

neckerchief twisted round his throat in a sort of wisp, a pair of great goggle spectacles upon his nose, and with two, three, or four folios usually ranged round him, one for reading, the others for comparison and reference. I had the good fortune once to hand him a ponderous tome which had slipped from his knees whilst he was intent upon another placed upon the stand before him; and after that time, if by chance he glanced up, which might happen once in a month perhaps, whilst I was in the reading-room, I was sure of a kindly nod at least before he glanced down again.

Once, in a difficulty, I ventured to refer to him, and I was no little astonished by the flood of erudition poured in consequence upon me. He knew everything that had been written upon the subject, and gave me the key to my puzzle immediately, together with half a hundred references wherewith still further to elucidate it. Afterwards our relationship became almost that of master and pupil; and I may say that we became in some sort friends, though our only place of meeting was the library.

The rule in our office was, that every one employed should be there and at work at nine o'clock in the morning; and accordingly at twenty minutes before nine, precisely, I passed the clock in the old church tower on my way to it. I believe that every clock in the back street in Strangeways in which I lived was timed by my movements, much in the same way in which my watch was timed by the church clock as I passed. From long habit this comparison had become a necessity, and the only temptation I ever had to omit it was occasioned by the passing the same spot, at my precise moment, of a young lady dressed in a green mantle, whom I met morning after morning, and whose fresh, pleasant face I got to look for until I fancied that missing it would almost cast a gloom upon the day. It was long before I did miss it: month after month, through the long winter, wet or dry, hail, rain, or snow, at twenty minutes to nine I met Greenmantle, as I called her in my own thought, opposite the old church tower. Very soon I knew her as well as any old house in the city, or out of it, and could have described every fold in her dress and every feature in her sweet face, but I had no one to describe them to at that time, and I am not going to begin now.

I was a young man of five and-twenty-then, but as shamefaced as a girl: if I fancied that Greenmantle looked in my direction, I coloured to the top of my head, I believe, and hastened onward; if she passed without appearing to notice me, I was miserable for the day.

Gradually, I put together a little history for her, but as it was incorrect except in two of its more insignificant particulars, it need not be detailed here. She had usually a roll of music with her, so I knew she was a governess somewhere, and that was all I could make out with certainty. I wanted to know all about her, who she was, where she lived, what relatives she had, and, above all, I wanted to know her. I had got to love her before I had exchanged a word, or even a nod, with her. Her face was the index to all goodness, and I felt that I must win her, or die. If I was as shy as a girl, I was every bit as romantic; and I actually upset all the neighbours' equanimity by starting from my lodgings ten minutes before my accustomed time, and so persuading them that every clock in the street was ten minutes behind time. But I missed seeing Greenmantle. I ran back, indeed, just in time to see her skirt disappear in the distant crowd; but that did not content me, and for weeks I became a true timekeeper again. Then I tried being late: I left my lodgings at the accustomed hour, indeed; but I loitered upon the road, and Greenmantle passed me almost at my own street end. I lingered and watched, but she went on and on until I could distinguish her no longer. Then I turned and ran,—ran at the top of my speed to the office, which I reached five minutes after nine, in time to find every one, from the master, downward, speculating upon my being seriously unwell, or possibly defunct. Thus things went till midsummer; I met Greenmantle, without appearing to recognize her, every morning, and I spent hours every evening in visiting places in which I thought it pos-

sible to meet with her; but, except at that precise spot, at twenty minutes before nine, I never had the luck to find her.

I had even begun to speculate upon the possibility of obtaining a day's holiday, in order to discover where she went to, and, possibly even, where she lived. I dwelt upon the idea, delighted, but the obstacles appeared insuperable. Could I say that I had urgent private business? Of course. But of what nature? I could not summon courage to tell a lie, and perhaps still less could I have told the truth.

One morning, Greenmantle did not appear. It was at midsummer, and we were busy with our annual balance-sheet; it was all but complete, and I had to sign it: instead of Richard Naylor, I signed, "Greenmantle." I tore off the corner surreptitiously, spilled some ink upon the mutilated remnant, and toiled far into the night to produce a clean copy, which I had very nearly signed "Greenmantle" again.

For the next week or two I was miserable: that Greenmantle must be enjoying her holiday, I knew well enough; but it was no slight deprivation to find myself alone, morning after morning, at the accustomed hour.

I determined I know not what; I would speak to her: I composed numberless pretty speeches; one or two fresh ones for every day: I committed them resolutely to memory: I conned them over as I walked, in the office even; and I made mistakes in the books: my ledger, which no pen-knife had ever touched, was disgraced for ever: and still Greenmantle came not.

It was the middle of August, and I ought to have started upon my annual journey home. I stirred not, and made no sign.

At length I was ordered off. I was getting thin and ill, and my master saw it, and told me to go into the country for ten days. I obeyed in part; but instead of going into the country, I commenced a systematic search for Greenmantle. I questioned everybody: cabmen, policemen, porters: many had seen her, but none lately, and none knew where she lived. I was pursuing my search still, and a week of my leave had nearly expired, when, coming suddenly into the marketplace, I saw Greenmantle; I was sure it was she, but some carts intervened, and before I could reach the spot, she was gone.

Here was new life, new hope for me! I spent long hours in the market next day, with Bowens' spectacles always looking at me and seeming to ask what I did there; but I was rewarded at last. I saw Greenmantle coming, and pushed towards her through the crowd. I reached her, and should have spoken: it was her mantle, but the bonnet was different, so was the face!

Here was disappointment doubly deep! I was reckless; my timidity had flown, and I spoke to the girl who wore the mantle I had been seeking so long. She was Greenmantle's sister, Greenmantle was ill; had been very ill; but she was better. Oh! yes, she was getting strong again; they did not live far from there. I was mad, I believe, and I fancy the girl thought so. I bought grapes, oranges, apples, flowers, and I wanted to buy wine for her. I poured my purchases into the skirt of the green mantle, and insisted upon seeing it home.

I sent messages of love, sorrow, happiness: I was grieved for this and happy at that, miserable for the other; I was eloquent and beside myself. I talked more in the ten minutes which it took us to go through the market and to the top of Smithy-door than I had done for months before; and when I was dismissed at the door, I stood gazing absently at the old picturesque building which held nearly all I cared for, until I turned sick and faint from excess of joy.

I went there in the evening, and knocked timidly (after many efforts) at the door. The woman of the house told me Greenmantle's name. "Yes, Miss Walton and her sister lived there: Miss Walton had been ill; but she was mending nicely; she would give my card, would say that I had called; would I wait then?" I felt very nervous, but I would wait, and in a few moments the sister came to me: Greenmantle had recognized me; Greenmantle would see me: would I walk upstairs?

It was an old-fashioned house, and I had never

before seen one so charming; the stairs were of old oak, wide and spacious; I sprang up them with alacrity; three flights were passed, and then, in a large wainscoted, poorly-furnished room, I found Greenmantle, pale and propped with pillows, but with a pleasant smile of welcome on her worn, dear face. I could do no more than I had done, she said: they were well off, they were rich: at least they had sufficient to last them for some time: but she was glad to see me; it was like seeing an old friend. Then Greenmantle spoke of books, pictures, flowers; led me to my own subjects, and appeared to listen with interest. I was eloquent; I was inspired; I astonished myself in particular; but I had no time to think of it then. Her sister told me to go: Greenmantle was tired; but I might come again: the next day if I chose. I did choose, and I chose to go for many a day after. I haunted the neighbourhood of their lodgings; and I have a particular affection yet for the large old window near the top of the most picturesque old house in Manchester, that at the higher end of old Smithy door. From that window Greenmantle has often looked kindly down to me.

She recovered rapidly; her sister said that I was her best doctor; and after I had spoken my love, which I did soon, and without any very extraordinary bungling in doing so, she told me her plain, simple story. Their father was a tradesman in a distant town; they had been carefully educated, partly with the idea that they might have to fight their own way: father and mother had both died suddenly, and almost at the same hour, and there was nothing left for them but their piano and some trifling articles of furniture which their father's creditors had presented to them. They had an uncle in Manchester (he was in the next room, and I must get his consent); so they had come here, and Greenmantle had maintained both her sister and herself by her exertions as a governess. She had continued her sister's education, too, and she hoped now that she could supply her place.

And so Greenmantle went, with a radiant face, to call her uncle; and I awaited, in fear and trembling, his much-dreaded approach. First I heard a great clatter of falling books, then a merry laugh and a shuffling of slippered feet, and then the door opened and Greenmantle entered leading by the hand—my old friend of the college library!

I sprang to him; I think I should have liked to kiss him, for he shook me warmly by both hands, muttered something about being happy,—good boy, good girl, very good girl; and then he joined our hands together, and shuffled away to his books again.

And then Greenmantle made her confession. She had known me quite as long as I had known her: indeed she thought longer, for several times she had passed me whilst I was looking at my watch: she saw that I was punctual; she saw that I was fond of books; she guessed that I liked pictures; she knew that I liked flowers; she had known my name long since; she knew that her uncle had met me; and crowning confession of all—but that was not made till after we were married—she produced my portrait, which she had painted for herself in secret, after, as she said, she knew that I loved her, and hoped that I would some day tell her so.

So Greenmantle's sister began to pass the old church at twenty minutes to nine every morning, and for a little while I used to meet and bid her "good morning" there: but as soon as I had got my cage ready I took home my bird; and now we have turned Greenmantle into a ring-dove, leaving the owl and linnet to keep house together, till the linnet settles in her own nest (which, judging from appearances, will not be long first), and then the owl is to come to us, and I am to rummage both his books and his brains at my pleasure. J. P.

NONE of us really wishes to exchange our identity for that of another, yet we are rarely satisfied with ourselves.

A TITLE may be a diamond to the possessor, but nine persons out of ten will put very little value upon it unless it is polished and set.