

mouth was in the bill, and the audience had been swindled out of that; but they evidently knew I'd been in danger, and they called me before the curtain. I looked up at that white-faced devil in the private box. He was standing up, rubbing his hands in a satisfied kind of way, as if he had seen what he wanted to see; and as I passed just under him he said in a slow measured voice that gave me the shivers:

"A narrow escape, Herr. Very well done indeed! I congratulate you."

"I gave him a look, which he ought to have understood if he didn't, made my bow to the house, and went off the stage. Robinson was quiet enough by this time. My man, Joe Purdy, had walked him off to his box, and there he was growling over his shin-bones, as wild a lion as you'd like to see. 'Only let me get you safe back to London, my friend,' says I, 'and I'll take you down to Jamrack's and swap you for something better tempered. Talent is all very well; but temper's worth all the talent in the world.' However, that's five years ago, and there's Robinson still performing with me. The brute has such a wonderful gift for his profession! and his heart and soul's in it too. Take that animal in the middle of the day, when he ain't particular hungry, and he's a decent fellow enough, but come between him and his business, and you'll find out what a lion is. He's the vainest beast out, and cuts up rough if he don't get a round of applause for every trick he does. But, Lord bless you, there's no such thing as genius without vanity. He's been a fortune to me first and last, has that animal. Brown and Jones are nothing more than supers to him."

"You didn't see any more of your friend in the box?" inquired Mr. de la Zouche, who was not particularly interested in these praises of the gifted Robinson.

"Curse him, no! By the time I'd changed my clothes he had left the house. I went round to the box-office to see if the box-keepers could tell me anything about him. No; he was a stranger. He had taken his box that morning, finding there was no stall to be had, and paid his three guineas without a question."

"Now I daresay you'll think me an out-and-out fool when I tell you I couldn't sleep that night, nor many nights after, for thinking of that man. I couldn't get his pale cheeks and lank jaws and light grey eyes, with that horrid gloating look in them, out of mind. 'That's a fellow who'd go to see a man hang,' I said to myself. 'That's a man who'd stand by to see his fellow-creatures hung, drawn, and quartered, and enjoy it—especially the drawing.' I hadn't a doubt in my mind that he was on the look-out for an accident all the evening; I hadn't a doubt in my mind that it was through him I made a mess of it at the end."

"Did you never see him again?" asked the low comedian.

"Never; God forbid I ever should, for I've a notion that if I did, it would be the death of me. I'm not a nervous man in a general way, nor superstitious either; but I'd give up the biggest haul I ever made by a benefit rather than act before that man."

"A queer notion," said the humorous Tiddikins.

"A very queer notion," echoed the gentlemanly De la Zouche.

He was not a fine actor, the walking gentleman, belonging rather to that class of performers who is contemptuously likened to a stick, and his dramatic path had been by no means strewn with roses; yet he was fain to congratulate himself that it had not been beset by lions. He had been somewhat inclined to envy Rudolph Prusinowski the distinction and prosperity of his career; but just now it occurred to him that there were two sides to the picture. He rubbed his shoulder thoughtfully, and was glad to think that he was exposed to the assaults of no fiercer animals than those rampant tragedians who snubbed him when he played Horatio, and made light of him in Cassio, but who melted a little on their benefit nights, and treated him to beer.

(To be continued.)

M. Ponchet, in his great work "The Universe," says that "Anatomically and physically speaking, the human mechanism is very rude and coarse compared to the exquisite delicacy revealed in the organism of certain animals. But in us, the intellect, the real sceptre of the universe, predominates over the apparent imperfection of matter. Through it man alone approaches the chosen creatures who shine near the throne of the Eternal, and form a bond of union between heaven and earth. If in his structure he belongs to our sphere, he seems already to elevate himself towards the Supreme Essence by the splendour of his genius. A grand and philosophic truth, and yet how comparatively small the number, and rare the genius, displayed in proportion to the number of the earth's inhabitants. Were man to conform more to the laws of health and of nature, and be less addicted to the gratification of his passions, it would not be necessary to advertise Fellows' Compound Syrup of Hypophosphites as a restorative for the powers of the brain and nervous system, while the world's progress in enlightenment would indeed be marvellous."

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THE NEW MAGDALEN.

BY WILKIE COLLINS.

SECOND SCENE—Mablethorpe House.

CHAPTER X.

A COUNCIL OF THREE.

FOR a moment Horace stood thunderstruck, looking in blank astonishment at Lady Janet. His first words, as soon as he had recovered himself, were addressed to Julian:

"Is this a joke?" he asked sternly. "If it is, I for one don't see the humour of it."

Julian pointed to the closely written pages of the consul's letter.

"A man writes in earnest," he said, "when he writes at such length as this. The woman seriously gave the name of Grace Roseberry, and when she left Mannheim she travelled to England for the express purpose of presenting herself to Lady Janet Roy." He turned to his aunt. "You saw me start," he went on, "when you first mentioned Miss Roseberry's name in my hearing. Now you know why." He addressed himself once more to Horace. "You heard me say that you, as Miss Roseberry's future husband, had an interest in being present at my interview with Lady Janet. Now you know why."

"The woman is plainly mad," said Lady Janet. "But it is certainly a startling form of madness when one first hears of it. Of course we must keep the matter, for the present at least, a secret from Grace."

"There can be no doubt," Horace agreed, "that Grace must be kept in the dark, in her present state of health. The servants had better be warned beforehand, in case of this adventuress or madwoman, whichever she may be, attempting to make her way into the house."

"It shall be done immediately," said Lady Janet. "What surprises me, Julian (ring the bell, if you please), is, that you should describe yourself in your letter as feeling an interest in this person."

Julian answered—without ringing the bell. "I am more interested than ever," he said, "now I find that Miss Roseberry herself is your guest at Mablethorpe House."

"You were always perverse, Julian, as a child, in your likings and dislikings, Lady Janet rejoined. "Why don't you ring the bell?"

"For one good reason, my dear aunt. I don't wish to hear you tell your servants to close the door on this friendless creature."

Lady Janet cast a look at her nephew which plainly expressed that she thought he had taken a liberty with her.

"You don't expect me to see the woman?" she asked, in a tone of cold surprise.

"I hope you will not refuse to see her," Julian answered quietly. "I was out when she called. I must hear what she has to say—and I should infinitely prefer hearing it in your presence. When I got your reply to my letter, permitting me to present her to you, I wrote to her immediately, appointing a meeting here."

Lady Janet lifted her bright black eyes in mute expostulation to the carved cupids and wreaths on the dining-room ceiling.

"When am I to have the honour of the lady's visit?" she inquired, with ironical resignation.

"To-day," answered her nephew, with impenetrable patience.

"At what hour?"

Julian composedly consulted his watch. "She is ten minutes after her time," he said—and put his watch back in his pocket again.

At the same moment the servant appeared, and advanced to Julian, carrying a visiting card on his little silver tray.

"A lady to see you, sir."

Julian took the card, and, bowing, handed it to his aunt.

"Here she is," he said, just as quietly as ever.

Lady Janet looked at the card—and tossed it indignantly back to her nephew. "Miss Roseberry?" she exclaimed. "Printed, actually printed on her card! Julian, even my patience has its limits. I refuse to see her!"

The servant was still waiting—not like a human being who took an interest in the proceedings—but (as became a perfectly bred footman) like an article of furniture artfully constructed to come and go at the word of command. Julian gave the word of command, addressing the admirably constructed automaton by the name of "James."

"Where is the lady, now?" he asked.

"In the breakfast-room, sir."

"Leave her there, if you please; and wait outside within hearing of the bell."

The legs of the furniture-footman acted, and took him noiselessly out of the room. Julian turned to his aunt.

"Forgive me," he said, "for venturing to give the man his orders in your presence. I am very anxious that you should not decide hastily. Surely we ought to hear what this lady has to say?"

Horace dissented widely from his friend's opinion. "It's an insult to Grace," he broke out warmly, "to hear what she has to say!"

Lady Janet nodded her head in high approval. "I think so too," said her ladyship, crossing her handsome old hands resolutely on her lap.

Julian applied himself to answering Horace first.

"Pardon me," he said, "I have no intention of presuming to reflect on Miss Roseberry, or of bringing her into the matter at all. The consul's letter," he went on, speaking to his aunt, "mentions, if you remember, that the medical authorities of Mannheim were divided in opinion on the patient's case. Some of them—the physician-in-chief being among the number—believe that the recovery of her mind has not accompanied the recovery of her body."

"In other words," Lady Janet remarked, "a madwoman is in my house, and I am expected to receive her!"

"Don't let us exaggerate," said Julian, gently. "It can serve no good interest, in this serious matter, to exaggerate anything. The consul assures us, on the authority of the doctor, that she is perfectly gentle and harmless. If she is really the victim of a mental delusion, the poor creature is surely an object of compassion, and she ought to be placed under proper care. Ask your own kind heart, my dear aunt, if it would not be downright cruelty to turn this forlorn woman adrift in the world, without making some inquiry first?"

Lady Janet's inbred sense of justice admitted—not over-willingly—the reasonableness as well as the humanity of the view expressed in those words.

"There is some truth in that, Julian," she said, shifting her position uneasily in her chair, and looking at Horace. "Don't you think so too?" she added.

"I can't say I do," answered Horace, in the positive tone of a man whose obstinacy is proof against every form of appeal that can be addressed to him.

The patience of Julian was firm enough to be a match for the obstinacy of Horace.

"At any rate," he resumed, with undiminished good temper, "we are all three equally interested in settling this matter at rest. I put it to you, Lady Janet, if we are not favoured, at this lucky moment, with the very opportunity that we want? Miss Roseberry is not only out of the room, but out of the house. If we let this chance slip, who can say what awkward accident may not happen in the course of the next few days?"

"Let the woman come in," cried Lady Janet, deciding headlong with her customary impatience of all delay. "At once, Julian—before Grace can come back. Will you ring the bell this time?"

This time Julian rang it.

"May I give the man his orders?" he respectfully inquired of his aunt.

"Give him anything you like, and have done with it!" retorted the irritable old lady, getting briskly on her feet, and taking a turn in the room to compose herself.

The servant withdrew, with orders to show the visitor in.

Horace crossed the room at the same time—apparently with the intention of leaving it by the door at the opposite end.

"You are not going away?" exclaimed Lady Janet.

"I see no use in my remaining here," replied Horace, not very graciously.

"In that case," retorted Lady Janet, "remain here because I wish it."

"Certainly—if you wish it. Only remember," he added, more obstinately than ever, "that I differ entirely from Julian's view. In my opinion the woman has no claim on us."

A passing movement of irritation escaped Julian for the first time.

"Don't be hard, Horace," he said, sharply. "All women have a claim on us."

They had unconsciously gathered together, in the heat of the little debate, turning their backs on the library door. At the last words of the reproof administered by Julian to Horace, their attention was recalled to passing events by the slight noise produced by the opening and closing of the door. With one accord the three turned and looked in the direction from which the sounds had come.

CHAPTER XI.

THE DEAD ALIVE.

JUST inside the door there appeared the figure of a small woman dressed in plain and poor black garments. She silently lifted her black net veil, and disclosed a dull, pale, worn, weary face. The forehead was low and broad; the eyes were unusually far apart; the lower features were remarkably small and delicate. In health (as the consul at Mannheim had remarked) this woman must have possessed, if not absolute beauty, at least rare attractions peculiarly her own. As it was now, suffering—sullen, silent, self-contained suffering—had marred its beauty. Attention and even curiosity it might still rouse. Admiration or interest it could excite no longer.

The small thin black figure stood immovably inside the door. The dull, worn, white face

looked silently at the three persons in the room.

The three persons in the room, on their side, stood for a moment without moving, and looked silently at the stranger on the threshold. There was something, either in the woman herself or in the sudden and stealthy manner of her appearance in the room, which froze, as if with the touch of an invisible cold hand, the sympathies of all three. Accustomed to the world, habitually at their ease in every social emergency, they were now silenced for the first time in their lives by the first serious sense of embarrassment which they had felt since they were children, in the presence of a stranger.

Had the appearance of the true Grace Roseberry aroused in their minds a suspicion of the woman who had stolen her name, and taken her place in the house?

Not so much as the shadow of a suspicion of Mercy was at the bottom of the strange sense of uneasiness which had now deprived them alike of their habitual courtesy and their habitual presence of mind. It was practically impossible for any one of these three to doubt the identity of the adopted daughter of the house, as it would be for you who read these lines to doubt the identity of the nearest and dearest relative you have in the world. Circumstances had fortified Mercy behind the strongest of all natural rights—the right of first possession. Circumstances had armed her with the most irresistible of all natural forces—the force of previous association and previous habit. Not by so much as a hair's breadth was the position of the false Grace Roseberry shaken by the first appearance of the true Grace Roseberry within the doors of Mablethorpe House. Lady Janet felt suddenly repelled, without knowing why. Asked to describe their own sensations at the moment, they would have shaken their heads in despair and would have answered in those words. The vague presentiment of some misfortune to come had entered the room with the entrance of the woman in black. But it moved invisibly; and it spoke, as all presentiments speak, in the Unknown Tongue.

A moment passed. The crackling of the fire and the ticking of the clock were the only sounds audible in the room.

The voice of the visitor—hard, clear, and quiet—was the first voice that broke the silence.

"Mr Julian Gray?" she said, looking interrogatively from one of the two gentlemen to the other.

Julian advanced a few steps, instantly recovering his self-possession. "I am sorry I was not at home," he said, "when you called with your letter from the consul. Pray take a chair."

By way of setting the example, Lady Janet seated herself at some little distance, with Horace in attendance standing near. She bowed to the stranger with studious politeness, but without uttering a word, before she settled herself in her chair. "I am obliged to listen to this person," thought the old lady. "But I am not obliged to speak to her. That is Julian's business—not mine." "Don't stand, Horace! You fidget me. Sit down." Armed beforehand in her policy of silence, Lady Janet folded her handsome hands as usual, and waited for the proceedings to begin, like a judge on the bench.

"Will you take a chair?" Julian repeated, observing that the visitor appeared neither to heed nor to hear his first words of welcome to her.

At this second appeal she spoke to him. "Is that Lady Janet Roy?" she asked, with her eyes fixed on the mistress of the house.

Julian answered, and drew back to watch the result.

The woman in the poor black garments changed her position for the first time. She moved slowly across the room to the place at which Lady Janet was sitting, and addressed her respectfully with perfect self-possession of manner. Her whole demeanour, from the moment when she had appeared at the door, had expressed—at once plainly and becomingly—confidence in the reception that awaited her.

"Almost the last words my father said to me on his death-bed," she began, "were words, madam, which told me to expect protection and kindness from you."

It was not Lady Janet's business to speak. She listened with the blandest attention. She waited with the most exasperating silence to hear more.

Grace Roseberry drew back a step—not intimidated—only mortified and surprised. "Was my father wrong?" she asked, with a simple dignity of tone and manner which forced Lady Janet to abandon her policy of silence, in spite of herself.

"Who was your father?" she asked, coldly.

Grace Roseberry answered the question in a tone of stern surprise.

"Has the servant not given you my card?" she said. "Don't you know my name?"

"Which of your names?" rejoined Lady Janet.

"I don't understand your ladyship."

(To be continued.)

Jacobs' Rheumatic Liquid applied in this frequently prevents weeks of suffering.