

peace of her last hours. He took a famous physician down to Crupskew Common, to ascertain whether Mrs. Carford could safely be moved to more comfortable quarters, but the doctor told him decisively that any attempt to remove the patient would only precipitate the inevitable end. She was dying. Tender and skilful nursing might alleviate the sufferings of her last hours. It could do no more.

Edmund made all necessary arrangements, took all charges upon himself, and remained at a village Inn in the immediate neighbourhood of Mr. Ledlamb's cheerless abode, in order to ensure the patient's welfare by frequent visits to the Arbor.

He had not long to wait for the melancholy end. Before the week was over Mrs. Carford's troubled life had reached its penitence close. James Carford was summoned ere the end, and came in time to breathe words of forgiveness into the dying woman's ear, and to implore pardon for his own unkindness and neglect, which he confessed might have done much to influence his wife's conduct.

"We are both to blame, I dare say," he said, "and I may have been the worst sinner."

James Carford and Edmund Standen returned to London together after the quiet funeral in the village churchyard. During the journey Mr. Carford, alias Carew, took occasion to inform Mr. Standen of the subject position to which his daughter's misfortunes had reduced him.

"I have been living like a gentleman for the last two years," he said, "and now I find myself brought face to face with starvation. My daughter had no thought of my destitute position when she fled, with all the property at her command. Unless I can join her in her exile I know not what is to become of me."

"You need not fear starvation," answered Edmund. "I have forfeited the inheritance that would have been mine, for your daughter's sake, and must henceforward work for my living; but I am not afraid to promise you fifty pounds a year for the rest of your life, and that income will save you from starvation."

"You are too good, Mr. Standen. Ah, if my unfortunate child had but seen things more clearly. How much happier for her to have been your wife than to have bartered peace for splendour."

"You forget, Mr. Carew, that you rejected my offer with contempt."

"Pardon that act of folly, Mr. Standen. Remember how little I knew of you. I saw before me only a foolish young man, over head and ears in love—rash, impetuous, ready to sacrifice his prospects, and involve the object of his affections in his own ruin. Had I known your steadfast and noble character, your power to win a position for yourself, I should have been the last to hesitate. However, it is worse than idle to regret the past errors. Poor Sylvia! Would to Heaven I knew where to find her."

Edmund sighed, and looked out of the window. Guilty Sylvia! His heart bled for her, worthless though she was. If she had stoned against him in the beginning, her last and heaviest sin had been committed for his sake. Hard if he had not pitied her.

"Those diamonds," mused Mr. Carew—"they must have been worth three or four thousand pounds. And that poor child wandering alone and unprotected, when she might at least have had a father's care."

He thought of that noble income, that splendid home, which Sylvia had lost by an act of guilt and folly that seemed to him unparalleled in the history of woman's wrong-doing.

Not long had Mr. Carew been permitted to enjoy the luxuries of the establishment in Willoughby Crescent. Mr. Bain appeared on the morning after Sylvia's flight, and that abode and its belongings had, as it were, dissolved and vanished before his coming; just as Lamia's air-built palace melted when that serpent woman was denounced by the Corinthian philosopher. Shadrack Bain paid and dismissed all the servants except Mrs. Tringfold, whom he sent back to Perriam with her youthful charge, without enlightening her as to his reason for so doing. He informed Mr. Carew, with extreme politeness, that it would be necessary for him to find other quarters forthwith, and at two o'clock in the afternoon he restored the keys of No. 17, Willoughby Crescent, to the house-agent, with all the moneys due to him on account of that dwelling-place.

Mr. Carew pressed for an explanation, whereupon the steward, in briefest, plainest words told the story of his daughter's wrong-doing.

"I decline to believe this statement until it is proved to my satisfaction," said Mr. Carew. "How do I know that this is not a plot of your hatching? It is easy enough for you to assert that the surviving brother is Sir Aubrey and not Mr. Perriam."

"There is one piece of evidence which ought to be convincing to you, Mr. Carew," answered the steward, unmoved.

"What evidence, sir?"

"Your daughter's flight."

James Carew was silent.

He removed from Willoughby Crescent to a single room in the shabbiest by-street of that aristocratic neighbourhood. Even cities of palaces have their outer fringe of hovels, where wealth's pauper dependents may find shelter. A sad change for Mr. Carew to find himself living in a shabby lodging on his scanty reserve fund, and with faintest hope of future comfort.

A brief statement of the main facts concerning Mordred's death had been made by Mrs. Carter the day before she died, in the present of Edmund Standen, Mr. Ledlamb, and Mr. Bain, who came to the Arbor expressly to obtain this confession. He had no knowledge of that manuscript in which Sylvia's mother had written the entire history of the conspiracy.

The document signed and witnessed, Mr. Bain had allowed Mrs. Carter to die in peace, while he remained in attendance upon Sir Aubrey at the chief inn at Hatfield, awaiting the time when it would be wise to remove the Baronet to Devonshire.

Happily there was no one interested in disputing Sir Aubrey's return to life. The heir-at-law would be no worse off for his resurrection, and there were no proceedings in Chancery to be feared from him. Nor could the question of identity give much trouble. All the old Perriam Place servants had been excluded from the rooms which their master inhabited after his supposed death. Mrs. Carter had performed the most menial services rather than suffer even a housemaid to enter those prison-like apartments. Those old servants who had waited on Sir Aubrey for years would not fail to recognize him.

There was Mr. Stimpson, too, who with self-abasement must needs confess the cheat that had been put upon him. Altogether there could be little doubt as to Sir Aubrey's reception at Perriam Place. One important question remained to be decided—was the wretched woman who had fled to be pursued by the law? Was any penalty to be exacted from her for her iniquity? Here Mr. Bain found himself at fault. His master and client was weak in mind and body, certainly in no condition to answer such a question as this. Finding himself obliged to determine on the course to be followed, Mr. Bain pursued his customary plan in all such difficulties—he referred the matter to his own interests, and decided that he had nothing to gain by hunting the miserable fugitive, or by dragging Sir Aubrey's sufferings and Sir Aubrey's wrongs before a court of law. All the law could do would be to restore Sir Aubrey to the position from which he had been ousted. If Sir Aubrey could be restored without the aid of the law, why incur the expense and scandal of law proceedings.

This was how Shadrack Bain argued. He had tasted all the sweets of revenge, and could afford to be negatively merciful to the woman who had scorned him. Let her go—let her starve, forgotten and unknown, in some foreign city; or let her win shameful fortune by the beauty he had once admired. Her fate could signify very little to him. The estate which he had once hoped to win through his influence over her was now removed beyond the limit of hopes. He had only his stewardship to look to. But Sir Aubrey's helplessness and his son's infancy made the Perriam stewardship a very comfortable thing.

"I shall be a rich man before I die," thought Shadrack Bain, "tho' I may never be called 'The Squire.'"

Skilful medical treatment and careful nursing wrought a considerable improvement in Sir Aubrey, and by the time he had been a week in Mr. Bain's charge, at the Hatfield Inn, he had become pretty much the man he was at Perriam, before the steward left for his second journey to Cannes. His speech and appearance were alike improved. Memory had in a considerable measure returned. He spoke of familiar things, asked for his old servants, was eager to return to Perriam, and never failed to recognize Shadrack Bain. But on one subject he was curiously silent—his wife's name never passed his lips.

Mr. Bain waited another week, by the end of which the patient's improvement was still more marked. He then wrote to the housekeeper at Perriam, announcing his return with Mr. Ledlamb's patient—no mention of Sir Aubrey's name—and requesting that Mr. Stimpson might be at the Place to receive the invalid on the following evening.

Perriam was looking its fairest in the glow of an autumnal sunset when Sir Aubrey returned to that peaceful abode of his forefathers. Sir Aubrey, whose name had been inscribed on one of the massive oaken coffins in the Perriam vault, whose pompous Latin epitaph—with an error in an ablative case, when was there a Latin epitaph without an erroneous termination of substantive or adjective, according to some learned caviller?—adorned the chapel wall. Mr. Bain and his charge drove from the station in the yellow chariot, which had been sent to meet them by the steward's order.

Sir Aubrey gazed upon that familiar scene in silent rapture. All the consciousness remaining to that weakened brain was aroused by the sight of home. How often in his joyless, comfortless captivity his thoughts had wandered dimly backward to these scenes; and with how keen an agony had he told himself that he should see them no more.

He turned away from the landscape at last, and clung to his steward's arm with a sudden pang of fear. "You won't let them take me away again, will you, Bain? You've always been a good servant to me. I tell everyone so. You've improved the property as your father did before you, and kept the servants up to the mark, and not wasted money on fanciful repairs. I've always praised you. You won't let me be sent away, will you, Bain? If I am mad I am not mad enough to do any one any harm. And I am Aubrey. They may talk themselves dumb, but they can never shake me from the certainty of that one fact. I know my own name. Mordred is a poor creature; my brother, but a poor creature. I will never submit to be called Mr. Perriam."

"Your brother Mordred is in his grave," replied Mr. Bain, "and you are Sir Aubrey Perriam, sole owner and master of this place. You shall never leave it again, save at your own wish."

"Poor Mordred dead! Bless my soul!" murmured Sir Aubrey. "He was a poor creature, but I was fond of him and he was fond of me. A man's hold on his own life relaxes when he loses his only brother."

They were at the house by this time. All the servants were assembled in the hall, according to Mr. Bain's instructions; and Mr. Stimpson was also in attendance. The outer world was still steeped in sunset's fading glory, but the lamps in the dusky old hall were lighted, and shone full on the faces of the travellers.

One startled cry broke from almost every lip as the baronet appeared among his household, leaning on Mr. Bain's arm, and supported on the other side by a valet who, in the steward had engaged for him at Hatfield.

"Sir Aubrey Perriam!"

"Yes," replied Mr. Bain, "Sir Aubrey Perriam. I thought such faithful servants would hardly fail to recognize a master they had served so long. Sir Aubrey Perriam, in spite of Lady Perriam's pretended widowhood—in spite of the lying epitaph in Perriam Church—in spite of the funeral, and the will which I read in this house—Sir Aubrey alive and among you once more. The coffin that was carried out of those doors held the body of Sir Aubrey's brother Mordred. For the last eight months of his life, Sir Aubrey has been the victim of a most foul conspiracy. But I have unearthed the plotters; I have unravelled their mystery; I have brought your old master back again to you and to his rights and his home."

Cheers, long and loud, for Sir Aubrey and his deliverer. Mr. Bain felt all the sweetness of being a hero.

Mr. Stimpson advanced, pale and scared of aspect, and examined the countenance of his old patient.

"Good heavens, how could I have been so much mistaken?" he exclaimed. "Yes, it is indeed Sir Aubrey. Those artful women! They kept the room dark, and contrived to distract my attention. There ought to have been an inquest. Sir Aubrey, can you ever forgive me?"

"I forgive everybody," said the baronet, feebly, looking round with an agitated expression; "and now I think I should like to go to bed, Bain. You'll stop with me, won't you. You'll take care. You'll not let them remove me while I'm asleep."

"Sir Aubrey, you are beneath your own roof. You are sole master here. This house holds no secret enemy now. You

can sleep in safety. You are surrounded by faithful servants."

The old man looked at them with a faint smile. "I thank them kindly for remembering me," he said, and then looking about him as if he suddenly remembered something, "I should like to see my son," he exclaimed.

Mrs. Tringfold came with her youthful charge, the youthful charge somewhat cross and sleepy, having been kept awake against his will for the last hour in case Sir Aubrey should ask to see him.

The old man looked down at him tenderly. There was no imbecility in that fond gaze, but sentient affection, a father's deep and silent love.

"I shall sleep better now that I have seen my boy," he said, "now that I know we two are under the same roof. Never let anybody part us again."

(To be continued.)

## DRAMATIC GOSSIP.

Berlin is going to build a theatre to be exclusively devoted to comic opera.

M. V. Sardou, the dramatist, is dangerously ill at Marly. He is suffering from erysipelas.

Molière's "Georges Dandia" furnishes the theme for M. Gounod's new opera for the Paris Opera.

H. C. Lumbye, the Danish composer, died at Copenhagen a few days ago. In dance music he was considered almost the equal of Strauss and Gung'l.

A wonderful collection of violins, signed by the great Italian instrument makers of the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, will shortly be sold at Havre.

The new Alexandra Palace is rapidly approaching completion, and it will be entirely rebuilt by the middle of June, when it is to be opened with great ceremony.

Adelina Patti, by a Royal decree of the Emperor of Austria, has been appointed first chamber singer to their Imperial Majesties, a compliment usually reserved for native vocalists.

Herr Wagner's early opera, "Rienzi," has been successfully produced at the Fenice in Venice. The local critics were surprised and pleased to find no traces of the "music of the future" in "Rienzi."

Cincinnati has an "Allegory of the Great Republic," that has netted £10,000 in twelve representations. Washington is one of the characters, but none of his old friends would be able to recognize him.

Gomez, the young Brazilian composer, whose opera, "Il Guarany," met with such poor success in London the year before last, has just brought out a new work, "Salvator Rosa," which has been very successfully produced at Genoa.

Madame Artot-Padilla (wife of the Spanish baritone, Senor Padilla, of the Italian Opera-house, Paris), has been creating a sensation in Berlin as prima donna. The lady was a pupil of Madame Viardot Garcia, and, like her teacher, is able to sing in half a dozen European languages.

Under the heading of "A Curious Coincidence," the Paris *Figaro* contends that the libretto of M. Offenbach's "Orphée aux Enfers" was suggested by one of the light pieces written by Mr. Dismal, a classical squib, a translation of which, by M. C. de Francoisi, was published in 1855 in the *Revue de Nord de la France*. The entrance of Orpheus into Pandemonium, the imprecations of the Furies, the intercession of Proserpine to induce Pluto to depart with Eurydice, the protests against any infraction of the fundamental laws *des Enfers*, which forbid the departure of any mortal therefrom who has once crossed the Styx, and the consequent resignation of Pluto's ministers, are amusingly described.

A curious incident occurred recently in a provincial town. The tenor who was to appear in the opera was on approval, as is the custom, but he sang so delightfully that the whole house applauded to the very echo. At the end of the applause one solitary spectator sent forth a long and melancholy hiss. The house applauded again, the spectator hissed once more, when there was, of course, a unanimous cry of "Turn him out." Thereupon the sibilant party rose, and with great indignation exclaimed, "Why, you are no better than a pack of fools, of imbeciles! Don't you know that the tenor you are applauding has entirely booked off with the Republicans, and is an enthusiastic Bonapartist?"

"La Causa Ticciborni" is the title of an opera about to be produced at Naples. The sensitive ear of the Italians, however, required that the English names of this world-famed trial should be rendered somewhat more euphonious in order to suit the music. Thus we have in the cast Sir Eugenio Ticciborni and Arturo Ortone, rival heroes; Caterina Danti, beloved by both; Sir Radicaliffo, a cavalier who marries the heroine; and subsidiary characters—Boghill, Pittendri, and Uolli, as the honourable member for Peterborough is called; the zealous counsel for the defence is fairly rendered as Il Dottore Chinelli; but the Lord Chief Justice would hardly know himself as Il Lord Capo di Giustizia Sir Cochiborno.

FINE STAGE "EXECUTION."—The London *Orchestra* says:—"Corporal Tibble, of the Twenty-first Foot, has died from injuries sustained on the stage of the Paisley Theatre Royal. 'Jack Robinson and his Monkey' was being represented, and a young gentleman named Douglas, student in the Glasgow University, impersonated as an amateur the part of Captain Tibble, who had previously gone on the boards as an auxiliary, took part in a general 'stage scramble.' The young captain directed his rifle at the head of Tibble, and discharged it at him at a distance not exceeding two feet from his eyes. The consequence was that the deceased's right eye was blown out, and his left one seriously injured. Douglas was brought before Sheriff Cowan and admitted to bail on £15."

Lecocq's new opera, "Giroflà et Giroflée," turns upon the indistinguishable likeness of two sisters, who are both engaged to be married. One of them is unfortunately abducted by pirates just before the ceremony, and as the match is an advantageous one, the parents determine that the wedding shall be attempted even in the absence of a real bride. Accordingly the remaining sister does duty for her own wedding and for her absent one's. The lover of the missing girl never detects the difference. In manoeuvres to avoid discovery the three acts are taken up, numerous shifts being devised for not presenting the two brides together; and it is only at the end of the piece that the missing sister returns and is allotted to her legitimate owner. It will be seen the plot is ludicrous enough. It should be stated that the locale is fixed in Spain.