

the lips of Mr. Dudleigh himself, as well as from others—made a good deal of noise in what are called “the fashionable circles,” and was obscurely hinted at in one of the daily papers. I was much amused at hearing, in the various circles I visited, the conflicting and exaggerated accounts of it. One old lady told me she “had it on the best authority, that Mr. Dudleigh actually struck his wife, and wrenched her purse out of her hand!” I recommended Mrs. Dudleigh to withdraw for a few weeks to a watering-place, and she followed my advice; taking with her Miss Dudleigh, whose health and spirits had suffered materially through the event which has been mentioned. Poor girl! she was of a very different mould from her mother, and suffered acutely, though silently, at witnessing the utter contempt in which she was held by the very people she made such prodigious efforts to court and conciliate. Can any situation be conceived more painful? Her few and gentle remonstrances, however, met invariably with a cruel and harsh reception; and at last she was compelled to hold her peace, and bewail in mortified silence her mother's obtuseness.

They continued at ——— about a month; and on their return to town, found the affair quite “blown over;” and soon afterwards, through the mediation of mutual friends, the angry couple were reconciled to each other. For twelve long months Mrs. Dudleigh led a comparatively quiet and secluded life, abstaining, with but a poor grace it is true, from company and cards—from the latter compulsorily; for no one chose to sit down at play with her, who had witnessed or heard of the event which had taken place last season. In short, every thing seemed going on well with our merchant and his family. It was fixed that his daughter was to become Lady ———, as soon as young Lord ——— should have returned from the continent; and a dazzling dowry was spoken of as hers on the day of her marriage. Pleased with his wife's good behaviour, Mr. Dudleigh's confidence and good nature revived, and he held the reins with a rapidly slackening grasp. In proportion as he allowed her funds, her sacred “friends” flocked again around her; and by and by she was seen flouncing about in fashion as heretofore, with small “let or hindrance” from her husband. The world—the sagacious world—called Mr. Dudleigh a happy man; and the city swelled at the mention of his name and doings. The mercantile world laid its highest honours at his feet—the mayorality—a bank—an East-Indian Directorship—a seat for the city in Parliament—all glittered within his grasp—but he would not stretch forth his hand. He was content he would say, “to be plain Henry Dudleigh, whose word was as good as his bond”—a leading iron on “Change—and, above all, “who could look every one full in the face with whom he had ever had to do.” He was indeed a worthy man—a rich and racy specimen of one of those glories of our nation—a true English merchant. The proudest moments of his life were those, when an accompanying friend could estimate his consequence, by witnessing the mandarin movements that everywhere met him—the obsequious obeisances of even his closest rivals—as he hurried to and fro about the central regions of “Change, his hands stuck into the worn pockets of his plain snuff-coloured coat. The merest glance at Mr. Dudleigh—his hurried, fidgety, anxious gestures—the keen, cautious expression of his glittering grey eyes—his mouth screwed up like a shut purse—all, all told of the “man of a million.” There was, in a manner, a “plum” in every tread of his foot, in every twinkle of his eye. He could never be said to breathe freely—really to live, but in this congenial atmosphere—his native element—the City!

Once every year he gave a capital dinner, at a tavern, to all his agents, clerks, and people in any way connected with him in business; and none but himself knew the quiet ecstasy with which he took his seat at the head of them all—joined in their tinned jokes—echoed their modest laughter, made speeches, and was bespoken in turn! How he sate while great things were saying of him, on the occasion of his health's being drunk! On one of these occasions, his health had been proposed by his sleek head-cleek, in a most neat and appropriate speech, and drunk with uproarious enthusiasm; and good Mr. Dudleigh was on his legs, energetically making his annual avowal that “that was the proudest moment of his life,” when one of the waiters came and interrupted him, by saying that a gentleman was without, waiting to speak to him on most important business. Mr. Dudleigh hurriedly whispered that he would attend to the stranger in a few minutes, and the waiter withdrew; but returned in a second or two, and put a card into his hand. Mr. Dudleigh was electrified at the name it bore—that of the great loan contractor—the city Croesus, whose wealth was reported to be incalculable! He hastily called on some one to supply his place; and had hardly passed the door, before he was hastily shaken by the hands by ———, who told him at once that he had called to propose to Mr. Dudleigh

to take part with him in negotiating a very large loan on account of the ——— government! After a hurried pause, Mr. Dudleigh, scarce knowing what he was saying, assented. In a day or two the transaction was duly blazoned in the leading papers of the day; and every one in the city spoke of him as one likely to double or even treble his already ample fortune. Again he was praised—again censured—again envied! It was considered advisable that he should repair to the continent, during the course of the negotiation, in order that he might personally superintend some important collateral transactions; and when there he was most unexpectedly detained nearly two months. Alas! that he ever left England! During his absence his infatuated wife betook herself—“like the dog to his vomit, like the sow to her wallowing in the mire”—to her former runcous courses of extravagance and dissipation, but on a fearfully large scale. Her house was more like an hotel than a private dwelling; and blazed away, night after night, with light and company, till the whole neighbourhood complained of the incessant uproar occasioned by the mere arrival and departure of her guests. To her other dreadful besetments, Mrs. Dudleigh now added the odious and vulgar vice of—intoxication!!! She complained of the deficiency of her animal spirits; and said she took liquor as a medicine! She required stimulus, and excitement, she said, to sustain her mind under the perpetual run of all luck she had at cards! It was in vain that her poor daughter remonstrated, and almost cried herself into fits, on seeing her mother return home, frequently in the dull stupor of absolute intoxication!—“Mother, mother, my heart is breaking!” said she one evening.

“So is mine!”—hiccupped her parent—“so get me the decanter!”

Young Harry Dudleigh trode emulously in the footsteps of his mother; and ran riot to an extent that was before unknown to Oxford!—The sons of very few of the highest nobility had handsomer allowances than he; yet was he constantly over head and ears in debt. He was a buckler of the ring ruffians; a great man at cock, and dog fights; a racer; in short—a blackguard of the first water. During the recess, he had come up to town, and taken up his quarters, not at his father's house, but at one of the distant hotels—where he might pursue his profligate courses without fear of interruption. He had repeatedly bullied his mother out of large sums of money to supply his infamous extravagancies, and at length became so insolent and exorbitant in his demands, that they quarrelled. One evening, about nine o'clock, Mrs. and Miss Dudleigh happened to be sitting in the drawing room, alone—and the latter was pale with the agitation consequent on some recent quarrel with her mother; for the poor girl had been passionately reproaching her mother for her increasing attachment to liquor, under the influence of which she evidently was at that moment. Suddenly a voice was heard in the hall, and on the stairs, singing, or rather bawling, snatches of some comic song or other, the drawing room door was presently pushed open, and young Dudleigh, more than half intoxicated, made his appearance, in a slovenly evening dress.

“Madame ma mere—!” said he, staggering towards the sofa where his mother and sister were sitting—“I—I must be supplied—I must mother!” he hiccupped, stretching towards her his right hand, and tapping the palm of it significantly with his left fingers.

“Pho—nonsense!—off to bed, young scape grace!” replied his mother, drowsily—for the stupor of wine lay heavily on her.

“’Tis useless, madam—quite, I assure you!—no money—money—money I must and will have!” said her son, striving to steady himself against a chair.

“Why, Harry, dear!—where's the fifty pounds I gave you a check for only a day or two ago?”

“Gone! gone! the way of all money, madam—as you know pretty well!—I—I must have £300 by to-morrow—”

“Three hundred pounds, Henry!” exclaimed his mother, eagerly.

“Yes, ma'am! Sir Charles won't be put off any longer, he says. Has my—my—word—good as my bond—as the old governor says!—Mother,” he continued in a louder tone, flinging his hat violently on the floor—“I must and will have money!”

“Henry—’t's disgraceful—infamous—most infamous!” exclaimed Miss Dudleigh, with a shocked air; and raising her handkerchief to her eyes, she rose from the sofa, and walked hurriedly to the opposite end of the room, and sat down in tears. Poor girl! what a mother! what a brother!—the young man took the place she had occupied by her mother's side, and in a whistling, coaxing way, threw his arm round Mrs. Dudleigh, hiccupping—“mother give me a cheque! do, please!—’t's the last time I'll ask you—for a twelvemonth to come!—and I owe £500 that must be paid in a day or two!”

“How can I, Harry!—dear Harry—don't be un-

reasonable! recollect I'm a kind mother to you,” kissing him, “and don't distress me, for I owe three or four times as much myself, and cannot pay it.”

“Eh!—eh!—cannot pay it!—stuff, ma'am!—why is the bank run dry?”—he continued, with an apprehensive stare.

“Yes, love—long ago!”—replied his mother, with a sigh.

“Whoo—whoo!”—he exclaimed; and rising, he walked, or rather staggered a few steps to and fro, as if attempting to collect his faculties—and think!

“Ah—ha, ha!—ureka, ma'am!” he exclaimed suddenly after a pause, snapping his fingers—“I've got it—I have,—the plate, mother,—the plate!—hem! raising the wind—you understand me!”

“Oh! shocking, shocking!”—sobbed Miss Dudleigh, hurrying towards them, wringing her hands bitterly—“oh mother! oh Henry, Henry! would you ruin my poor father, and break his heart?”

“Ah, the plate, mother!—the plate!”—he continued, addressing his mother—then turning to his sister—“away, you little puss—puss!—what do you understand about business, eh?”—and he attempted to kiss her—but she thrust him away with indignation and horror in her gestures.

“Come, mother!—will it do!—a lucky thought! the plate!—Mr. ——— is a rare hand at this kind of thing!—a thousand or two would set you and me to rights in a twinkling—come, what say you?”

“Impossible, Harry!”—replied his mother, turning pale,—“’tis gone—’tis—’tis—out of the question!”

“Pho! no such thing!—It must be done!—why cannot it, ma'am?” enquired the young man earnestly.

“Why, because—if you must know strath!—because it is ALREADY pawned!”—replied his mother, in a loud voice, shaking her hand at him with passion. Their attention was attracted at that moment towards the door, which had been standing ajar—for there was the sound of some one suddenly fallen down. After an instant's pause, they all three walked to the door, and stood gazing horror-struck at the prostrate figure of Mr. DUDLEIGH!

He had been standing unperceived in the door-way—having entered the house only a moment or two after his son—during the whole of the disgraceful scene just described, almost petrified with grief, amazement, and horror—till he could bear it no longer, and fell down in an apoplectic fit. He had but that evening returned from abroad, exhausted with physical fatigue, and dispirited in mind—for while abroad, he had made a most disastrous move in the foreign funds, by which he lost upwards of sixty or seventy thousand pounds; and his negotiation scheme also turned out very unfortunately, and left him means nearly as much more.—He had hurried home, half dead with vexation and anxiety, to make instant arrangements for meeting the most pressing of his pecuniary engagements in England, apprehensive, from the gloomy tenor of his agent's letters to him while abroad, that his affairs were falling into confusion. Oh! what a heart-breaking scene had he to encounter—instead of the comforts and welcome of home!

This incident bro't me again into contact with this devoted family, for I was summoned by the distracted daughter to her father's bedside, which I found surrounded by his wife and children. The shock of his presence had completely sobered both mother and son, who hung horror-stricken over him, on each side of the bed, endeavouring in vain to recall him to sensibility. I had scarce entered the room before Mrs. Dudleigh was carried away swooning in the arms of a servant. Mr. Dudleigh was in a fit of apoplexy. He lay in a state of profound stupor, breathing stentoriously—more like snoring. I had him raised into nearly an upright position, and immediately bled him largely from the jugular vein. While the blood was flowing, my attention was arrested by the appearance of young Dudleigh; who was kneeling down by the bed side, his hands clasped convulsively together, and his swollen blood-shot eyes fixed on his father. “Father! father! father!” were the only words he uttered, and these fell quivering from his lips unconsciously. Miss Dudleigh, who had stood leaning against the bedpost in stupefied silence, and pale as a statue, was at length too faint to continue any longer in an upright posture, and was led out of the room.

Here was misery! Here was remorse!

I continued with my patient more than an hour, and was gratified at finding that there was every appearance of the attack proving a mild and manageable one. I prescribed suitable remedies, and left, enjoining young Dudleigh not to quit his father for a moment, but to watch every breath he drew. He hardly seemed to hear me, and gazed in my face vacantly while I addressed him. I shook him gently, and repeated my injunctions; but all he could reply was—“Oh—doctor—we have killed him!”—To be continued.