

of the Gorgon, as he profanely styled Mrs. Bleakiron, he would be enabled, as he thought, to modulate the immoderate transports of Juliana, and make the recalcitrant wife bendable to his lawful authority.

All his personal luxuries—his pipe, his game at billiards, his dog, nay, even his old companions—were sacrificed on the altar of his hymeneal devotion. Then, again, he had his penances of commission as well as omission; for the ladies affected piety, and he went through a rigorous course of serious autobiographies, three Sunday services, Sabbatical cold dinners, and the Reverend Archibald Shuffle—the latter affliction being the high priest of a new sect of the "peculiar people" species.

Knowing his position so well, I was considerably surprised one winter's day to meet Davy in the highest possible spirits. In brighter times he had a joocular way of singing some snatch of a comic-song chorus, and dancing an accompanying break-down on the pavement, and, to my utter amazement, the moment he met me he began,

"*Ri-fol-de-riddle-loll-de-ri-do-da!*" flourished his cane in the air, and struck an attitude worthy of the Champion Clogger himself.

"Horace, my boy," he cried, "give me your fin."

I shook hands with him heartily, right glad to see him so merry.

"You were just the fellow I was looking for," he continued. "Will you come to my house to-night for a vesperial peck and a game at Loo? There'll be Frank Barrington, Jack Irving, Walter Holbrooke, and Paul Massey—all men of our set. Come early, and bring your pipe."

"But, Mrs. Douglas?" I stammered.

"Oh, there's the joke," grinned Davy. "Mrs. D. and the Gorgon are going to Brighton by the 5.30 from London Bridge, and I am left till next Tuesday a disconsolate bachelor. *Ri-fol-de-riddle-loll!*" and he fairly danced with delight at his temporary emancipation.

Rejoicing at my friend's joy, I promised compliance with his wishes. The men I was going to meet were all good fellows. Frank Barrington was about forty, a handsome man, engaged as secretary of a railway in India, and home with his wife and family for a year's leave of absence; Irving was a junior partner in a firm of solicitors; Paul Massey was a surgeon, rising rapidly in his profession; Walter Holbrooke was an emigration agent; and I, Gerald Grey, held a clerkship in the Woods and Forests.

We were a merry party when we drew our chairs round the fire in Davy's dining-room. The flames gave forth a ruddy cheerfulness, the