

The Popular Preacher. It was a worthy pastor, who saw with grief and care, His congregation go to sleep, Or which was worse—elsewhere, He pondered long and deeply, This wise and pious man, And at last hit on a simple And most effectual plan. Next Sunday, of his sermon The text when he had said, He slid down the pulpit stairs And stood upon his head. By thousands flocked the people That preacher great to hear, And the trustees raised his salary To two thousand a year.

RETURNED FROM THE GRAVE By MRS. HENRY WOOD: Author of "Est Lynne," "Oswald Gray," &c.

CHAPTER VIII.—CONTINUED. Mr. Lester was now near forty years of age, but he did not look it. He was a fine handsome man, rather "fast" yet, a great admirer of beauty, fond of society and exceedingly popular. To say that he had become attached to Lady Adelaide, would be scarcely a right phrase to use. He had not suffered himself to become so, seeing that she was engaged to her cousin, Captain Dane. He admired Lady Adelaide greatly, he felt that he could love her; very delighted and proud would he have been to make her Lady Adelaide Lester, but for that previous engagement to Harry Dane. But then came Harry Dane's death; the barrier was removed, and Mr. Lester's heart leaped up within him. Not immediately did he speak; the deaths following rapidly at the castle one upon another, barred its propriety; but when the rumor reached him that Lady Adelaide was about to return to Scotland, he threw propriety to the winds, and besought her to become his wife. She requested a day or two for consideration and then accepted him. Mr. Lester urged their immediate marriage; where was the use of her traveling to Scotland, he said; better be married at once from the castle, and obviate its necessity. Lady Adelaide, as an objection to haste, put forth her aunt's recent death. But Mr. Lester replied that circumstances altered cases, and he thought haste in this instance was justifiable. Lord Dane agreed with him. He told them both that he felt his own life wanting quickly, and should be better content to leave Adelaide with a legal partner. So the usual formal preliminaries and preparations were in their case dispensed with, and the wedding-day was fixed. "Geoffry," said Lord Dane to his nephew, "I cannot leave my bed and accompany them to church to give her away. Will you attend for me?" Let us deprecate and put down all attempts at dissensions, civil, religious and national, and pave the way to a more harmonious intercourse among us. It was the first positive information Geoffry Dane had received of the forthcoming marriage of Lady Adelaide. Vague reports, half surmises, had penetrated to him, but he believed them not. A deadly pallor overspread his face, too sudden, too intense to be concealed; and it startled Lord Dane. "Be a man, Geoffry. If she won't have you, if she prefers somebody else, you can't alter it; but don't sigh for her after the fashion of a love-sick girl. Adelaide is beautiful, but she is not the wife I should like to choose; she is capricious and unsteady as the breeze. Forget her, and look abroad for somebody better; there's a good fish in the sea as over came out of it." Geoffry's color was coming back to him, and he made an effort to smooth his brow—to pass it off lightly. "Will you go to church and for me, Geoffry?" "No, sir," he answered in a low tone, but one that betrayed firm resolution. "If she marries (George Lester of her own inclination why—let her. But I will not take part in it." Not only to Geoffry Dane, did the projected union bring its pang. Mr. Lester's first wife had been a Miss Bordillon, a lady of a good family, but a poor one—there was a saying in their vicinity, "A poor and proud as a Bordillon." During Mrs. Lester's last illness which was known to be a fatal one, a very distant relative of hers, but still a Bordillon, was staying with her. They had been girls together, close and tried friends since, and Mrs. Lester besought a promise from Margaret Bordillon that she would remain at the hall after her coming death, and watch over her young daughter, Maria. Margaret Bordillon was a delicate looking woman of two or three and thirty, and the pink hue came into her cheeks as she thought or what the world might say did she remain an inmate of the house of the somewhat gaily inclined George Lester. But when death is brought palpably before us—and Margaret Bordillon knew that it was very near to that chamber, as she held the damp hand, and looked down in the wasted face of Mrs. Lester—minor considerations are lost in the vista of the future, which now comes so palpably before us; that solemn future where we must all be gathered together and render up our accounts, and we feel far more anxious to fulfill our duty, wherever it may lie, than be troubled at what the "world will say." Mrs. Lester received the promise she craved, that Margaret Bordillon would—at any rate for a time—remain at the hall to take charge of Maria. "And remember, Margaret," whispered Mrs. Lester drawing Margaret's ear down, that she might catch unwisely the low accents, should any warmer feeling arise between you and George—it may be so—should he ever seek to make you his wife, remember that I now tell you I should be pleased with it." "How can you contemplate such a thing! how can you speak of it—at this moment?" interrupted Miss Bordillon, aghast. "You, his wife can calmly enter upon the subject of his marrying another!" "The world and its passions are fading from me, Margaret," was the reply of Mrs. Lester. "It almost seems as if I had already left it. I feel no doubt that George will marry again; he is most likely to do so; and I would prefer that he should make you my children's mother rather than any other woman."

joined. Mr. Lester, Maria was only eight years old at the time of her mother's death; had she been more of a woman, Miss Bordillon would have felt her position less awkward. "Some ladies might not have found any awkwardness in it; but Miss Bordillon was of an unusually sensitive temperament, exceedingly alive to the refined proprieties of life. Two years had now passed over her head since Mrs. Lester's death, and what had they brought forth? Love, thrown into constant contact with George Lester, who was a man of remarkably attractive manners, to Miss Bordillon as to others; ever dwelling on the words spoken by Mrs. Lester, Miss Bordillon had at first unconsciously to herself, become deeply attached to him. And when a woman's love has lain dormant for the first five-and-thirty years of her life, and is then awakened, it bursts into a lasting passion,—one that the young little know of Timid, modest, retiring, she nourished it in secret, gradually giving way to the hope that she should be what Mrs. Lester had suggested, his second wife; a hope that soon grew to intensity—nay, to expectation. And Margaret Bordillon's days, now, were as one long dream of paradise. More especially high beat her heart one morning, for her hopes appeared to be nearing their realization. It was a hot summer's day at the close of July, and as the party rose from breakfast, Mr. Lester remarked that, while the excessive heat lasted, it would be better to have the breakfast laid in the dining-room, which did not face the morning sun. "I will tell the servants to-day," said Miss Bordillon. Wilfred Lester was at home for his holidays, which, however, were drawing to an end. He was a high-spirited boy of fourteen, though, it must be confessed, given to be passionate and disobedient on occasions; his eyes were of an intensely violet blue, his hair and eyelashes dark, and he gave promise of being a handsome man. Maria and Edith had run out to the lawn, and Wilfred vaulted after them. A pretty little girl of eleven, was Edith Bordillon, now on a visit to the hall. She was the daughter of Major Bordillon, and niece of Margaret. The children were gamboling on the lawn, caring nothing for the heat, and Mr. Lester stood at the window watching them. Miss Bordillon remained in her seat at the breakfast-table, reading a letter which the morning post had brought. "Look here, Margaret," Mr. Lester suddenly exclaimed. "Step this way a minute." She put aside her letter, and went to him. "Has it ever struck you, Margaret, what a famous conservatory might be carried out from this end window?" "It would be an excellent spot for one," she replied. "I think I once heard you make the same remark." "No doubt. It has been in my mind some time. I suppose I must set about it now." "Why now?" inquired Miss Bordillon. Mr. Lester laughed; it was what might be called a shy laugh, and as he replied to the question, his usually free tone had a tinge of embarrassment in it. "It is two years—more—since Katherine died; I may begin to look out soon for some one to supply her place. In that case, the old house ought to be brightened up. What say you, Margaret?" Margaret Bordillon said nothing. She stood with her eyes cast down, and her cheeks glowing. She certainly did not construe the words into an offer; she had better sense; but she did believe that George Lester's intentions pointed to herself; his embarrassment of manner may have aided the thought. He saw the marks of confusion; it was impossible that she could conceal them, standing facing him, as she did, in the glowing brightness of the morning; and he attributed them to displeasure; he thought she was feeling pain at the idea of Katherine's place being filled up. "Margaret," he said, in a low tender tone, as he gently laid his hand upon her shoulder, though neither the tone nor the action was born of tenderness for her, "it is not good for a man to be alone. Katherine is gone, but we are living. Ponder over what I have hinted, and try and overget your distaste to it." Mr. Lester stepped out at the window, which opened to the ground, and he concluded, and joined the child. n. And Margaret Bordillon—she remained standing as he had left her in the day's brightness, type of the brightness which had rushed over and was illuminating her whole soul. "I shall be his wife at last," she softly murmured; "his wife! his wife! how have I deserved so intense a happiness?" The servants entered to remove the breakfast-things, and that aroused her. She called to her two little girls, and went with them up stairs to the study, to superintend, as usual, their lessons. The day went on to its close, its calm varied only by an outbreak between Wilfred and Tiffle. Tiffle, one of the ourest of virgins, was the head-servant at the hall, and liked to rule with an overbearing hand. She was housekeeper and mistress, subject, of course, to the authority of Miss Bordillon; but Miss Bordillon interfered but little. Tiffle, it not of a desirable temper, was neither of a kindly disposition: the servants called her cross-grained, and Miss Bordillon, truth to say, felt afraid of her. When Mrs. Lester died, and Tiffle found that Miss Bordillon was to remain, Tiffle went her master and gave warning. Mr. Lester would not take it; he fancied that the hall, deprived both of mistress and housekeeper, inevitably come to something bad; and he raised Tiffle's wages, and told her she must stop. Tiffle ungraciously consented to a three-months further sojourn; but when the three months came to an end, and Tiffle found how little Miss Bordillon troubled her—that she had, in fact, far more sway than in the days of her late mistress, Tiffle said no more about leaving. But she hated Miss Bordillon, simply because use the latter was nominally placed over her; and Tiffle was one who could hate to some purpose. Another object of her dislike was Master Lester, and it was returned by him. That sort of repulsion must have existed between them, which two persons will entertain, one to the other, unexplainable by themselves or in metaphysics; and when Wilfred was at home there were frequent contests between him and Tiffle. On this occasion it was sharper than customary: so and loud as to disturb the household: Mr. Lester was out, but Miss Bordillon, as in duty bound, interposed her authority, and ordered them both before her. It was an unusual procedure for her to make: induced possibly by a forshadowing idea of the full and indisputable authority she might soon be vested with in that house. Miss Bordillon found that Tiffle was in the wrong—had provoked the boy unjustifiably; and she reproached her. Tiffle was pretty nearly stunned with indignation, truth to say, though the faint lay on her side this time, it was as often on Wilfred's; and she withdrew, vowing vengeance in her heart against the world in general and Miss Bordillon in particular. The servants suffered from her temper that day, as they scarcely ever had suffered, and the murmurs were loud and deep. "Let her have her fling out," cried the

butler, who had been a passive listener. "It won't be for long now. I have heard news this evening." "What's that?" cried Tiffle, turning sharply around upon him. "Did you speak of me?" "I tell them they may as well let you have your fling-out," Mrs. Tiffle, he quietly answered. "Another week or two, and it will be at an end." "You are a fool," retorted Tiffle. "Perhaps I am," said the man. "Perhaps master would be if he didn't set himself about remedying this. But he is going to, and to marry a wife, and to give the house a mistress—which will put your nose out of joint, ma'am." "Is it true?" uttered one of the other servants, all of whom stood in consternation. "It is perfectly true; otherwise I should not have repeated it. In a couple of weeks at the most, I believe they'll be married." His accent was serious, and they knew him to be a cautious and truthful man, even Tiffle felt calamity was certain, and she turned cold all over. "It's that animal, Miss Bordillon!" she uttered, the conviction fixing itself into her mind; "it's she who has come over him, and no other. She's as sly as a cat!" The butler only smiled; it exasperated her beyond bearing, and she flung out of the room. "I'll go to her this minute, and tell her what I think of it!" she muttered, "and the duce himself shouldn't stop me." Miss Bordillon was alone in the breakfast-room—it was so pleasant to be where the windows opened to the ground, and to step out when inclined. Mr. Lester was dining out that evening. The little girls were dragging a child's carriage to and fro on the lawn, in which were seated two dolls in state, Wilfred teasing them with all his might, and, altogether, making a great noise. Tiffle came brushing in, her face red. She had a long sharp nose, and gray, sly ferret's eyes: was very little in person, and generally stealthy in her movements. She was attired in an old brown silk dress and a white muslin apron. "I lived in the family before you ever came near it, Miss Bordillon," began she, "and I think if this change was in view I might have been injected into it." Miss Bordillon looked up, astonished at her abrupt entrance, her words, her manner altogether. Tiffle was literally panting with passion. "Explain yourself," said Miss Bordillon. "I say that it's a shame for the servants to have been enlightened, and for their head, to have been kept in the dark," burst out Tiffle. "But when things are set about in this kitchen way, it don't bring much luck." "Explain yourself, I repeat," interrupted Miss Bordillon. "What are you speaking of? You forget yourself!" "It's announced in the kitchen by Jones that you and master are going to make a match of it," shrieked Tiffle. "I suppose master told him." Miss Bordillon was completely taken too; never had she been so much so in all her life. Tiffle's insolence was entirely merged in the news; it was that which took away her self-possession, and covered her with confusion. She blushed rosy red, she stammered, she faltered; bringing out some disjointed words that she "did not know," she "was not sure." Tiffle read the signs only too correctly. "Love-sick as a school-girl!" she contemptuously soliloquized, and then spoke aloud. "So, as I have not been used to underhanded treatment, and can't stomach it, I'll give warning now, if you please." And, leaving Miss Bordillon in a whirl of happy perplexity, she strode back to the servants, and boasted of what she had done. "Good heavens!" exclaimed the butler, "you never have been such an idiot! You compliment me with being a fool just now, but you might have kept it for yourself more justly. It is not Miss Bordillon that master's going marry." Tiffle sat down, overcome with sundry emotions. "Not Miss Bordillon! Who is it then?" "The pretty young lady at the castle—Lady Adelaide. I should be sorry to put my foot in it, as you have done." Tiffle said in reply. She sat silent for at least half an hour, revolving in her mind the points of all she had heard and seen, and drawing her own deductions. Than she arose and proceeded again to the breakfast-room. Miss Bordillon sat as she had left her, in the same chair, in the same position, her eyes fixed on vacancy, and the rosy hue of happy love lighting her countenance. She was lost in the mazes of dreamland, illusive dreamland, upon which a rude blow was about to fall—one that would shatter its bliss forever. Very different was the present Tiffle meekly standing there, from the outrageous Tiffle of half an hour ago. She deprecatingly held her hands together, smothering them one over the other, and stole covert glances with her aloe eyes at Miss Bordillon. "I am come to apologize, ma'am, for what I said just now, which I shouldn't have done but for laboring under a misapprehension. Their servants led me into it, and I should like to turn the whole lot away. I find there were no grounds for coupling your name with master's." "Your words took me so entirely by surprise, that I did not meet them, or reprove you as I ought," was the quiet reply of Miss Bordillon. "I will now merely observe that Mr. Lester entertains no present intention of changing his condition, so far as I know. Do not offend again—or take up groundless notions." "I was only mistaken in the lady, you see, ma'am," returned Tiffle, standing her ground. "I thought it had been you—for which as I say, I'm here to beg pardoning—whereas it's somebody else. Master is about to marry." Slowly Miss Bordillon gathered in the words. Had they meaning? or had they not? Her heart beat wildly, as she gazed at Tiffle. "In less than two weeks from this the wedding is to come off," proceeded Tiffle, venturing on the unqualified assertion, and positively reveling in the misery she knew she was inflicting. "A dainty bride she'll make, young and lovely as ever were the orphans worth; but master—so it's said—always had an eye for beauty. You don't seem as though you had heard it, ma'am; he marries Lady Adelaide." Misery? Ay, misery as cruel as ever fell in this world. Margaret Bordillon's pulses stood still, and then began to beat with alarming quickness. All the blood in her body seemed turning to stone, her brain whirled, her heart turned sick, the things around were growing dim to her. "Water—a drop of water, Tiffle," she gasped out, as her sight was falling. Tiffle whisked around to where some stood, a wicked look of satisfaction on her countenance, now that it was turned from view. She poured some into a tumbler, and carried it to Miss Bordillon, beginning to speak in a condescending tone. "These changes are unpleasant, ma'am, when they come upon us by surprise; but—" Tiffle ceased; for she saw that her words were falling on a deaf ear. Miss Bordillon lay in a fainting fit.

CHAPTER IX. The indisposition of Miss Bordillon soon passed, and Tiffle withdrew in silence, having the grace to feel that it was scarcely the moment to venture upon any more of her condolences. The evening grew later, and the children were sent to bed; but Margaret sat on where she was, never quitting her chair. To say that the news had stunned her, would be to use a most feeble expression, as descriptive of the facts. Her whole mind was in a chaos; and she was only conscious that the Rubicon, which most women must encounter once in their lives, was now passed, leaving behind it sweet and sunny plains, as of Arcadia; stretching out before it, the way she must henceforth walk, nothing but black darkness. But Margaret Bordillon was one to look troubles firmly in the face, and she set herself to do so by this; even now, in the very dawn of her agony. First of all, were the tidings true? If so, she must decide upon her own future movements; for, to remain in the house after the young Lady Adelaide was brought to it, his wife—Margaret bent her head with a wailing cry; she could not pursue the thought. She must, if possible, be satisfied on the point before she slept; there was only one way to accomplish it, and that was by putting the question to Mr. Lester; and she resolved to do it. He came home about eleven o'clock, much surprised to see Miss Bordillon sitting there; for she never waited for him when he passed his evenings out. "You are quite dissipated, Margaret," began he, in his gay, careless tones. "Eleven o'clock, and you sitting up?" She strove to form her lips to answer, but no sound came from them. She was schooling down her manner to indifference, making an effort to speak with calmness, but it was more difficult than she had thought, Mr. Lester continued, pointing nothing. "I am sure this is much more sensible than your dancing off up stairs to your own sitting-room or to bed, leaving an empty room to welcome me; I have wondered why you do so, Margaret; you can't fear I shall eat you." Margaret cleared her throat preparatory to speaking, but the self-agitation which the effort induced, was more than she knew how to hide. Her heart was beating great thumps, beating up to her throat, her face was white and her lips were dry. She arose from her seat, and opening her workbox, which rested on a side table, stood there apparently rummaging its contents, her back to Mr. Lester. Then she managed to bring out what she had made up her mind to say. "I have been hearing some news to-night, and I thought I would wait and ask you if it was true. These warm evenings, too, one finds sitting up agreeable." "What momentous news have you been hearing?" he laughed. "That the Thames has taken fire?" "Something nearer home," she answered, dropping a reel of cotton and stooping for it. "I have been told that you are going to—" a sudden cough took her, which caused a pause—"to marry Lady Adelaide Errol." "Now, who the duce could have given you that information?" demanded Mr. Lester, in a joking tone. "Tiffle. She said that Jones—at least I think she said it was Jones—had announced it to the servants, and she concluded he had authority from you." "The notion of Miss Bordillon's listening to the gossip of servants?" was his retort; but for his manner, still a laughing one, she would have deemed it all nonsense together; perhaps a faint hope did come across her that it might be. At that juncture the butler happened to enter with some glasses, and his master arrested him. "So Jones, you have been making free with Lady Adelaide Errol's name to-night—in conjunction with mine." Jones turned crimson and purple, but not a connected word could Jones utter. "Pay from whom did you get your information?" continued Mr. Lester. "Sir, I'm sure I beg pardon if—If it's not correct, or if I did wrong to speak of it," cried the man. "I got it from Mr. Geoffry Dane." "From Mr. Geoffry Dane?" repeated Squire Lester, surprise causing him to utter the words. "How did that come about?" "It was in this way, sir. I met Mr. Geoffry Dane in the road near the castle, and he stopped to speak; he often does, for he's a affable, pleasant gentleman; and just then my Lady Adelaide passed toward the castle, with her maid and Buff behind her. She's a winsome young thing, sir; I said, when Mr. Dane was putting on his hat again, which he had taken off to her, 'as good as a sunbeam.' It's a sunbeam you'll soon have near to you, Jones," answered he; 'in a week or two, my mistress leaves the castle for your master's, changing her name for his.' He looked so queer when he said it." "Queer! How queer?" asked Mr. Lester. "Well, sir, I can hardly describe—there was a funny look about his mouth; the corners of it drawn down like. It make me think he had been speaking in ridicule, but I found he had not." The servant ceased, but no rejoinder was made to him. "And I certainly did speak of it when I got home, sir, and I am sorry if it has given offence, but I thought there could be no harm in repeating it, as it was said openly to me. Shall I contradict it, sir?" "Oh! read, no," carelessly replied Mr. Lester. "You may go, Jones." The man retired, and Miss Bordillon, who had been standing her nerves during the colloquy, turned to Mr. Lester. "Is it true, then?" "It is true, Margaret," he answered, his manner changing to seriousness. "I should have consulted you with it to-morrow; the few words I said to you this morning after breakfast were intended as preparatory heralds." "And is it possible that it is so near?" "Circumstances are compelling the haste. Lord Dane's state is most precarious, and I do not wish Adelaide to depart for Scotland." "I think you should have told me," she returned, her voice expressing resentment. "It is a short notice for me to lay my plans and get away from the house." "Get away from the house!" exclaimed Mr. Lester. "What are you thinking of now?" "Nay—what are you thinking of? I may rather say." "The house is large enough for you and for Adelaide. She will not be putting you out of your place as mistress, because it is a place you have never assumed, and never would do it. You can remain in it precisely as you have hitherto done." "No, Mr. Lester, it is impossible," she answered, a sickly smile momentarily arising to her features. "Before you bring home your wife, I must leave to make room for her." "Margaret," he returned in a low tone, "I do not forget that you promised Katherine to supply her place to Maria—to be, in a sense, the child's second mother. Are you forgetting it?"

A flush of pain dyed her face—the peculiar word called it forth. "You are bringing home Maria's second mother, in Lady Adelaide," she said, laying her hand on her chest to still its beating. "I should not bring Adelaide here to saddle her with the charge of a child, for whom she does not, as yet, care; and she is neither old enough nor experienced enough to fulfill the duties of a parent to one of Maria's age." When she shall have children of her own, experience will come with them. Margaret, you love Maria almost as the apple of your eye; you could not bear to part with her." "That it would—bring more grief than she chose to acknowledge, was certain." "I must bear it," was all she said. "No, no. Margaret, by the remembrance of Katherine, for Maria's own sake, I ask you to rescind this expressed resolution, and remain with us. At any rate, for a period; say three months, six months; and then—if your sojourn be not agreeable, and you and Adelaide cannot get on well together—then it will be time enough to talk of leaving. Dear Margaret! do not desert Maria." He had drawn close to her, and taken her hands in the earnestness of his emotion. She quietly withdrew them without reply; and Mr. Lester supposed his prayer was acceded to. Margaret Bordillon retired to her chamber, and sat herself down to think. What should she do! what ought she to do? She was a woman greatly alive to the dictates of conscience, one who was most anxious, even at a self-sacrifice, to fulfil her duty. And conscience was already beginning to ask her whether it would be right to abandon Maria Lester. "Should I put my own pain, my own chilled feelings in comparison with this?" she asked herself. "Terrible as it will be to me to live here when she is his wife, perhaps I can bear it. And I deserve punishment; yes; for I had no right to suffer myself to become so attached to him. Let me take up the punishment and bear it, as I best may." She sat on, to the little hours of the morning, battling with her grievous trial. But no better reconciled did she get to it; and she rose impressed with the belief that she should not be able to remain. She made a kind of compromise with herself; she would not hurry away before the marriage, as was her first thought, but would remain during the month the bride and bridegroom expected to be absent on their wedding tour following the customs of the world, and quit it only just previous to their return. "About Edith?" she said to Mr. Lester, the following day, without touching upon other particulars. "She had better be sent back to school." "I don't see why she should be," was his reply. "She was invited for a three-months' visit, and but a month of it has elapsed. Her remaining here will make no difference to Lady Adelaide; she will be with Maria." Miss Bordillon offered no rejoinder. Edith could leave when she did, she thought. A few days passed on, nine or ten, and the day fixed for the wedding was drawing very close. Lord Dane seemed to have taken a turn for the better; he still kept his bed—from that he would never rise again—but that his general health and spirits were much improved. One morning he sent for Mr. Apperly. The lawyer expressed his pleasure at seeing him so well. "Yes," smiled Lord Dane, "I fancy I have taken another lease of my short span of life, and may be here a few months longer instead of a few weeks. Feeling equal to business, Apperly, I may as well execute the will to-day; I suppose it is ready." "Quite ready, my lord, and has been this fortnight. But you were to let me know when to bring it up for signature." "I have not been well enough to put myself to any sort of business or trouble," was the reply of Lord Dane. "It is not well to suffer wills to remain unexecuted," remarked the lawyer. "Procrastination plays strange tricks sometimes." "Not well, as a general rule, or when a man lies daily in danger of death," acquiesced Lord Dane. "Had I been likely to go off like the snuff of a candle, I would have signed the will the day it was made. But I do not imagine my departure will be quite so sudden as all that." "About witnesses?" inquired Mr. Apperly; "shall I bring them with me?" "There's no necessity. Bruff and one of the other men will do. Squire Lester may happen to be in the castle at the time; if so, he can be one." "He marries Adelaide, we hear." "Yes," was Mr. Apperly's reply. "The settlement?" Mr. Apperly shook his head. "I am not solicitor to Mr. Lester. Oh, by the way," he suddenly added, "your lordship heard that Hawthorne is off to Australia?" "Hawthorne off to Australia?" uttered Lord Dane, turning his eyes on the lawyer in surprise. "What should take him thither?" "He has heard from his two brothers, who went over, as your lordship may remember, some four or five years ago. They are doing well—excellently well, making fortunes; and have written for Hawthorne to go out and do the same." "And he intends to go?" "Ay, and to be off in a jiffy. Since the letter came the man has not known whether he stood on his head or his heels, his brain reeling with the golden visions it holds forth. He was with me next day, asking what he had better do about the lease of his house. It seems he had given wings to the news, and twenty air already after it, anxious to take it off his hands—of course subject to your lordship's approval." "A good house is the Sailor's Rest," remarked Lord Dane; "an excellent living for any steady man. Hawthorne would do well to think twice before he gives it up." "So I told him. But, you see that sun, my lord, its rays shining in so brightly; you might just as well try to turn that from the earth, as to turn Hawthorne from this new project. He is wildly bent upon it, and his wife is the same; she is already gone to London to lay in an outfit for the voyage." "What do they mean to do with their furniture and fixtures?" "Whoever takes to the house must take to them. He puts the value down at £300, altogether; furniture, fixtures, lease, and good will; and it's not too much. One man is after it who would make a good tenant,—Mitchel." "Mitchel!" echoed Lord Dane. "What could he do with a public house? And where's his money?" "Your lordship is thinking of the prevent-man. I mean his brother." "Oh, nay, I forgot him. Yes, he would be a good tenant, and could pay Hawthorne the money down. Well, I leave it to you, Apperly; but let the name be submitted to me before the bargain is actually struck. I like to approve of my own tenants." "Very well, my lord. But I suppose I may allow the negotiations with Mitchel to go on, if he and Hawthorne so will it?" "Yes, yes," returned his lordship. "I could have no objection to Mitchel. A respectable man; a very respectable man is Mitchel."

"And what hour shall I return with the will?" inquired Mr. Apperly. "Three o'clock—four o'clock?" "Any hour. You won't find me gone out," responded Lord Dane, with a joking smile. "Then I'll say three; said Mr. Apperly, "and bid your lordship good-day now, hoping my visit has not fatigued you." He had quitted the room, when Lord Dane's bell rang a hasty peal. "It was to recall him," "Apperly," cried his lordship, "I do feel somewhat fatigued, not so well as I did when you came in, and think it may be better to put off the business till to-morrow. It's not well for me to attempt too much in one day. Be here with the will at eleven in the morning." "And the lawyer, with a bow of acquiescence, turned and went out again. When he reached home, John Mitchel was waiting to see him, the man who wished to take to the Sailor's Rest. "Hawthorne and I have come to terms, sir," were the words with which he accosted Mr. Apperly; "and we shall want you to make out the agreement and transfer. I don't care how soon it's done." "All very fine, my good man," returned the lawyer, who, lawyer-like, chose to throw difficulties in the way, though none really existed; "but there's a third party to be consulted in this affair, besides you and Hawthorne. And that's Lord Dane." "I feel sure his lordship will accept me readily," returned the man. "He could not find a surer tenant; you know he could not, Mr. Apperly." "I have nothing to say against you, Mitchel; there's no doubt his lordship might get many a worse. Well, I'll see about it in a few days." "But, if you could manage it, sir, we should like the deeds drawn out immediately. I want to take possession next week, and Hawthorne wants to be rid of it." "Fool, fool!" cried Mr. Apperly, "you can't take a bull by the horns that way. Some men are six months getting into a house. I am busy to-day; and I shall be busy to-morrow; but you may come in again the next morning. Meanwhile, I'll contrive to see Lord Dane." "I dare say, sir," returned Mitchel, looking hard at Mr. Apperly, "you might accept me now, if you would. It's not altogether that I am in so great a hurry to get into the house; it is Hawthorne who is in haste to get out of it; but what I want is, to make sure that I shall have it—that I shall be put aside for another. I'd pay this freely, to secure it, sir." He laid down a five-pound note. Five-pound notes had charms for Mr. Apperly like they have for all men, lawyers in particular. He looked at it complacently; but, true still to his craft, he would not speak the word positive. "I have some power vested in me, Mitchel, certainly, and believe I can promise that you shall become the tenant. Subject, you understand, to the consent of Lord Dane." "Of course, Mr. Apperly. Then it is a settled thing, for I know his lordship won't object to me. So I'll say good-morning, and thank you, sir." "And step in the day after to-morrow, in the forenoon, Mitchel. As to this," added the lawyer, carelessly popping the note inside his desk, "it can go into the costs." But there was to be acting and counteracting. Somewhere about the same hour that Mitchel paid his visit to Mr. Apperly, Richard Ravensbird paid one to Mr. Geoffry Dane's. The latter looked exceedingly surprised to see him, if not annoyed. "Sir," began Ravensbird, without any circumlocution, "report runs that now you are the heir, my lord leaves many points of business, relating to the estate, entirely in your hands. I have come to ask your interest and influence to get me accepted as tenant of the Sailor's Rest." He spoke fearlessly, not at all as a petitioner, more as though he was making a demand. A remarkably independent man was Richard Ravensbird. "What! are you after the Sailor's Rest?" exclaimed Mr. Dane. "I have heard a dozen names mentioned; but not yours. The man most likely to have it, they say is Mitchel." "I have not been after it with a noise, like the rest have, sir; but, as soon as I found it was to let, I spoke privately to Hawthorne. I must do something for a living, and have been looking out ever since I left the castle in the spring." "Then you intend to go to service again?" "Service!" returned Ravensbird. "Who would engage me, after having been taken up on a charge of murdering my former master? There may be some, Mr. Herbert—I beg your pardon, sir, I ought to say Mr. Dane—who don't yet believe me innocent. Not that that's the reason; I never did intend to enter upon another service, if I left Captain Dane's. The Sailor's Rest is just such a house as I should like; will you help me to it, sir?" "Ravensbird," said Mr. Dane, not replying to his request, "it appears strange to me that you should remain in Danesheld. You have no ties in it; until you came with your master you were a stranger to it; had a like cloud fallen upon me, however unjustly, I should be glad to get away from the place." "No, sir," answered Ravensbird, in a quiet, concentrated tone, "I prefer to stay in it." "To enter upon the Sailor's Rest would require money," again objected Mr. Dane. "I am prepared for that. I have not lived to these years without saving up money. That won't be the bar—as Hawthorne knows. He has been shilly-shallying as Hawthorne," continued Ravensbird. "I know of his intentions to leave the house as soon as he did, for he read the letter from Australia to me when it came, lodging with them as I do; and I spoke up at once, and said 'I would take the house off his hands. He quite jumped at it—was all eagerness to transfer it to me; but in a day or two his tone changed, and he has been vacillating between me and John Mitchel." "Why did he change? Do you know?" "Yes; and I have no objection to say," answered Ravensbird. "A crotchet came over him that I might not be an acceptable tenant to my lord, who still wavers as to my guilt or non guilt." "My lord does not waver; he believes you guilty," was on the tongue of Geoffry Dane; but he checked the words, and suffered Ravensbird to continue. "It is scarcely likely that any reasonable man can believe me to have been the assailant, in the face of the sworn alibi; so why should his lordship nourish a prejudice against me? Will you accept me as a tenant, Mr. Dane?" "I have no power to do so; you have taken up a wrong notion altogether. I certainly have transacted business for my uncle, since I have stood, as it may be said, in Mr. Geoffry Dane's place; but he has not given me authority to let his houses." "Will you speak to him for me, sir?" Mr. Dane hesitated. "I would speak in a minute, Ravensbird, but I am sure it would be doing no good. Apart from any prejudice he may or may not hold against you, he is one who will not brook interference, even from me."