

his temperament, and it gratified his ambition. He knew that he inspired the lodging-house bosom with confidence, and the parochial authorities with esteem. The pew-opener courtseyed to him, and the churchwardens nodded to him affably in the street. In short, Pentonville regarded him as a thoroughly respectable man.

Scarcely less methodical was the other—the professional—half of this respectable man's career. He was punctuality itself, and hung his hat up in William Trefalden's office every morning at nine, with as much exactitude as the clock announced the hour. At one, he repaired to an eating-house in High Holborn, where he had dined at the same cost, and from the same dishes for the last two-and-twenty years. Don Quixote's diet before he took to knight-errantry was not more monotonous; but instead of the "pigeon extraordinary on Sundays," Mr. Keckwiteh dined on that day at his landlady's table, and stipulated for pudding. At two, he resumed his seat at the office desk; and, when there was no particular pressure of work, went home to his cat and his violoncello at half-past-six. At certain seasons, however, Mr. Keckwiteh and his fellow-clerks were almost habitually detained for an hour or an hour and a half overtime, and thereby grew the richer; for William Trefalden was a prosperous man, and paid his labourers fairly.

So sober, so steady, so plodding was the head clerk's daily round of occupation. He fattened upon it, and grew asthmatic as the years went by. No one would have dreamed, to look into his dull eyes and stolid face, that he could be other than the veriest machine that ever drove a quill, but he was nothing of the kind. He was an invaluable clerk; and William Trefalden knew his worth precisely. His head was as clear as his voice was husky; his memory was prodigious; and for all merely technical purposes, he was as good a lawyer as Trefalden himself. He entertained certain views, however, with regard to his own field of action, which by no means accorded with those of his employer. He liked to know everything; and he conceived that it was his right, as Mr. Trefalden's head clerk, to establish a general supervision of the whole of that gentleman's professional and private affairs. He also deemed it to be in some sort his duty to find out that which was withheld from him, and regarded every reservation as a personal affront. That Mr. Trefalden should keep certain papers for his own reading; should answer certain letters with his own hand; and should sometimes remain in his private room for long hours after he and the others were dismissed, preparing unknown documents, and even holding conferences with strangers upon subjects that never filtered through to the outer office, were offences which it was not in Mr. Keckwiteh's nature to forgive. Nor were these all the wrongs of which he had to complain. It was William Trefalden's pleasure to keep his private life and his private affairs strictly to himself. No man knew whether he was married or single. No man knew how or where he lived. His practice was large and increasing, and the proceeds thereof were highly lucrative. Mr. Keckwiteh had calculated them many a time, and could give a shrewd guess at the amount of his master's annual income. But what did he do with this money? How did he invest it? Did he invest it at all? Was it lent out at usurious interest, in quarters not to be named indiscreetly? or launched in speculations that would not bear the light of day? or gambled away at the tables of some secret hell in the purlieus of the Hay-market or Leicester-square? Or was the lawyer a mere vulgar miser, after all, hoarding his gold in the cracks and crevices of some ruinous old house, the address of which he guarded as jealously as if it were the key to his wealth?

Here was the mystery of mysteries; here was the heart of William Trefalden's secret; here was the one thing which Abel Keckwiteh's whole soul was bent on discovering.

Possessed by that innate curiosity which acted as the leaven to his phlegmatic temperament, the head clerk had for years pondered over this mystery; lain in wait for it; scented round it from all sides; and, in a certain dogged way, resented it. But since that evening of the second of March, he had fixed upon it with a vindictive

tenacity as deadly as the coil of the bon. He saw, or believed he saw, in this thing, a weapon wherewith to chastise the man who had dared to find him out, and call him spy; and upon this one object he concentrated the whole force of his sluggish but powerful will. For Abel Keckwiteh was a later after Byron's own heart, and loved to nurse his wrath, and brood over it, and keep it warm. He never passed that doorway in Chancery-lane without rehearsing the whole scene in his mind. He remembered every insulting word that William Trefalden had hurled at him in those three or four moments. He still felt the iron blow, the breathless shock, the burning sense of rage and humiliation. These things rankled day by day in the respectable bosom of Abel Keckwiteh, and were each day further and further from being forgiven and forgotten.

The secret, however, remained as dark as ever. He had fancied once or twice of late that he was on the verge of some discovery; but he had each time found himself misled by his suspicions, and as far off as ever from the goal.

Hope deferred, and wrath long cherished, began at length to tell upon Mr. Keckwiteh's health and spirits. He became morose and abstracted. He gave up practising the violoncello. He lost his appetite for the diurnal meats of High Holborn, and his relish for the leaders that he was wont to devour with his cheese; and he forgot to take notice of his cat. His landlady and his fellow-clerks saw and marvelled at the change; and the soul of the one-eyed waiter who received Mr. Keckwiteh's daily obolus, was perplexed with him; but none dared to question him. They observed him from afar off, as the Greeks looked upon Achilles sitting sullenly beside his ships, and canvassed his mood "with bated breath and whispering humbleness."

This went on for weeks; and then, all at once, the tide turned, and Mr. Keckwiteh became himself again. A bright idea had occurred to him, by the light of which he distinctly saw the path to success opening out before him. He only wondered that he had not thought of it sooner.

#### CHAPTER XXIV. AT THE WATERLOO-BRIDGE STATION.

Saxon Trefalden was in buoyant spirits that afternoon as he wandered to and fro among the intricate platforms of the Waterloo-bridge station, and watched the coming and going of the trains. He had plenty of time; for he was a very inexperienced traveller, and, in his anxiety to be punctual, had come half an hour too soon. But his mind was full of pleasant thoughts, and he enjoyed the life and bustle of the place with as much zest as if the whole scene were a comedy played for his amusement.

He was very happy. He thought, as he went strolling up and down, that he had scarcely ever felt so happy in his life.

In the first place, he had that day received a letter from Pastor Martin—a long, loving, pious letter, filled with sweet home news, and benevolent projects about good things to be done in the valley of Domleschg. The remittance which he had despatched the very day after he drew his first cheque, had been distributed among the poor of the neighbouring parishes; the organ that he had sent out a fortnight since had arrived, and the workmen were busy with it daily: the farm-buildings at Rotzberg were being repaired, and the three meadows down by the river-side, that had been so long for sale, were now bought in Saxon's name, and added to the little demesne. The pigeons, too, had a new-pigeon-house; and the spotted cow had calved; and the thrushes that built last year in the great laurel down at the end of the garden, had again made their nest in the branches of the same tree. These were trifles; but to Saxon, who loved his far-away home, his native valley, and all the surroundings of his boyhood with the passionate enthusiasm of a mountaineer, they were trifles infinitely precious and delightful. And besides all this, the letter ended with a tender blessing that had rested upon his heart ever since he read it, and seemed to hallow all the sunshine of the April day.

Then, in the second place, he had that morning enjoyed the supreme luxury of doing good.

William Trefalden had, it is true, affirmed that the hours of Greatorex and Greatorex were numbered, and that Saxon's fifty-nine thousand could only interpose a brief delay between the bankers and their ruin; but Laurence Greatorex, with the crisp bank-notes in his hand, had assured him that this sum, by renewing their credit and tiding them over the present emergency, was certain salvation to the firm. Taking it on the whole, this matter of the cheque had been sufficiently disagreeable. It had shown the banker's disposition from an unfavourable point of view, and to withdraw from even a part of his rash promise had been a source of humiliation to Saxon. Perhaps, too, the young man could not help liking his friend somewhat less than before; and this is at all times a painful feeling. Himself one of nature's own gentlemen, he shrunk instinctively from all that was coarse and mercenary; and he could not shut his eyes to the fact that Greatorex had shown himself to be both. However, it had ended pleasantly. Saxon had saved his friend, and the banker had not only overwhelmed him with professions of gratitude, but given him a proper acknowledgment for the money, so that William Trefalden's promissory note (which Saxon knew he should never have produced, though he had lost every penny by the omission) was happily not needed after all.

And in the third place, he was going into the country for a week or ten days. That was the last and best of all! After six weeks of feverish London life—six long, dazzling, breathless, wonderful weeks—he felt his heart leap at the thought of the free, fresh air, and open sky. He longed to be up and out again at grey dawn, with a gun on his shoulder and a dog at his heels. He longed to feel the turf under his feet; and, above all, to practice the art of horsemanship in some more favourable locality than the yard of the riding-school, or the crowded manege of Rotten Row. To this end, he had a couple of thorough-breds and a groom with him, and had just seen the animals safely disposed of in a horse-box, ready to join the train as soon as it was backed into the station.

So Saxon was in great spirits, and went round and about, looking at the book-stalls and the hurrying passengers, and thinking what a charming thing it was to have youth, riches, friends, and all the world of books and art before one! There were, in truth, a great many half-formed projects floating about his brain just now—vague pictures of a yachting tour in the Mediterranean; visions of Rome, and Naples, and the isles of Greece; glimpses of the Nile, and the Pyramids, and even of the white domes of Jerusalem. For some of these schemes Lord Castletowers was answerable; but let the foreground be what it might, the familiar snow-peaks of the Rhoetian Alps closed in the distance of every wondrous landscape that Saxon's vivid imagination bodied forth. He had no thought of wandering into Italy without first revisiting the valley of Domleschg; and still less did he ever dream of making his permanent home away from that still, primitive, untrodden place. But he had projects about that also, and meant some day to build a beautiful commodious chateau (not so large, but much more beautiful than Count Planta's), and to rebuild the church, and throw a new bridge over the Rhine, erect model cottages, and make every one happy around him.

"Well, what is it?" said an authoritative voice. "Anything the matter?"

Saxon was looking at the red and gold backs of a long row of Traveller's Guides on a bookstand close by, and the voice broke in abruptly on the pleasant reverie which their titles had suggested. He turned, and saw a lady, a railway guard, and a burly-looking official with a pen behind his ear, standing at the door of an empty second-class carriage of the up-train which had discharged its freight of passengers three or four minutes ago.

The guard touched his cap.

"Lady's lost her ticket, sir," he replied, with a knowing twinkle of the eye.

"I know I had it when the train stopped at Weybridge," said the lady. "I took it out from my purse, because I thought the guard was going to ask to see it."