

cious little ease about them that I can see."

"Frederick was very ill and was ordered home," said Mrs. Ashley. "So as the doctors thought it better not to go by the Red Sea, we came by way of China and San Francisco. My dear," addressing her husband, "it is time for you to take your medicine. He is still quite an invalid Mr. Dugdale, but what are you doing here?"

"I have been on this continent for a considerable time now," replied Dugdale.

"Ever since you left India? Ah those were happy days," said Mrs. Ashley simpering, "but of course you have forgotten them,—as a man always does."

"I remember them perfectly I assure you," replied Dugdale, who was again mentally comparing the slight active figure of his recent dream, with the stout languishing woman opposite him.

"So different to the life here," continued Mrs. Ashley. "Frederick for goodness sake don't pick your fingers in that horrid manner, unless you wish to drive me distracted."

"There is not much resemblance," said Dugdale smiling.

"Here it is all bustle and rush, while there the perfect repose was so delightful. Do leave your hair alone Frederick; why will you irritate me so?"

"Everything seems to irritate you," grumbled Ashley.

"What a kind remark," retorted his wife, "when I wait upon you hand and foot. Ah Mr. Dugdale, how I miss our Indian servants! There is positively no real service in this country, and I often wonder what Frederick would have done without me to look after him. Are you married?"

"No," returned Dugdale shortly, thinking it was not a particularly pleasant picture of wedded life that he saw before him.

"Wise man," said Ashley with a feeble laugh.

"I would not make absurd jokes if I were you my dear," said his wife.

"I never joke upon serious subjects," was the rejoinder, whereupon Mrs. Ashley remarked that Frederick must be fairly better he was so lively, and Dugdale began to wish he had not seen the light of other days. So it is that the scales drop off our eyes and the weeds stare at us from a garden where we fondly thought only flowers grew.

"Do you make a long stay in the States?" enquired Dugdale.

"Oh no, we sail from New York on Saturday," replied Mrs. Ashley, "that is if Frederick is not too fatigued with the railway journey from this place."

"You will leave Denver to-morrow evening then, I presume?"

"Yes, we had thought of going on to-night, but Frederick does not feel up to it."

"Beastly nuisance being so sick," said Ashley.

And this selfish brute, though Dugdale, has won her, whom I once deemed perfection, and who now alternately bullies and pities him. Where is the fault? She used to be a bright charming girl a few years ago, and he, though he was my rival, did not appear a bad sort of fellow. Is it always so? No, but there are some ships which are only suited for summer seas, and not a few houses, which are built upon the sand, in which case we know what the result will be when storms and bad weather come.

"No doubt you will soon pull round when you reach England," Dugdale remarked, by way of saying something cheerful. "I hope you are enjoying your trip—at least as much as possible, under the circumstances."

"I suppose so," replied Mrs. Ashley. "China was not bad, nor the voyage across the Pacific, but this country is fearfully democratic, don't you think?"

"It does not pretend to be anything else," said Dugdale quietly.

"I forgot you were always rather that way inclined yourself, and believe, in all men being equal."

"Pardon me, that is too sweeping an assertion," replied Dugdale. "Men are not in my opinion born equal, either physically, mentally, or morally, but they are all entitled to equal rights from a legal point of view, as separate from the social. Thus England in India, while not interfering with 'caste' rules or prejudices, allowing the Brahmin the privilege of imagining himself contaminated should a Peon brush against him, but in the halls of justice recognizes no distinction of caste, one being as amenable to the law as the other."

"What a dreadful leveller you are!" exclaimed Mrs. Ashley with a horrified air.

"We have to be so sometimes in our profession," was the smiling rejoinder.

"Oh but such doctrines are awful you know—quite upsets all our preconceived notions of class distinctions," pursued Mrs. Ashley.

There are none such—or ought not to be—in the eye of the law," persisted Dugdale.

"By George you have become a perfect Yankee," struck in Ashley. "I begin to think someone must have perverted you."

"Do leave your cheek alone Frederick, you will scratch a hole in it before long," snapped his wife. "Then I suppose Mr. Dugdale you have no pity for Mrs. Windsor in that strange jewel robbery lately reported. Fancy a lady brought up as she has been, going to a common jail!"

"If she had been a poor woman, who had stolen a loaf of bread, would you be so sympathetic Mrs. Ashley?" asked Dugdale with a sneer.

"Oh a creature of that class is used

to it you know, and does not feel the disgrace," argued Mrs. Ashley.

"Used to it!" cried Dugdale losing patience. "Yes, God help them! Many of them are used to starving, 'clemming' as we say in Lancashire, and because of that, and being dressed in rags, no one wastes any pity on them when they are punished. But give them silk attire, bring them up listening to prayers and soft words, instead of receiving curses and blows, and then, should they snatch some glittering jewels from their best friend, adding perjury to the theft so as to make a desirable marriage, we are expected to look upon the criminal as a martyr, and remember her position in society!"

"What an excitable fellow you are Dugdale, and how extremely warm you get in argument!" drawled Ashley, to whom a man having strong opinions and standing to them was a curiosity, while his wife shaking her finger, as she glanced from one to the other, said with rather a dreary smile, "Shocking, shocking, Mr. Dugdale! You are not changed one bit from what you were in the old days."

Did she regret those days, and would she have altered her choice could she have recalled them? We shall never know, but Dugdale felt he could not return the compliment, (if it were intended as such) so he merely laughed, and taking out his watch remarked that it was dinner time and he hoped he might have the pleasure of sitting at their table.

During the meal they conversed a good deal about India and people they had known there; how Sir Michael Jelly, Judge of the High Court in Bombay, had retired, and Sir Richard Ottoman had been created a member of the Privy Council. Tom Drayton of the Civil Service was dead, and Jack Stirling, the Army Surgeon, had completed his service and was believed to have settled down somewhere in Canada. And so the talk flowed on, with the wine, and Dugdale could not help thinking that Ashley was inclined to put his glass a little too frequently to his lips, which made his wife nervous and fidgetty, for in that matter her control over him did not seem perfect. Dinner concluded, Ashley suggested that he and Dugdale should adjourn for a "peg," as a brandy, or whiskey, and soda is called in India, but observing a certain anxious look on the face of Mrs. Ashley, Dugdale declined, saying he should smoke a pipe in the office, and advising the invalid to retire early to recruit himself for the journey on the morrow. The expression of gratitude which shot out of Mrs. Ashley's eyes for an instant made him think more kindly of her than he had hitherto done. "Poor thing," he muttered to himself over his pipe, "I fear she has no bed of roses, and too many 'pegs' are already nailed in that fellow's coffin."

Somehow he was not sorry to part from them the following evening, the picture, I repeat, had not been a very pleasant one, and as the train steamed out of the depot, bearing away the light of other days into the darkness, he felt a "burra choop," or great tranquility, steal peacefully over him, and was glad he had postponed his departure so as to avoid having the Ashleys for travelling companions.

To be continued.