

"I have no doubt what was amiss, what Amy found lacking. Struggle as she might against the repulsion, casting out as a sin all suspicion, all doubt, which seemed to her pure soul a want of loyalty to her affianced husband, still she missed the poetic side of her Percy's character. She thought him altered. And the alteration was unfortunately in the very point which appealed most forcibly to her own sympathies. O! short-sighted Jonathan, that looked merely on the surface and forgot the soul! Were you so blind that you could not see that the very aptitude for stooping to a base action was a sufficient difference between your worldly heart and Percy's pure honor to upset the cunningest disguise?"

"The day before that appointed for the wedding, Amy sought me in the Ghost's Walk. I could see she had been crying.

"Percy," she said, "I am very weak and foolish. Will you please not to scold me?"

"My darling!"

"Percy, I am afraid I don't love you—not as a wife ought, you know—quite."

"My love, my own little queen, my beauty, your commonest regard would be more to me than another woman's love."

"Percy, I will do my duty to you. I will try hard, O so hard, to love you; but if you think that somebody else might love you—and I am sure there are many, many that would—as I can not, but as you deserve, then you are free."

"As she uttered these words, trying hard to smile through her tears, a whirl of thought rushed through my mind. Never till that moment had I thought of the meanness of the deceit I had practised. It had never presented itself from that point of view before.

"But what was best to do. If I were to tell her the plain truth the shock might kill her. If I were to renounce her, finding that, in addition to the alteration in her Percy, he no longer loved her, she would likely mope and die. Besides, my own love for her, stronger than the love I had ever felt for any woman, pleaded that both these plans were unfeasible. I could no longer live without her. It was beyond my power to renounce her now.

"So, we were married, but Amy shivered as she stood before the altar, and the hand on whose finger I placed the ring was cold as marble. The beautiful bride that I led away that day was like a tinted statue of the Amy that had embraced me with such a tender welcome a few months before.

"Half-maddened by my wife's coldness, and by the sight of the evident struggle which embittered her existence, for she battled with her own repugnance as with a deadly sin, I relieved her as much as possible of my presence, and sought in the pursuit of manly sports—in riding hard to hounds and as an amateur in dangerous steeple-chases—for an excitement which might act as a counter irritant.

"I was to ride one day in a four-mile steeple-chase with some ugly leaps in it. The other horses were to be ridden by professionals, but still I preferred to ride my own. As I passed to the paddock with a light overcoat over my jockey rig, I found my wife's carriage, already upon the ground, with some ladies of her acquaintance.

"Percy," she said, leaning from the landau, with an unusual tenderness in her tone, "I wish you would get some man to ride 'High-flyer' instead of yourself to-day."

"Why, Amy?" I asked.

"Oh! I don't know," coloring; "the danger, and the others are all professionals, you know."

"The interest—an unwonted interest—which she evinced had pleased me. But was it not rather the degradation of my competing with professional jocks which had caused her to speak? Bah, it was her pride, not personal interest in me, which had roused her.

"I leaped lightly on 'High-flyer's' back, and began the preliminary canter.

"Then came the start, and away we went over the black fence and the double rail and hedge, and across the brook, and over another hedge and ditch, and so to the great jump of the day, a stone wall on the top of a low bank, with bad taking-off ground and worse the other side. Safe over this and the day was mine. The field was pretty well weeded, and only two whom I could call antagonists remained. The next leap was a mere nothing—a small hedge with a low rail in it—of so little importance that there were no bystanders. I was just rising to this, 'High-flyer' going easily with a slight lead, when I heard a sudden rush, felt a treacherous touch of a toe beneath my heel, and a muttered oath in my ear, and was sensible of being hurled violently from my saddle. Then I lost consciousness.

"The first words I heard when I was again capable of hearing were spoken by an old servant whom Amy had told me had nursed me when I was little:

"What an ugly scratch. Right over the pretty strawberry mark on his left breast."

"And so a friendly stump had obliterated the only clue (unless they shaved me and exposed my retreating chin) which would have proved my non-identity with Percy Pelham.

"And though they shaved my head when I was raging with fever, my wife herself, I was told, gave strict orders that not a hair of my tawny beard should be touched.

"Thus fate seemed to favor my deceit!

"Amy was constant in her attendance during my delirium. They told me she had never left me. But when I had again almost recovered her old coldness returned, and the old barrier rose up between us.

"I wonder what I talked about in my madness?"

"If I had discovered my secret, Amy made no sign. Only she drooped visibly, and as the October leaves strewed the ground, she withered and died—died with the old wish upon her lips that I might find somebody to love me.

"That somebody I never found, but the widower found a solace in watching the loves of others, and promoting their happiness. And now, knowing that the girl of your choice can never be yours unless you can obtain a goodly portion of this world's wealth, and loving you both as if you were my own children, permit me to enable you to enjoy a happiness which has never been mine, and to die with the consciousness of having desired, at least, to act for the best in this matter, before I go to meet Amy and Percy in that land where all hearts shall be open and no secrets hid. O God, be merciful to me, a sinner."

And so ended this strange story of mingled good and evil. What lies before us, my Laura, in the years to come? Shall the monster of Deceit invade our Eden, and our confidence in each other's love grow dim? Heaven forbid!

## A WORD IN SEASON.

BY CHARLES DICKENS.

They have a superstition in the East.

That Allah, written on a piece of paper, Is better unctious than can come of priest, Of rolling incense, and of lighted taper: Holding, that any scrap which bears that name In any characters its front impressed on, Shall help the sinner thro' the purging flame, And give his toasted feet a place to rest on.

Accordingly they make a mighty fuss

With every wretched tract and fierce oration, And board the leaves—for they are not, like us, A highly civilized and thinking nation; And always stizping in the miry ways To look for matter of this earthly leaven, They seldom, in their dust-exploring days, Have any leisure to look up to Heaven.

So have I known a country on the earth

Where darkness sat upon the living waters, And brutal ignorance, and toil, and death, Were the hard portion of its sons and daughters; And yet, where they who should have opened the door Of charity and light, for all men's finding Squabbled for words upon the altar floor, And rent The Book in struggles for the binding.

The gentlest men among those pious Turks

God's living image ruthlessly defaces; Their best High-Churchman, with no faith in works, Bowstrings the Virtues in the market-places. The Christian Pariah, whom both sects curse, (They curse all other men, and curse each other,) Walks thro' the world, not very much the worse, Does all the good he can, and loves his brother.

## HALF A DREAM.

IN TWO CHAPTERS.

BY THE REV. M. G. WATKINS.

### CHAPTER I.

"GENTLY, Geordie! take your time, man! Now then!" The excited gilly wades into the pool with his gaff, there is a brief struggle, and then he lays on the grass a fine salmon of eighteen pounds at least.

On disengaging the fly, it is found too ruffled and "mauled" to be of any further use. My pouch does not contain another puce floss-silk-bodied fly.

"It is no manner of use ye're trying the Spey wi' ony o' the fal lals," exclaims honest Geordie, turning out my best London-made flies with no small amount of disdain; "I'll jist rin awa' to the manse doon yonder; Mr. Finlan ties a fly that will kill in ony weather, and he'll gie your honor ane, I ken weel."

While he takes my compliments to his reverence, I fling myself down beside my quarry. He was my first salmon, and not a little proud was I of his silvery sides and perfect form. But the morning was hot and the heather-tufts comfortable. I lighted a cigar, and reflected on the odd chances that had brought me, William Robinson, late of the Bengal Civil Service, to the banks of the Spey.

The night-side of London, during the season, offers many curious sights to the social philosopher. Heightened by the darkness overhead, and lit by the glare of the numerous gas lamps the contrasts of fashionable life and poverty come forth far more strongly than during day. The scum of the Great City does not often bubble to the surface before evening. Wealthy Pleasure does not thoroughly rouse herself until dinner or ball beckons at sunset. In no scene can the various aspects of high and low life in London be so well studied, as under the corridor of the Opera when the prima donna's last notes still quiver in the memory, or in front of one of the theatres when the curtain has fallen and the lights inside have been dimmed. What a rush of splendid horses, what a whirl of wheels, and Babel of excited shouts from struggling coachmen, policemen, and gentlemen, as "Lord A's carriage stops the way!" or "Lady B's brougham is brought up with a sudden check!" How strange to see young and lovely women, exquisitely dressed and ornamented, huddling

together under the slight shelter if it rains, while the dirtiest and most disreputable of their sisters leer at them from the wet and mud, with smiles obviously due to the influence of gin! Then the dashing off of adventurous gentlemen in search of a cab, the cool manner in which it is often appropriated when brought up, in the confusion, by another party, while the first man vainly attempts to collect his ladies—the subsequent feelings of these ladies after the exposure to cold and wet, when they do get into a cab at last—all this, and much more, supplies a thoughtful mind with plenty of reflections. Look at that elegant girl, in green muslin and silvery gauze trimmings! Consumption is the great artist who causes her violet eyes to sparkle at her companion's sallies, and paints her cheeks with that becoming carmine flush! This ten minutes' waiting has signed her death-warrant. He has hailed a cab at last, and handed her in. Alas! has he not handed her into a hearse?

Such were my meditations one night in front of the Lyceum, while a drizzling rain was falling, and the cold canopy of fog and mist seemed settling down closer every minute. I had left Oxford that morning, and in ordinary costume was comfortably surveying the confused sights before walking to my hotel. The eagerness of those who were still within, pushed the first who had left the theatre beyond the scanty limits of the awning, and many stood in the street waiting for cab or carriage. Suddenly my eye fell on a familiar face. It was Buchanan of Saint Vitus's (my own college), who in full evening costume, with a breadth of shirt-front that the rain was already discomposing, stood outside the awning with a young lady on his arm. They had no umbrella, and evidently would have to wait some minutes yet. The rain fell piteously on his companion's pretty head-dress, but she did not seem to mind it much. I pressed up to them, and said—

"Here, Buchanan; I can't bear to see your friend getting so wet. Take my umbrella till your carriage comes."

"What, you here, Robinson! how kind of you! The very thing, isn't it?" (this to his companion).

"Let me hold it well over you. There!" and having ended his *petite soane*, he suddenly remembered—"Oh! Miss Frere, Mr. Robinson!—but where have you sprung from, old boy, eh? Shall I see you to-night at the club? No, by the way, I shan't be able to come up to-night; hope to see you though to-morrow,—Here, John! here!" and in less time than I take to write it, the carriage dashed up, Buchanan handed in the young lady, who had only time to thank me with a word and a still more gracious smile, an elderly lady and gentleman hurriedly got in, Buchanan dropped the wet umbrella into my arms, with a "Ta, ta! old boy; many thanks," and they were whirled away, leaving me with as little ceremony, I reflected, as if I had been engaged by the theatre to stand at the door and provide ladies with umbrellas. However, Buchanan doubtless meant nothing by it, I thought; he looked very much in love with his fair companion, and probably had not many ideas for any one else at present. Small blame to him, for she was very pretty; what eyes she had, and what a smile! Happy Buchanan! and here I must walk solitary home to my hotel. So I lit my cigar and strode on through the dripping crowds.

It was long before I fell asleep, and even in dreams the winning smile, the graceful figure, the dainty lace that was so cruelly besmirched by the rain, and which formed the head-dress of Miss Frere, constantly intruded themselves. Her face was one which derived much of its charm from beauty of expression, and few faces so provokingly fix themselves in the memory as these. Next morning at breakfast my thoughts recurred to her, then the paper came: I finished my chop, bustled off into the City on business, and forgot her. The examination for the Indian Civil Service was beginning in a few days, and work put everything else out of my head. In due time I was appointed to one of the vacancies, and (it was before the present system) received orders to be ready to sail in three months.

One lovely afternoon that August, I had rambled from Penzance, where I was bidding farewell to friends, down to the stern granite cliffs which, hung with a waving fringe of grey lichen, hurl back defiance on the surges that so frequently assault the Land's End. It was a glorious scene that I surveyed, looking over the broken water that runs so swiftly among the black reefs off the headland on to the Longships Lighthouse, and then to the illimitable Atlantic beyond, like the vast unknown future which lay before my life-voyage. Suddenly laughter and voices struck on my ear. Turning round, I saw a party of ladies and gentlemen, followed by servants with baskets and cloaks. Evidently it was a picnic party, so I went on with my meditations while they passed round a shoulder of rock, whence occasionally burst of merriment floated over to me.

At length a lady, in light gauzy muslin dress, girt with a broad pink sash *à la fronde*, and accompanied by a man who was earnestly chatting to her, passed between me and the sea, clambering over the rocks. As he passed by he looked up: it was Buchanan. He uttered a cry of surprise, whereat his partner, the fair Frondense, raised her head, and once more I beheld the face that had burnt itself into my memory the night after the theatre. It was fresh, gay, and lively as the glittering waves before us, while, as with them, slumbered under its arch expression an undercurrent not to be fathomed or understood all at once.

"What! Robinson! where have you dropped from, old fellow?" said Buchanan.

"I remember you well, Mr. Robinson," added the lady. "What a romantic place to meet in!"

"I could not forget you, Miss Frere," I observed, in all seriousness, for such was the thought that at once passed through my mind; then adopting a lighter tone for Buchanan's benefit, I said, "Haven't you brought a parasol to shade me from the sun in my time of need at present?"

"No; but we have plenty of champagne and ice to cool you. Come along round the rock!"

"Do come, Mr. Robinson! It will please papa to be introduced to you—and a family picnic," she added with archness, "is generally so dull."

There is no need to describe the charm of the picnic, to me at least, heightened as it was by the pleasure of watching the varied expressions that swept over Miss Frere's face, to die out (as Wordsworth says) in her eyes, and by the singular rock-scenery amongst which we feasted. Buchanan was very attentive to Miss Frere, and I had no doubt that a few more months would see them married. Declining a pressing invitation to dine with Mr. Frere that evening, as I had to leave Penzance for town, I once more lost sight of the face that possessed such a strong attraction for me. Shortly afterwards I started for India, and after five years' service, during which I had never forgotten Miss Frere, though I had heard nothing either of her or of Buchanan, I returned home for a year's rest.

Hitherto my story has dealt in suddenly changed kaleidoscopic combinations: it will now become more steady. That summer I spent with my brother and sister at Guildford, and was returning there by the last train on a lovely July night, from a cricket-match at Aldershot. Suddenly there was a violent lurch, then the carriage seemed to spring into the air, turned over on one side, and after plunging up the ground for a few yards, subsided along with all behind it into a general wreck, covered with clouds of dust. The engine had gone on, and the carriage I was in, having run off the line, had carried confusion and ruin into all behind it. To my utter amazement, beyond a good shaking I was not hurt; so having extricated myself from the smashed carriage, I proceeded to help the other passengers. There were very few of these, and none were seriously hurt, though contusions and broken heads abounded. Loud was their wrath, and dire their threats of actions, and of the compensation they would exact from the company. I left them to their grumblings, and passed to a first-class which had not been overthrown. By the aid of the guard's lamp we saw a lady sitting with clasped hands, apparently paralysed with terror; while, to add to the confusion, a thunderstorm now broke forth in a deluge of rain. It was out of the question to leave the lady where she was. "Madam," said the guard anxiously, "I trust you are not hurt."

The lady did not stir or speak.

"Madam," I said, coming to the rescue of the guard, "suffer me to help you out; you must not stay here; pardon me!" and I took her arm, and tried to raise her.

She burst into a torrent of tears, with her hands before her face, but without uttering a word or rising. I saw that she was utterly unhinged in mind, though it seemed fortunately not hurt in person.

What was to be done? Guard and I looked at each other in doubt; still she could not be suffered to remain; so I took up her dressing-bag and cloak which lay on the opposite seat, and handed them to the guard. On doing so, a name caught my eye, which was engraved on the lock of the former article—ELLEN FRERE. It touched an old key-note within me, but that was all, and I applied myself again to remove the lady.

"Thank God!" at last she said devoutly, and I started at her accents. Once such tones had vibrated in my mind, but that was all gone; still could it—could it be? Swifter than thought I seized the guard's lamp, and in the rudest but most eager way held it up to the lady's face. There were the well-remembered violet eyes, suffused now with tears, the fair cheeks blanched with terror, the half-opened lips that had twice before so powerfully attracted my fancy.

### CHAPTER II.

"Now then, sir, look alive!" said the guard roughly. I awoke from my amazement.

"Miss Frere! how very fortunate! I am thankful indeed that you are not injured. You remember me?—Robinson, whom you met at the Land's End? Now you must let me take you out, and I will see to you, and not leave you till I have safely handed you to your friends."

"Mr. Robinson!" she said dreamily; "ah, yes; I will leave this now," and she took my arm while I hurried her out of the train. Luckily the accident had happened a hundred yards from a little station, and we were soon under its shed, she trembling convulsively still, and clasping my arm tightly. I let her remain silent for a few minutes, I then poured out some sherry for her from my flask. This revived her, and she said, with a sweet resumption of her old graceful manner, "Mr. Robinson, how can I thank you enough? but what shall I do? I have forty miles yet to travel to S—, and my luggage lost, and I with such a headache! so shaken with it all!"

"The first thing is to telegraph to your friends at S— that you are safe. To whom were you going?"

"To the Lamberts."