunt to the realms of eternal frizzling.

How the shadow of the Past rise up to mock him now, and tell him that were his wildest speculations realised, there would still remain an obstacle to his asking any woman to become his wife! How he curses that obstacle and his own folly, as he dashes onward to the metropolis! and how many of his fellow-passengers that day may not—had they indulged them—have had similar thoughts to his! It is the misfortune of this miserable purblind existence that we must either loiter timidly along the road of life, permitting ourselves to be out-distanced at each step, or rush onward with the ruck, pell-mell, helter-skelter, stumbling over a stone here, rushing headlong against a dead wall there—on, on, with scarce a thought to what we have left behind us and no knowledge as to what lies before—straining, pushing, striving, wrestling—and the devil take the hindmost.

What wonder if we oftener fall than stand, and that the aforesaid gentleman does take a pretty considerable number of us!

Muiraven cannot bear the presence of that Nemesis; and the endeavor to outwit it drives him wild for a few days; after which he runs up to Scotland, startling Lord Norham with his eccentric behavior, until the time arrives for him to cross the Channel with his cousin Stratford and meet the outward-bound steamer at Brindisi. The voyage does him good. There is no panacea for dispersing miserable thoughts like lots of bustle and moving about—and it is very difficult to be love-sick in the company of a set of excellent fellows who will not leave you for a moment to yourself, but keep you smoking drinking, laughing and chaffing from morning till night. There are times, of course, when the remembrance of Irene comes back to him—in his berth, at night, for instance; but Muiraven is no sentimentalist: he loves her dearly, but he feels more disposed to curse than cry when he remembers her—although the only thing he curses is his own fate and hers. He reaches Bengal in safety, and for the next few months his cousin and he are up country, "pig-sticking," and made much of amongst those regiments with the members of which they are acquainted. During his absence, Muiraven hears no news except such as is connected with his own family. His brother is married (it was a great cause of offence to the Robertson family that he did not remain in England till the important ceremony was over) and his old father feels lonely without Cecil, and wants his eldest son back again. Muiraven also beginning to feel rather home-sick and as though he had had enough of India, Christmas finds him once more at Berwick Castle: paler and thinner perhaps than he looked on leaving England; but the heat of the climate of Bengal is more than sufficient to account for such trifling changes. He arrives just in time for the anniversary; and a week afterwards, he wants to return to London, being anxious (so he says) about the case of certain valuables which he purchased in Calcutta months ago, and sent home round the Cape. Lord Norham suggests that his agent will do all that is necessary concerning them; but Muiraven considers it absolutely important that he should be on the spot himself. The fact is, he is hankering after news of Irene again; the dead silence of the last six months respecting her begins to oppress him like some hideous nightmare; the false excitement is over and the ruling passion regains its ascendancy.

What if anything should have happened to her in his absence? Notwithstanding her prohibition to the contrary, he sent her a note on his return to England, simply telling the fact and expressing a hope that they might soon meet again; but to this letter he has received no answer. He becomes restlessly impatient to hear something—anything, and trusts to the despatch of a cargo of Indian and Chinese toys, which he has brought home for Tommy, to break again the ice between them. It is this hope that brings him up to London, determined to see after the arrival of these keys to Irene's heart himself.

They are all safe but one—the very case which he thinks most of, which is crammed to the lid with those wonderful sky-blue elephants, and crimson horses, spotted dogs, which the natives of Surat turn and color, generation after generation, without entertaining, apparently, the slightest doubt of their fidelity to nature. It was consigned, amongst many others, to the care of Calcutta agent for shipment and address; and Muiraven is at first almost afraid that it has been left behind. His cousin Stratford suggests that they shall go down to the Docks and inquire after it themselves.

"Queer place, the Docks, Muiraven! Have

you ever been there? It's quite a new sensation, I assure you, to see the heaps of bales and casks and cases, and to hear all the row that goes on amongst them. Let's go, if you've got nothing else to do, this morning. I know that it'll amuse you."

And so they visit the Docks in company.

There is no trouble about the missing case. It turns up almost as soon as they mention it, and proves to have come to no worse grief than having its direction obliterated by the leakage of a barrel of tar. So, having had their minds set at rest with respect to Tommy's possessions, Muiraven and Stratford link arms and stroll through the Docks together, watching the business going on around them with keen interest. They look rather singular and out of place, these two fashionably dressed and aristocratic young men, amongst the rough sailors and porters, the warehousemen, negroes, and foreigners of all descriptions that crowd the Docks. Many looks are directed after them as they pass by, and many remarks, not all complimentary to their rank, are made as soon as they are considered out of hearing. But as they reach a point which seems devoted to the stowage of bales of cotton or some such goods, a rough-looking young fellow, a porter, apparently, who has just had a huge bale hoisted on to his shoulders by a companion, with an exclamation of surprise lets it roll backwards to the earth again, and stepping forward, directly blocks their pathway.

"Now, my good fellow!" says Muiraven carelessly, as though to warn him that he is intruding.

"What are yer arter?" remonstrates the other workman, who has been knocked over by the receding bale.

"I beg your pardon," says Joel Cray, addressing Muiraven (for Joel, of course, it is), "but, if I don't mistake, you goes by the name of 'Amilton'?"

This is by no means the grandiloquent appeal by which he has often dreamed of, figuratively speaking, knocking his adversary over before he goes in without any figure of speech at all, and "settles his hash for him."

But how seldom are events which we have dreamed of fulfilled in their proper course!

That man (or woman) that jilted us! With what a torrent of fiery eloquence did we intend to overwhelm them for their perfidy when first we met them, face to face; and how weakly, in reality, do we accept their proffered hand, and express a hope we see them well! Our ravings are mostly confined to our four-posters. This prosaic nineteenth century affords us so few opportunities of showing off our rhetorical powers!

On Joel's face, although it is January and he is standing in the teeth of a cold north wind, the sweat has already risen; and the hand he dares not raise, hangs clenched by his side. Still, he is a servant in a public place, surrounded by spectators—and he may be mistaken! Which facts flash through his mind in a moment, and keep him quiescent in his rival's path, looking not much more dangerous than any other impatient, half-doubting man might be.

"As sure as I live," he repeats somewhat huskily, "you goes by the name of 'Amilton,' sir!"

"Is he drunk?" says Muiraven, appealing to the bystanders. "It's rather early in the day for it. Stand out of my way—will you?"

"What do you want with the gentleman?" demands his fellow-workman.

"Satisfaction!" roars Joel, nettled by the manner of his adversary into showing something like the rage he feels. "You're the man, sir! It's no use your denying of it. I've searched for you high and low, and now I've found you, you don't go without answering to me for her ruin. You may be a gentleman, but you haven't acted like one; and I'll have my revenge on you, or die for it!"

A crowd has collected round them now, and things begin to look rather unpleasant.

"We're going to have a row," says Stratford gleefully, as he prepares to take off his coat.

"Nonsense, Stratford! The fellow's drunk, or mad. I cannot have you mixed up with a crew like this. If you don't move out of my way and stop your infernal insolence," he continues to Joel Cray, "I'll hand you over to a policeman."

"I am not insolent—I only tell you the truth, and the whole world may know it. Your name's 'Amilton.' You ruined a poor girl, under a promise of marriage, and left her and her child to perish of grief and hunger! And, as sure as there's a God in heaven, I'll make you answer for your wickedness towards 'em!"

"Ugh!" groans the surrounding crowd of navvies, always ready, at the least excuse, to take part against the "bloated hairestocracy."

"I don't know what you're talking about. You must have mistaken me for some one else," replies Muiraven, who cannot resist refuting such an accusation.

"Surely you are not going to parley with the man!" interposes Stratford.

"You don't know of such a place as Hoxford, may be?" shouts Joel, with an inflamed countenance, and a clenched fist, this time brought well to the front—"nor of such a village as Fretterley?—nor you've never heard tell of such a girl as Myra Cray? Ah! I thought I'd make you remember!" as Muiraven, turning deadly white, takes a step backward. "Let go, mates—let me have at him, the d—d thief, who took the gal from me first and ruined her afterwards!"

But they hold him back, three or four of

them at a time, fearing the consequences of anything like personal violence.

"Muiraven, speak to him! What is the matter?" says his cousin impatiently, as he perceives his consternation.

"I cannot," he replies at first; and then, as though fighting with himself, he stands upright and confronts Joel boldly.

"What have you to tell me of Myra Cray? Where is she? What does she want of me? Why has she kept her hiding-place a secret for so long?"

"Why did you never take the trouble to look after her?" retorts Joel. "Why did you leave her to die of a broken heart? Answer me that!"

"To die! Is she dead?" he says in a low voice.

"Ay! she's out of your clutches—you needn't be afraid of that, mister—nor will ever be in them again, poor lass! And there's nothing remains to be done now, but to take my satisfaction out of you."

"And how do you propose to take it? Do you wish to fight me?" demands Muiraven, calmly.

"Better not, mate!" says one of his comrades in a whisper.

"Bleed him!" suggests another, in the same tone.

As for Joel, the quiet question takes him at a disadvantage. He doesn't know what to make of it.

"When a feller's bin wronged," he begins, awkwardly—

"He demands satisfaction," continues Muiraven. "I quite agree with you. That idea holds good in my class as much as in yours. But you seem to know very little more than the facts of this case. Suppose I can prove to you that the poor girl you speak of was not wronged by me, what then?"

"You've bin a deal too 'asty," whispers one of his friends.

"But your name's 'Amilton'—ain't it?" says Joel, mistily.

"It is one of my names. But that is nothing to the purpose. Far from shirking inquiry, I am very anxious to hear all you can tell me about Myra Cray. When can you come home with me? Now?"

"Muiraven! in Heaven's name—is this one of your infernal little scrapes?" says Stratford.

"In Heaven's name, hold your tongue for the present, and you shall know all. Is there any reason why this man should not accompany me to my place of residence?" continues Muiraven, addressing one of the bystanders.

"He can go well enough, if he likes to. He's only here by the job."

"Will you come, then?" to Joel.

"I'm sure I don't know what to say," returns Joel, sheepishly. "Tain't what I call satisfaction to be going 'ome with a gentleman."

"Come with me first, and then, if I don't give you entire satisfaction with respect to this business, we will fight it out your own way afterwards."

"Gentleman can't say fairer than that," is the verdict of the crowd. So Joel Cray, shamefacedly enough, and feeling as though all his grand schemes for revenge had melted into thin air, follows Muiraven and Stratford out of the Docks, whilst his companions adjourn to drink the health of his enemy in the nearest public-house.

"Where are you going to take him?" demands Stratford, as a couple of hansoms obey his cousin's whistle.

"To Saville Moxon's. You must come with us, Hal. I have been living under a mask for the last five years; but it is time I should be true at last."

"True at last! What humbug, Muiraven! As if all the world didn't know—"

"Hush, Hal!—you pain me. The world knows as much about me as it does of every one else."

Saville Moxon—now a barrister, who has distinguished himself on more than one occasion—lives in the Temple. Fifteen minutes bring them to his chambers, where they find him hard at work amongst his papers.

"I feel beastly awkward," says Muiraven, with a conscious laugh, as Moxon is eager to learn the reason of their appearance in such strange company; "but I've got a confession to make, Moxon, and the sooner it's over the better. Now, my good fellow, pass on."

This last request is addressed to Joel, who, half doubting whether he shall make his case good after all, recapitulates, in his rough manner, the whole history of Myra's return to Priestley—the birth of her child—her aimless searches after her betrayer—and, lastly, her unexpected death.

Muiraven starts slightly, and changes color as the child is mentioned; but otherwise, he hears the sad story through unmoved. The other two men sit by in silence, waiting his leave to express their astonishment at the intelligence.

"Poor Myra!" says Muiraven thoughtfully, as Joel, whose voice has been rather shaky towards the end, brings his tale to a conclusion. "I don't wonder you thought badly of me, my friend; but there is something to be said on both sides. I never wronged your cousin—"

"You say that to my face!" commences Joel, his wrath all ready to boil over again at such a supposition.

"Stay! Yes—I repeat it. The person whom I most wronged in the transaction was myself. Her name was not Myra Cray, but Myra Keir. She was my wife."

"Your wife!" repeats Joel, staring vacantly.

"Good God!" exclaims Saville Moxon.

"Muiraven! are you mad?" says Stratford.

"My dear fellows, do you think I'd say a thing of this kind for the mere purpose of sneak-

ing out of a scrape? You know what our ideas