Lucy, the Factory Girl;

Or, the Dark Places of Glasgow.

CHAPTER II.

Mr. Shuffle sat in his private room of the firm, with his elbow on the desk and his chin on his hand. He was busy ruminating.

Suddenly a deadened squeaking sound was heard, and as it came nearer he aroused himself from his abstraction.

"Ah, here comes Sleek; I'll consult him," he said to himself.

A very peculiar man was Mr. Sleek—peculiar in his appearance, peculiar in his manners. He was short in stature, and thin in body, not to sparseness certainly, but to slenderness of proportion; and his little model frame was dressed with scrupulous neatness.

His clothes were not made in what might be called the fashion; he had rather fashion of his own, from which he seldom varied in any important degree. But they (his clothes) were always very smooth, well-fitting, and adjusted to a nicety. Beginning with his lower extremities, and going upward, we have to remark first, that he wore shoes—not boots, never boots, but shoes—shoes square in the toes, and shoes which squeaked. The tops of the shoes were covered by gaiters of a dark grey color, buttoned at the side, and fastened below with leather straps. His trousers were of the same color as his gaiters—not black, but something very near it and at the top of them dangled a very broad ribbon, with massive seals attached. His vest was black, and so was his coat. Both were made in a sober dress style, and fitted close to his little body. From the breast of his vest peeped a frill, very white and faultless in its plaits; and a white neckerchief, also very pure in its color, was passed round his throat and tied in a little knot behind. Next comes Mr. Sleek's face. It was just like his body, small and thin, with a complexion inclining to fair. The faint outline of a round whisker might be seen at the back of either cheek, but his chin was shaven to a remarkable smoothness. The nose was aquaiine, and at its source separated two light grey almond-shaped eyes, which had a very calm, restful appearance, and were more inclined to be cast upon the ground than on the face of the person who was speaking to their owner, or to whom their owner was speaking in turn. About the eyes was a crown not particularly broad, not particularly high, but still well developed. On the head there was not much hair, but what there was was combed and smoothed with an exactness and precision unexceptionable. Every hair had its own place, and was never allowed to stray therefrom, but lay in loving proximity to its neighbor, and embraced in the closest manner the head from which it sprung.

Such was the outward man of Mr. Sleek. His manners were quite in harmony with his dress and appearance. His bow was about the blandest that could be imagined. He never laughed, never even smiled, yet had his gravity nothing melancholy about it; it was just of a piece with his gaiters and his hair—betokened a calmness and sobriety not to be diverted into any visible relaxation, far less into boisterousness. And then his voice—oh! how mild, how soft and oily—never rising, never falling, but always tuned to the same key. Within and without he was done up and ironed on the neatest of principles, never ruffled, never excited; the same in prosperity as adversity, unswayed by circumstances, untouched by what was sudden or perplexing—a man of unparalleled equanimity.

One characteristic of Mr. Sleek we must not forget to mention. He did not possess a thing which a great many, we should hope most men, possess, a heart. If he had such a thing at all, it was of extremely small proportions, as hard as a stone, and sealed up all round, so that it was impossible for its power to be manifested either for good or evil. The consequence was that he neither loved nor hated his fellows. He had no desire to injure a living soul, for he was too cold and calm to have passions of any kind, but for the same reason he was never lovingly or sympathetically affected towards anyone. The men and women with whom he came in contact in the business of life were nothing more than cabbages to him. He used them, if needful, for the advancement of his own purposes or interests, but as to feeling for them in untoward circumstances, or being glad at their prosperity, to such an experience he was quite a stranger. He never had the slightest inclination to extend generosity or compassion towards those who had been overtaken by misfortune, but was ready, with the same absence of compunction, to work up their difficulties into his own web, if, by so doing, he could benefit himself. This want of heart, of course, pre-supposes a want of conscience. He never hesitated as to the morality of the means to be adopted for the securing of certain ends. The power of the law was the only fear he had before his eyes; but as he intimately knew the law, knew how far it extended, where it ceased to take hold, and how it might be evaded, he took care to keep himself clear of its fangs.

We have now said enough to give the reader a pretty accurate notion of the outer and inner man of the personage who was then the junior partner in this legal firm, which had been established for the good (?) of the people of Glasgow.

"Mr. Sleek, come here a moment please," said Shuffle to his meek-looking partner.

Sleek stept up to where the other was sitting, who thrust before him a sheet of thin tissue paper, on which Shuffle had slyly taken an impression of Sal's letter without her perceiving it.

"What does it mean?" asked Sleek, after he had read it. "Any case for us."

"I am puzzled about it," said his partner. "That is but a copy of a copy, which I did at the request of Sal, who came here a little while ago with the origan, and asked me to imitate it."

"Didn't you ask her about it?"

"I did, but she would not reply, and charged me to keep it secret. It must be quite a private transaction, for she enjoined me to keep it even from the captain. Depend upon it, this is a bone that will stand a good deal of picking."

"How can she have got hold of the letter? It is quite of recent date. Who can it belong to?"

"Don't know as yet, but we must by-and-bye."

"Of course we must. The document is too valuable to be understood only by Sal. Yet I see no clue here to the person to whom it is addressed, and there is just one way of finding that out. Either you or I must go"—

"To the Broomielaw, when the vessel arrives."

Sleek nodded.

"I'll go," said Shuffle.

"Do. The matter may turn out useful by-and-bye. But be sure to disguise yourself, for if Sal gets her eyes on you, and suspects you are on the watch, it will be a bad business for both of us. I'd rather brave the captain and the whole gang than get Sal for an enemy. She has the power to ruin us, Shuffle, and she would do it too, though she, herself, and the whole of them should fall with us. So take care."

"I will take care," rejoined Shuffle. "But my decided impression is, that the matter is worth some risk."

It was night, clear, cold, and moonless, and several persons walked to and fro on the Broomielaw, waiting the arrival of the vessel from Belfast. She was late that night, considerably behind her time—and the few people who had come to welcome friends from the Emerald Isle grew impatient at the delay. It was not improving to the temper to walk back and forward in the cold night air, instead of being seated in the cosy parlor, with feet in slippers, and slippers on fender; and as the frosty atmosphere penetrated to their toes, and enfolded their limbs in a chilling embrace, they vented peevish complaints on the dilatory ship.

Among those who thus waited was Daniel Dexter and he was not the least impatient of the group. He did not mind the cold much, but it was getting near to the hour when he was to meet Sal at the Monument, and deliver over the child to her care, and he was fearful least the non-arrival of the vessel should prevent him from keeping the appointment.

In one of the sheds opposite the landing place crouched a woman, keenly watching the movements of Dexter. Behind some boxes and packages she sat, her tartan cloak drawn closely round her body, and head bound up in a scarlet napkin. It was Sal! She had come to the Broomielaw to be near when the vessel arrived, for she wanted to see the child given up to Dexter by the captain. She kept her black eye on the form of the agent as he paced to and fro, and glances of a strange, lurid flight flashed from them as she gazed.

Along the pier at some distance from the rest, and in the shadow was another figure—the figure of a man wrapped and muffled. He seemed an old man, for his form was bent, and white locks of thin silken hair fell down upon the collar of his black overcoat. He was not what he seemed, however. It was not age but artifice that bent his body, and beneath that white hair there grew darker locks. It was Shuffle, the lawyer, who had come to the place with the intention of fathoming the mystery of the letter which Sal had brought him to copy.

At length a splashing sound was heard in the river, and the vessel glided into the empty space, and ropes were run out to fasten her to the iron pillars on each side. Many passengers were on deck, and away forward was a mass of goods built up into a huge pile, with sheets of tarred canvas thrown over it for protection.

The passengers leaped ashore, and those whose friends were waiting for them were immediately recognized, and kind and cordial greetings took place, and they hurried away, glad to shelter themselves from the frosty night air.

The moment the steps were placed between the gangway and the side of the pier, Dexter stepped on board, and looking about saw the captain standing aft, near the man at the wheel. He at once approached him.

"Captain," he began, "I understand you have brought a child over with you."

"Yes sir," returned the captain in a quick tone. "Are you Mr. Dexter?"

"I am. Where is the girl?"

"Down in the cabin, fast asleep, I believe. The stewardess has charge of her. Come down with me and I will deliver her into your hands. She is a sweet, beautiful, engaging child, sir."

Dexter followed the captain down to the cabin, where, on a sofa, lay the little Lucy, covered up with shawls, and, as the captain had said, fast asleep.

"Now Mrs. Ward, you will be relieved of your charge. This is the gentleman to whom she is consigned."

"Ah, poor little dear, I am sorry to part with her," said the woman in a regretful voice, as she bent down and took off the handkerchief which concealed the girl's face.

What a vision of loveliness and innocence was revealed to the onlookers. There lay the upturned face of a child whose countenance was beautiful as that of a cherub. It was a round, rosy face, with dimpled cheeks and chin, and silken lashes fringing eyelids which covered the closed eyes. The hue of health mantled on the ruby lips and on the exquisitely formed features. The brow was half-concealed by clustering ringlets of auburn hair, which lay upon it in silken waves. What calmness, what purity rested on that sleeping face. Yet to Daniel Dexter it had no meaning—called up no emotion. His one thought was to bear the child away to the place of rendezvous as fast as possible, and be quit of her for ever.

"'Tis a pity to wake her," said the stewardess, whose heart was already twined round that of the infant's.

"Oh, don't wake her at all," quoth Dexter, who was glad to find her asleep, and hoped to hand her over to Sal in a state of unconsciousness. "Just wrap her up again, will you, and lift her gently into my arms?"

The woman did as suggested. With a soft and motherly hand she wrapped the shawls round the child, and covered her face with a thin handkerchief, after she had printed a kiss on her rosy cheek. Then she lifted her up, and put her into Dexter's outstretched arms. He took her, and without a word left the cabin, ascended on deck, stepped ashore, and glided along the quay. The same moment the watcher in the shed rose from her post of observation, drew her cloak closer around her, and started out at one end of the shed, coming in contact with an old man, who started when he saw her, and bent on her a very keen glance. But Sal heeded not the solitary passenger. Without looking at him a second time she crossed over towards the houses and walked with a quick, yet silent step in an easterly direction. He held on his way, keeping both the agent and Sal in sight for a time, but suddenly the latter disappeared through an entry, and became lost to view. Dexter, however, continued to walk slowly with his sleeping burden, close by the iron railings which separated the street from the river, and to him Shuffle now turned his sole attention, for he was anxious to know what was to be done with the child. On he went, past the first bridge, and past the second, taking no notice of the few pedestrians who at that hour were abroad. When he came to the gaol he crossed over its lower end, and passing under its shadow, kept straight east, and finally entered the Green.

"Good Heavens! he must intend to drown the child," thought Shuffle, as he paused on the verge of the Green, irresolute whether to follow any further. He hesitated to quit the shelter of the railings, for on the level ground his person would be seen, and he might thereby place himself in the power of those whom he conjectured were lawless enough to do him an injury if they suspected that he was keeping a watch on them. While he stood peering after the lessening form of Dexter, his eye caught sight of another figure crossing the Green far to the east, and going in the direction of Nelson's Monument. He looked keenly for a few moments and recognized Sal.

"I see it," he exclaimed with a chuckle. "The child is to be delivered over to Sal; and this man who is, no doubt, the guardian mentioned in the letter, will appropriate the twenty thousand pounds. A very pretty job this; but methinks I should have a bit of the bone to pick. It is very cunning of Sal to keep this snug little business all to herself, but I must contrive to come in for my share. Come, I'll go to the foot of Charlotte street, and wait for her.

He turned to the left, and walked on till nearly opposite the north angle of the gaol, when he again leaned his arms against the railings, and looked keenly through the darkness, to catch again, if possible, the forms of the two persons who, he knew, were about to meet. While thus intently gazing, a hand was suddenly placed upon his mouth, and left a plaster there. At the same moment his arms were grasped and pinioned to his side, so that he could not move them. Instinctively he struggled for a few minutes, but the strength which held him was far more than a match for his own, sealed up as his mouth was, so that he could neither breathe nor cry.

Ceasing to resist when he found resistance to be in vain, he looked round and beheld two powerful men, who had a grasp on either arm. Rough and ferocious-looking they were. One of them was a huge fellow, six feet high, and stout in proportion, of very dark complexion, and scowling visage and bloated features. The other, somewhat shorter, but equally well built, had a face nearly covered with red bushy hair, and out of it gleamed a pair of sharp, fierce eyes, in which no ray of mercy shone.

They dragged Shuffle across the street, and when they entered the Saltmarket they kept in the centre, so that the lamps might not shine too brightly on them, and reveal to passers-by who noticed the three forms from the pavement, they appeared to be three drunken men reeling home, the centre one being most under the influence of liquor, and requiring to be supported by his companions. Hence they never thought of interfering with them, or of bestowing more than a passing glance upon them as they passed. They had no suspicion that the man in the centre was the victim of robbers, whose mouth was covered by an adhesive plaster, so that he could not cry, and was being dragged along in a grasp which he could not oppose, far less shake off. He was powerless and helpless, therefore, even to throw out signs of distress, and was led unresistingly on to a secluded place where his captors could effect their intended purpose regarding him.

We return to Dexter who shaped his course as directly as he could towards the monument, whose high peak shot up into the frosty sky. While he was yet some distance from it, the hour of twelve was heard pealing from St. Andrew's church, and he hastened his steps. The child he carried moved not, but slumbered on in sweet peacefulness, altogether unconscious of the foul hands into which it had fallen. Daniel Dexter was thankful that its sleep was so sound. As he neared the Monument he cast a piercing glance within its shadow. Close by its south side stood a dark figure, which moved out a few paces as the agent drew near. It was Sal. She had reached the appointment place before him.

"So, Sarah, you are punctual," said Dexter, who was much relieved when he saw her.

"Did you expect me?" she asked in a cold indifferent tone.

"Certainly I did, for you have never yet deceived me."

"I wish I could say the same of you," returned the other bitterly.

"Come, come," rejoined Dexter, "we have not met at this hour and in this place to recriminate. The past is past, and let it be forgotten. Here is the child and the money. Take both and let us go our several ways. Be careful of her—she sleeps."

"And you want to learn nothing further of the child?" enquired Sal, as she held out her arm sand took the sleeping girl.

"Nothing," repeated Dexter quickly.

"Or of me either, I suppose?" she continued with a sneer.

"Why, Sarah? Why should we meet again? We can be nothing to each other—our paths lie separate, let them remain so."

"And yet I once loved this man," muttered Sal, after a pause. "Oh God! how I was deceived. Farewell, Daniel Dexter," she added aloud, "farewell for the present. I do not say we shall not meet again, but it may not be for years."

She turned and passed one of the corners of the Monument, taking the child with her. The agent also turned and walked away in an opposite direction; and thus was the little Lucy Livingston, the pure and lovely household flower, translated into a soil of sin, an atmosphere of iniquity. She, the innocent and undefiled, whose infant life had hitherto been sheltered from every breath that could contaminate, whose young bright days had been surrounded by all that was good and true, and chaste and lovable, who had never known aught but scenes of peace and joy, who had seen only smiles and sunshine, and heard only sounds of gentleness and affection—she was now cast into the gulf of perdition.

Cruelly deserted and betrayed, and cast off by the man to whose fostering care her dying father had, in unsuspecting confidence consigned his darling child, she was now in the keeping of those who had forgotten the ways of peace, and gone on the paths of sin and crime.

God help thee, thou little lamb! What can save thee for life? What can rescue thee in death! Helpless thou art in the hands of human fiends, who would deface the pure image of God that is now vividly stamped upon thee—who woul obliterate from thy heart all the beautiful impressions which a sainted mother in gentleness and love put upon it; who would sully thy budding nature with the pestilential breath of direst sin — who would teach thee to grow up to lie and steal, and curse and swear, and embrace all manner of vice. Is this, sweet cherub, to be thy position? Is the morning of thy life, which dawned so purely and serenely, to rise to a day of clouds and darkest gloom, till it be quenched in darkest night? Is the guardian angel to be grieved by the loss of thee; and are the dark fiends in hell to triumph in thy destruction? Is innocence to be swallowed up in defilement? Is thine immortal nature to be consigned to mortality, corruption, and death? Alas! alas! How do the wicked seem to prevail, and the workers of iniquity receive the innocent for a prey. Again we say, God help thee, thou little sleeping one, for when thou awakest it will be to a dark weary lot.

CHAPTER III.

Headquarters in the Tontine Close.

The two ruffians who had pounced upon Shuffle, and after making him resistless, had dragged him up the Saltmarket, directed their steps towards the Cross, and thence up the High Street, passing under the arch of the old Town Hall, which spans the pavement.

On entering this secluded place, one of the men hastily slipped a bandage over the prisoner's eyes, and slouched his hat so as to hide it from any chance pedestrian. They then brought him a little further up the street, and dived into a close to the left. Here all was darkness and silence. The tall, grim houses rose on either hand, their dark windows and darker doorways yawning in deepest gloom; while from within came sounds of passion, strife, and blasphemy.

They proceeded along the close till an iron gate brought them to a stand: but one of the ruffians, producing a key, it was soon opened, and they passed through, waiting only till they locked it behind them.

A few paces beyond, the close turned at a right angle to the left, or rather the end of the close first entered led into another which ran parallel with the High Street, towards the Trongate, the only separation between the two being the iron gate just mentioned.

The latter close was much narrower than the former, and nearly as straight as a line. It was scarcely four feet in width, and the houses were very high, showing a line of dim sky, in which the sun never was seen, and through which the stars seldom shone, except on a clear, frosty night, like the present, when the smoke of the day had passed down the Clyde, and left the black houses to rise up against the midnight heaven.

"This was the Tontine Close!"

About half-way towards the Trongate, the men dragged Shuffle into a wide doorway, on which no door was hung, and groped their way down a flight of damp steps, where the walls were clammy, and the atmosphere raw and very close.

"You hold him there, Bill, till I strike a light," said the tallest of the men, as he took a tinder box from his pocket and lighted a candle, which he found in a recess of the wall.

By the aid of the light thus afforded, the horrible desolation of the place was revealed. They passed through a row of underground chambers, into which no light from above could come, for there were no windows, and the walls were thick masses of black, unplastered masonry.

The very appearance of the place was suggestive of crimes and deeds of darkest character, it was so secluded, so solitary. A victim once there could have no hope of assistance. His cries could not penetrate the massive walls which surrounded him, or if they could, they would be heard only by those who were the friends and associates of his captors.

Going through chamber after chamber of this description, dimly revealed by the light of the candle as they progressed, they came at length to a low, iron-bound door, and one of Shuffle's conductors, stooping down, put his hand into a cavity in the wall, and drew forth a large black key, which he inserted into the lock and turned, when the door swung back with a creaking noise, and they passed within.

"Now, old covey, you must be quiet. I say, Bob, shall I take the mitten from his cheese-trap?"

"Better work the gauger first, and see what the captain says," replied the other, as he went to the corner and pulled a rope, when the faint ringing of a bell was heard above.

Presently a trap door in the ceiling was lifted, and in a few moments a square board was seen to descend through it. On the board stood a man, stout and well made, seemingly about forty years of age, smartly and even richly dressed, somewhat after the manner of a Spanish bandit. On his head he wore a tasseled silk cap, and the upper part of his body was covered by a tightly-fitting velvet jacket. Round his waist was a richly ornamented girdle furnished in front with two pistols and a dagger, the handle of the latter flashing in the candle-light as if it had been studded with precious stones.

He was a well-favored man, with regular features, and a countenance not by any means marked with the ferocious expression which characterised the other two. His eyes were large, and, when at rest had a sweetness and mildness about them; his nose was Grecian in form, and surmounted a mouth which, when narrowly scrutinised, gave the key of his character. By it one could judge that he was one used to command, and capable of controlling the fiercest and most untamable spirits. There rested an iron firmness, a determination, a decision, which pointed him out as a director, a leader, and a commander—as one to whom authority had been unreservedly conceded, and who was in the habit of maintaining it.

"Well, lads, what game have you got in the snare to-night?" he asked, as he stepped from a board on which he had been let down by a windless from above, and fixed his eyes on the captive.

"An old cove, captain," answered Bill. "We grabbed and mittened him near the Green, but don't know what think he has got in his thigh bank."

"Ah! well, off with the mitten and let him peep," returned the captain.

A bowl stood upon the table half-filled with water, and in the water floated a sponge. The sponge Bill immersed, and applying it to Shuffle's mouth, soaked the plaster which covered it. He then removed the latter without difficulty, and the lawyer was once more free to use his tongue.

But he didn't speak just at once. His arms being now also at liberty, he slipped the bandage from his eyes, and lifting the hat from his head, and the wig of long white hair along with it, revealed to the three onlookers the head and face of a much younger man, and one with whom they were not unfamiliar.

"What means this?" asked the captain hastily, as he glanced at the other two.

"It's a mistake, that's all, captain," said the lawyer, speaking for the first time, and smiling with a quiet smile.

"Well, I'm blowed if it ain't Mr. Shuffle," cried Bill, running forward, and looking narrowly into his face.

"Just the gentleman, and no other," remarked the lawyer. "Captain, you owe me something in the way of damages for this assault, committed by your men."

"But what does it all mean?" asked the captain gravely and with some asperity.

"Took him for an old cove who would come down handsomely. Didn't we Bob?" appealing to his astonished companion.

"Course we did," ejaculated Bob.

"And why didn't you put them right, Mr. Shuffle?" asked the captain.

"How could I?" replied the lawyer. "Before I knew anything, or had seen my captors, my mouth was scaled up with that cursed plaster, and my arms held as if they had been in a vice."

"But this disguise," continued the captain, pointing to the white wig and Shuffle's chalked face.

"I was going about on a little business of my own," answered the lawyer.

"Which is, of course, spoilt by the mistake?"

"Well, it can't be helped. The mistake was a natural one. But let us get out of this horrid dungeon of a place," continued Shuffle, looking round upon the cave-like chamber.

"Ah! well, you shall sup with us to-night," cried the captain, laughing heartily. "But, I say, not a word of the mistake to any of the rest."

"Faith, captain, for our own sakes we'll not peach," said Bob, who seemed considerably annoyed at finding they had had all their trouble for nothing.

"Now, then, give them the wink to work the gauger," said the captain, as he stepped again upon the board. "You will come up, next time, Mr. Shuffle," he added, as he began to ascend. "But first give your face a touch with the sponge to take off the chalk."

The lawyer nodded. In half a minute the board descended empty, and Shuffle, placing himself upon it, was drawn upward. He passed through the ceiling, and found the captain waiting to escort him to the hall of general rendezvous.

"Come, Mr. Shuffle," he remarked gaily, "you have had a good deal of conversation with the chief of business with our society, but have never yet seen us in the midst of our social enjoyments. You shall do so to-night. This is one of our supper nights, and you shall join us."

The lawyer was nothing loath to accept of this invitation, for he was under the idea that the scene he would witness might give him some hints in the way of his profession. He also had an eager desire to be present when Sal returned, to see if she had the child—for he meant to have some share in her very promising enterprise. He therefore very willingly allowed the captain to lead forward to a door at the far end of the chamber into which they had just been raised by a windlass.

By means of a pass-key the door was opened, and revealed a narrow stair, well-lighted by two oil-lamps which were swung from above. The walls on either side were painted, a carpet covered the stair, being secured on each step by brass rods.

At the top of the stair was a wide landing place, and in front a door, which was fastened. This the captain opened, and it led them into an antechamber, round the walls of which were various doors, beautifully painted. A bright coal fire burnt in the grate, a richly-colored and very thick carpet covered the floor, and a long sofa or couch stood on that side of the room where there were no doors.

Crossing over, the captain opened that which appeared on the other side, when a multitude of loud sounds were heard. They entered a spacious, oblong room, which was brilliantly lighted by many lamps, all swung from the roof—a row of them stretched from one end to the other above a table which ran down the centre. Seats of all kinds were strewed about, and groups of men and women were gathered together in various parts of them talking loudly and eagerly to each other.

The appearance of Shuffle along with the captain attracted some observation at first, and many keen looks were bent upon him; but he was well known to not a few who had benefited largely by his professional services, and these informing others how closely identified he was with the interests of the society, they ceased to regard him with suspicious or unfavorable looks.

At the upper end of the room, near a large fire, were two or three empty seats, one larger and more elevated than the rest, made of black oak curiously carved on the back and covered on the bottom with red leather. Into this the captain threw himself and motioned to Shuffle to be seated in another close by.

Shuffle sat down and eyed the group curiously. One man, thin and sallow in complexion, was sitting by a small table, a little apart from the others. Before him lay a pile of base five shilling pieces, and he was busy wrapping each into a piece of tissue paper by itself. Another was on the opposite side of the room, before a table, on which the clothes of all kinds were hung, and around him were gathered three or four boys, whom he was teaching the sublime art of pocket-picking. Close by was a group of smart young men, seated round a table, poring over the game of thimble and pea; while, flitting from group to group, or sitting together in knots, were several young girls, some still pretty, others haggard and reckless-looking, and all having the appearance of wanderers in the ways of vice and crime. Close by the side of the fire sat a boy, seemingly about 12 years of age, whose large eyes, hectic cheek, and short, dry cough, indicated that he was far gone in consumption. He paid little heed to what was going on around, but sat looking steadfastly into the fire with his strange, earnest eyes as if his thoughts were far away—as if his spirit were already breaking through its fast-crumbling tenement, and roaming amid other scenes. There he sat, his little emaciated form bent towards the fire, but bright expressions flitted over his half-smiling countenance, as reflections of a brighter and purer region than that in which he had long lived—glimpses dim and fitful, but sufficient to entrance his awakening soul, and cause it to grope after and hope in a world of great and glorious realities.

"Well, Mr. Shuffle, now that you have scanned the scene pretty closely, what do you think of it?" asked the captain, breaking the silence which he and the lawyer had maintained for many minutes. You are not aware, I suppose, that our Society, for whom you act professionally, is so large and well-organized? Of course you do not see the full membership, for many have not dropped in for the night; but you see enough to give you a notion of our association."

"I really, captain, am amazed," answered Shuffle. "Your task must be a difficult one, to keep in order so many turbulent spirits, and maintain an organization so wide in extent and ramified in operations."

"Ah, yes, it requires tact and firmness," rejoined the captain. "It takes me to have a good deal of the devil in me to do it; but I require more than that. If I had nothing else, Heavy Ben there, whom you see sleeping in the corner, would usurp my place for he is all devil together; but ferocity is not wanted always. Our people must have mirth and fun at times, and I can enter into that when the fit seasons for it come. But don't you want to have an idea of the various kinds of business we have constructed our association on, division of labor principle, and, I flatter myself, with a deal of success. Bus Bill and Bob the Swaggerer, who made the mistake with you to-night, are our two trappers. Their business proper is to bring likely persons to the chamber below, where we keep them till their friends ransom them."

"Isn't that dangerous?" asked Shuffle.

"Mightn't they peach when they got out? Ah, captain, that is very risky."

"Not so risky as you imagine," was the reply. "In the first place, we make them take an awful oath that they will reveal nothing, and then we impress upon them this fact, that hundreds of eyes will be upon them, and that if they should be so very imprudent as to violate their oath, a quick and terrible punishment will overtake them. Oh, you have no idea how effectual this plan is. Then the other line of business we do is, of course, in house-breaking, and here Bob and Bill figure pretty largely likewise; but Heavy Ben lying yonder is our mainstay in this department. No one can manage a bull-dog so well as he, or handle bludgeon, or face a blunderbuss. These three, with a few others compose the Working corp, as we call them. They have no project in hand to-night, and most of them, I daresay, are asleep somewhere, but they will all drop in to supper. Then, for the minor and miscellaneous departments, we have a host of ladies and gentlemen, such as you see, and I assure you I have got them trained up to a very satisfactory state of efficiency. I am proud of my command, Mr. Shuffle. Ours is a bold and adventurous life, such as suits my hot blood. I could not a live a tame, spiritless existence—I must have excitement; and this sort of life is just the thing for me. You lawyers choose a different way of fleecing people—you do it quietly, cautiously, and safely; we do it boldly, openly, and adventurously."

"But still have to be indebted to us, when you get into difficulty," remarked Shuffle, with a smile.

"Ah, yes, you are very useful to us, Mr. Shuffle. So here are our family beginning to return."

"Well, Little Tip, what luck?" cried the captain, as a very little, sharp, needle-looking fellow entered the room, and made his way forward.

"Pretty fair," answered the person addressed, as he began to disgorge from his many pockets various articles of plunder, which he had just possessed himself of in the street, without saying to their owners—"By your leave."

The others gathered round as Tip unloaded, and every fresh article produced caused a burst of admiration. The plunder consisted of handerchiefs, innumerable watches, chains, purses, pocket-knives, and other such things, which formed quite a pile when they were laid all together.

The captain smiled his approval, and called upon the treasurer to deposit the spoil in the warehouse. Others now began to drop in, some of them laden like Little Tip, though less heavily, and some empty-handed.

At length Shuffle started on observing Sal enter, bearing a bundle wrapped up in a shawl.

"I know she would have it!" he mentally exclaimed. "So so! I shall be at the bottom of it all before I quit this place. Eh, what now?"

"What is it? What is it?" was the general cry, as they crowded round the new comer.

"Hush! she sleeps!" she whispered. "Why, Sal, what on earth is it?" asked the captain.

"It is a child," replied Sal.

"A child!" echoed every one.

And Sal removed the covering, and there lay Lucy in all her child-like loveliness.

(To Be Continued.)

FRIENDS OF MAXIMILLIAN.

There died in St. Catherines, Ont., the other day Mrs. W. Benfield, whose life for the last quarter of a century has been spent in quietude and comfort, but whose experience at one period of her life was stormy and sensational enough to furnish material for a first-class romance. Her husband died a few years ago, but both Mr. and Mrs. Benfield at one time played a prominent part in the history of what is now the Mexican Republic. Mr. Benfield being one of the same friends of Maximilian that time Emperor of Mexico. Had the Emperor followed the advice urged on him by Mr. Benfield, both he and the Empress would have escaped. For his loyalty to his friend Mr. Benfield came very near sacrificing both himself and wife, and they made their escape from Mexico only with the greatest difficulty. Mrs. Benfield frequently described how she and her maids sat up all night cutting rich-colored and very thick carpet covered the floor, and a long sofa or couch stood on that side of the room where there were no doors.

Crossing over, the captain opened that which appeared on the other side, when a multitude of loud sounds were heard. They entered a spacious, oblong room, which was brilliantly lighted by many lamps, all swung from the roof—a row of them stretched from one end to the other above a table which ran down the centre. Seats of all kinds were strewed about, and groups of men and women were gathered together in various parts of them talking loudly and eagerly to each other.

The appearance of Shuffle along with the captain attracted some observation at first, and many keen looks were bent upon him; but he was well known to not a few who had benefited largely by his professional services, and these informing others how closely identified he was with the interests of the society, they ceased to regard him with suspicious or unfavorable looks.

At the upper end of the room, near a large fire, were two or three empty seats, one larger and more elevated than the rest, made of black oak curiously carved on the back and covered on the bottom with red leather. Into this the captain threw himself and motioned to Shuffle to be seated in another close by.

Shuffle sat down and eyed the group curiously. One man, thin and sallow in complexion, was sitting by a small table, a little apart from the others. Before him lay a pile of base five shilling pieces, and he was busy wrapping each into a piece of tissue paper by itself. Another was on the opposite side of the room, before a table, on which the clothes of all kinds were hung, and around him were gathered three or four boys, whom he was teaching the sublime art of pocket-picking. Close by was a group of smart young men, seated round a table, poring over the game of thimble and pea; while, flitting from group to group, or sitting together in knots, were several young girls, some still pretty, others haggard and reckless-looking, and all having the appearance of wanderers in the ways of vice and crime. Close by the side of the fire sat a boy, seemingly about 12 years of age, whose large eyes, hectic cheek, and short, dry cough, indicated that he was far gone in consumption. He paid little heed to what was going on around, but sat looking steadfastly into the fire with his strange, earnest eyes as if his thoughts were far away—as if his spirit were already breaking through its fast-crumbling tenement, and roaming amid other scenes. There he sat, his little emaciated form bent towards the fire, but bright expressions flitted over his half-smiling countenance, as reflections of a brighter and purer region than that in which he had long lived—glimpses dim and fitful, but sufficient to entrance his awakening soul, and cause it to grope after and hope in a world of great and glorious realities.

"Well, Mr. Shuffle, now that you have scanned the scene pretty closely, what do you think of it?" asked the captain, breaking the silence which he and the lawyer had maintained for many minutes. You are not aware, I suppose, that our Society, for whom you act professionally, is so large and well-organized? Of course you do not see the full membership, for many have not dropped in for the night; but you see enough to give you a notion of our association."

"I really, captain, am amazed," answered Shuffle. "Your task must be a difficult one, to keep in order so many turbulent spirits, and maintain an organization so wide in extent and ramified in operations."

"Ah, yes, it requires tact and firmness," rejoined the captain. "It takes me to have a good deal of the devil in me to do it; but I require more than that. If I had nothing else, Heavy Ben there, whom you see sleeping in the corner, would usurp my place for he is all devil together; but ferocity is not wanted always. Our people must have mirth and fun at times, and I can enter into that when the fit seasons for it come. But don't you want to have an idea of

Dr. Price's Cream Baking Powder
World's Fair Highest Medal and Diploma.

PROVINCIAL NEWS.

Interesting Information [illegible] to the Rich Interior.

A local branch of the National Council of Women of Canada is to be formed at Kaslo.

So far this year 26,330 tons of ore have been shipped from Kootenay, valued at $2,045,950.

D. Gellatly, of Vernon, recently killed a mountain lion, which measured 8 1-2 feet from tip to tip.

I. F. Hauk, of the Brookside Gardens, near Vernon, is missing. No reason can be assigned for his absence.

The C. & K. & N. Co.'s new boat, now being built, it is understood, will not be launched until spring.

The people of Mara have built a school house with their own funds, but not content with this have added an organ to the fittings.

R. J. Bealey & Co., the Rossland brokers and financial agents, have incorporated as a limited liability company, with a capital of $50,000.

H. Noble and W. G. Robb have bonded their group of claims on White Grouse mountain to W. R. Ramsdell, of Butte, Mont., for the sum of $12,000, receiving a liberal cash payment.

John A. Finch, Patrick Clarke and W. S. Norman have announced their intention of applying to the Provincial Legislature at the next session for incorporation as the Rossland Land, Water & Light Co., for the purpose of supplying water for domestic and fire purposes to the town of Rossland, and also electric light and power, as well as water, electric lights and electric power for the mines adjacent. The water is to be taken from Stoney creek, Little Stoney creek and Sheep creek.

Says the Kaslo Claim: The first ore to be shipped this year from the head of the lake, or more properly the Lardeau region, was brought down in row boats this week and taken over the Moonstone, a claim recently located by Bigham & Baum near the deserted townsite of Lardeau. The smelter returns show 81 per cent. lead and 106 ozs. in silver, a net profit of $71.72 per ton. The shipment netted $32.42. The owners think they have a good thing, as their lead is a large one, and will at once begin development work with a force of men.

The contractors are putting the finishing touches to the Kaslo & Slocan railway. The 140-foot span Howe truss bridge has been forwarded to its destination and is now being rapidly put in place across Carpenter creek. As soon as it is completed, the track will be laid over the half mile to Cody. The balance of the road is wholly complete. Some of the box cars have been brought into service, and others are being pushed as rapidly as possible. Porter Bros., having very nearly completed their work, are bringing in their outfit from the outlying camps.

A man named John A. Langford shot at a man named Thomas Thomas in the bar-room of the International hotel, at Rossland, on Nov. 12th. But one shot was fired. It did not hit Thomas, but it grazed the throat of a man named Carrington, who was standing 20 feet distant. Thomas did not appear at the preliminary examination, which was held before Justice of the Peace Newton. The accused was committed to the next assize court on two charges: one, carrying concealed weapons; the other, unlawfully shooting at Thomas with intent to kill. The witnesses were held in $200 each to appear when called.

Common Colds

Never neglect the kidneys when you have a cold.

Only diseases that kill—those the doctors shake their heads at—all commence with a cold.

Bright's disease, diabetes, paralysis and female troubles all commence with a cold.

From the first sneeze, at any stage, Dodd's Kidney Pills always cure.

It is not the cold that gives you an attack of rheumatism.

It is the impure blood caused by a derangement of the kidneys, caused by a cold.

Of course the cold gets to your joints and muscles, but it is by way of the blood.

The kidneys stand guard to keep out these poisons which cause rheumatism, or any other one of the many effects of a cold.

Now, when you have a cold take Dodd's Kidney Pills.

You may have a cure of your own for a cold, but you listen to us.

You can knock it out quicker with Dodd's Kidney Pills than with anything else you ever saw.

It is much better to prevent than to cure serious disease.

For a long siege of disease weakens the defences.

And life is worth saving.

We are preparing a medal to be worn by those who have been saved by using Dodd's Kidney Pills.

It will require thousands to give each person one.

CANADIAN NEWS.

In the Hyams murder trial at Toronto yesterday, the medical experts called by the defence gave much valuable evidence in favor of the accused, all agreeing that the facts of the case pointed conclusively to the accident theory.

The Speaker has issued at Ottawa the writs for the bye-elections. These have not left the Government's hands yet.

The Toronto Street Railway Co. wishes to run a shorter schedule of cars during the winter, but the city council will take steps that the summer arrangement is kept up.

Lord Aberdeen is to be present at the St. Andrew's Society dinner at Winnipeg on Dec. 2nd and will reply to the toast, The Day We Celebrate.

The Aurania loaded 141,000 bushels of wheat at Fort William on Wednesday, the largest cargo ever shipped from there.

The Manitoba & Northwestern railway authorities report a wonderful increase in mixed farming along their line. The shipments of produce, stock and grain average 50 per cent. more than last year.

Farmers in the Crystal City district, in Manitoba, are getting about 8 cents per bushel more for their oats than the farmers a few miles south of them in Dakota.

B. W. Folgar, of Kingston, says that Barney Barnato, "the King of the Kaffirs," was born at Eagle Creek, near Pakenham, on the line of the Kingston & Pembroke railway, where he has a brother now residing.

Despatches from Prince Edward Island show that the big storm of Wednesday was general throughout the Province. The wind blew with hurricane force, and at Charlottetown it was difficult and dangerous to move about the streets of the city owing to falling sign boards and other debris. The roofs of several houses were crushed in, but no one was killed. A steam launch and a small schooner were sunk at the wharves. The schooner Lily was stranded at Victoria Point, and the schooner Minnie Bell at Crapaud.

E. Belanger, of Quebec, has assigned