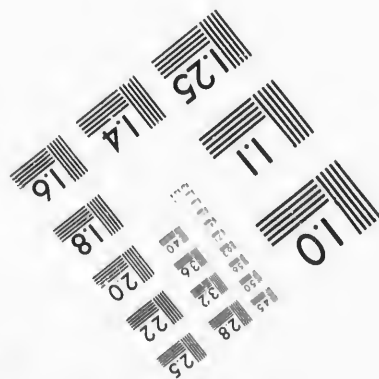
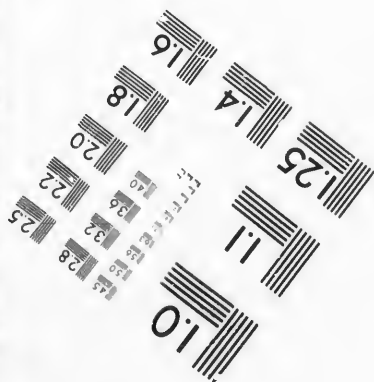
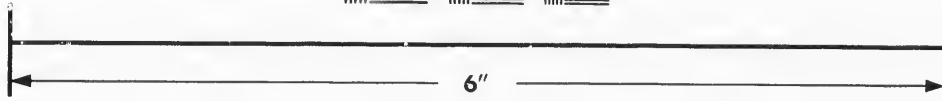
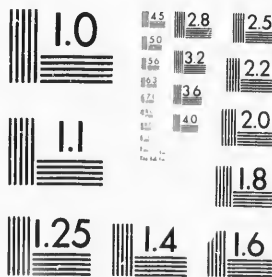


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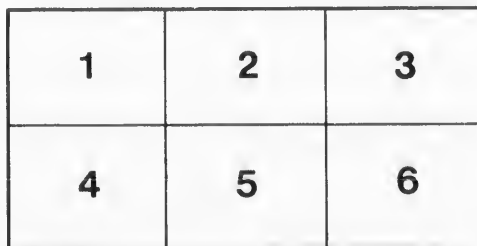
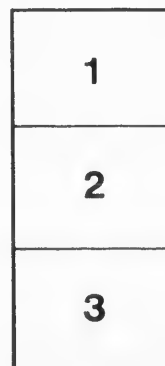
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THAT BOWL OF PUNCH!



WHAT IT DID, AND HOW IT DID IT.

Six Christmas Stories,

BY

BERNARD BIGSBY,

*Author of "Ellen's Secret," "Flowers and Thorns," "My Note Book."*

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# “THAT BOWL OF PUNCH!”



WHAT IT DID, AND HOW IT DID, IT.

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BY

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### CONTENTS.

- I. Christmas Day with a Vengeance.
  - II. How Harold Macfarlane went through the Fire.
  - III. In the White House at Midnight.
  - IV. Dr. Winsom's Wooing.
  - V. The Shadow.
  - VI. What that Bowl of Punch did.
- 

Toronto:

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1872.

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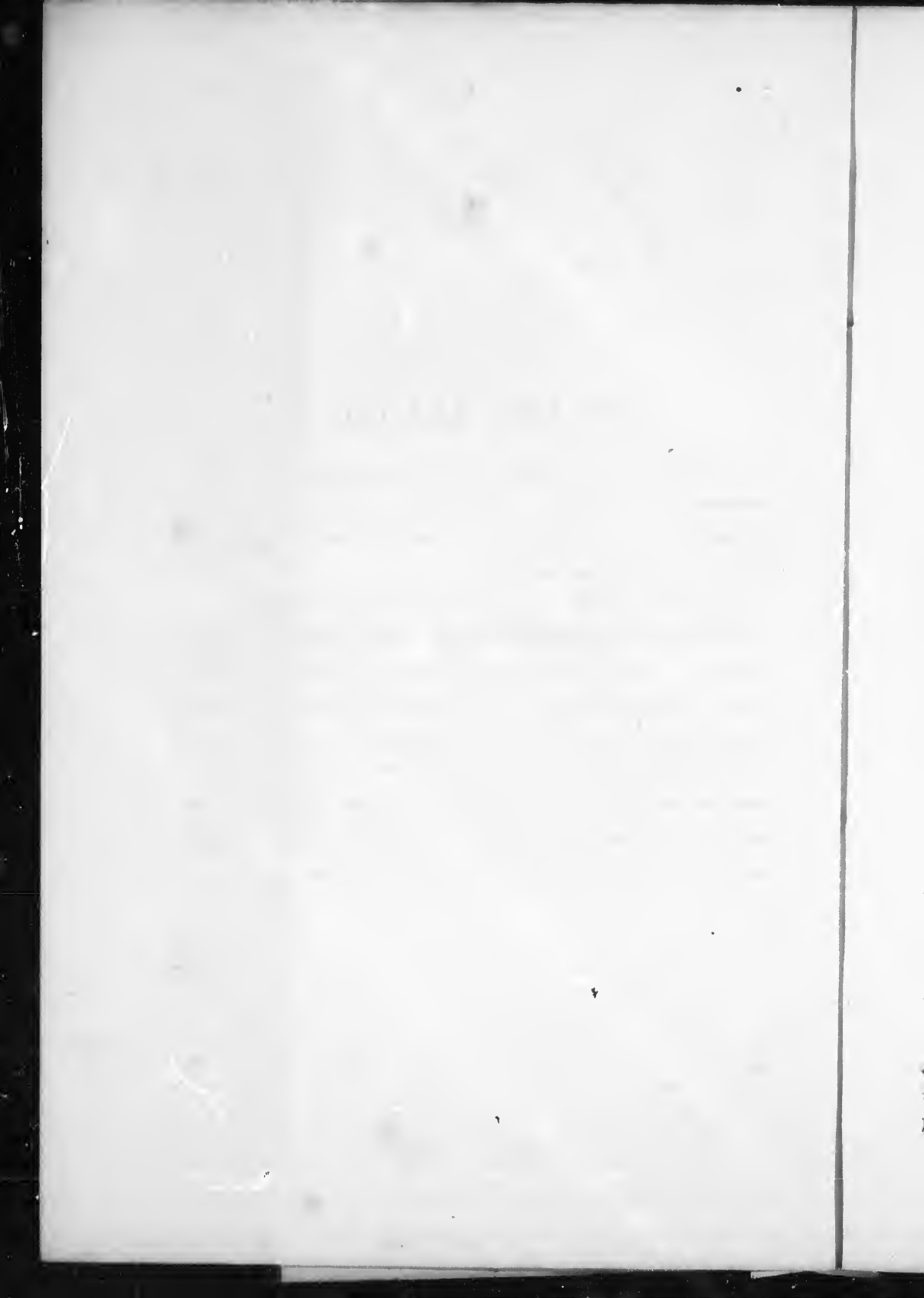
## TO THE READER.

It has been suggested to the author that the publication of this *brochure*, under the title of "THAT BOWL OF PUNCH," might lead the public to entertain the opinion, that he godfathers proclivities to habits of indulgence and excess.

The fairness of such an assumption he indignantly challenges.

He looks upon the habitual drunkard as a social leper, whose breath is poison, who barter the love of wife and child, the ties of home, high self-esteem, and all that makes life pure and happy for a grovelling, base, and sensual gratification of a selfish passion.

He, then, dedicates these pages to those to whom the motto *nunc est bibendum* has a limited and sensible signification—in fact to all good lovers of temperance and sobriety who, like himself, can use, not abuse, a gift of an all-wise Providence.





## “ THAT BOWL OF PUNCH ! ”

### THE BREWING.

**H**IS intimate friends never spoke of him as Mr. David Douglas ; to them he was simply Mrs. David Douglas's husband ; he the parasite, she the plant. He, an insignificant incubus in the family circle ; she, the fountain-head of all its glory.

And yet Davy—as we affectionately called him—was not always milk-and-watery in disposition. Once he used to be positively perky—I use the term advisedly—perky ; for he was a little man with big, explosive ideas, that he jerked out with much gesticulation. Nay, sometimes he was even obnoxiously demonstrative and opinionated, and ready to argue the point with anyone who differed in sentiment from him.

But from the day that Davy led to the altar the magnificent Juliana Bleakiron, his individuality was gone ; he came back from his marriage tour an altered man, and it soon became apparent to his friends and associates that the little fellow was suffering from a chronic and virulent attack of hen-pecking. In addition to this marital affliction, a mother-in-law, of more than ordinary interfering proclivities, drove the sharpest little pins and needles of petty persecutions into his unhappy person, and led him the life of a dog.

His cheery loud laugh soon degenerated into a listless smile, and his self-sufficient air gave place to an humility that would have been the envy of Uriah Heap himself. Month after month passed by in perpetuated affliction ; old friends tried to laugh him out of his horrors ; but the evil was past curing by a joke. To me he confessed that, if he could only get rid

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 jocular 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

kettle sang snugly on the trivet, the decanters, glasses, and golden lemons glistened on the table, and we were prepared to make a night of it.

The centre-piece was a large china Bowl, with an old-fashioned punch-ladle, which had descended to our host through several generations of Douglasses.

This was THE BOWL.

"Now," said David, tenderly taking down from a shelf a manuscript receipt-book, that had been compiled in bye-gone days by his great grandmother, a dame famous far and wide for her confections, "I'll read the directions; and, Gerald, will you brew?"

"With all my heart," I replied, turning back my sleeves and preparing for action.

"Rub the sugar over the lemon until it has absorbed all the yellow part of the skin, then put the sugar into the bowl; add the lemon-juice (free from pips), and mix these ingredients together."

"Mixed they are, Sir."

"Pour over them the boiling water."

"How much?"

"About a pint, and take care that it boils."

"Take care that it boils! Why, the kettle is fuming and fretting and puffing out volumes of steam, as if it dared me to lay hold of it and make it do its duty."

"Add a tumbler of rum, a tumbler of brandy, some nutmeg—half a teaspoonful—and mix discreetly. Then spice it according to taste."

It was finished at last.

There it stood upon the table, its hot breath heavy with the odours of Indian spices, and offering up its incense of vapour, while it ladened the air with delicious aromas.

Again and again the ancient ladle did its duty. Then the sparks glowed in the bowls of the mist-compelling meerschaums, and there rolled to the ceiling thick, wreathing clouds of fragrant tobacco smoke.

The cold, polished, immaculate poker and tongs had forgotten their accustomed mathematical neatness, and lay honestly begrimed with unwonted labour, while the fire entered into the spirit of the thing, and crackled, and roared and tossed its tiny sparks up the chimney in wild and exuberant glee. How could we leave such a merry companion to take our places at the card-table? The thing was impossible.

"Look here, boys," said Barrington, "let's do as the Christmas Annual fellows always do, when down in a diving-bell, or up in a balloon, or snow-bound at a village inn, each man tell a tale or sing a song."

It was agreed upon. Then came the momentous question—who should begin—and seeing a good deal of hesitation amongst us, Walter Holbrooke, who was never backward in coming forward, started with a relation of how he spent

#### CHRISTMAS DAY WITH A VENGEANCE.



I SHUT the ledger with a bang, locked up the cash-box, and gave the keys of the board-room to our antediluvian housekeeper with "a happy new year," and a more than usually liberal largess to help her to spend one, and I, Walter Holbrooke, secretary to the Philanthropic Association for the promotion of the emigration of paupers to Figi-land, hurried off to catch the mid day train from St. Pancras to the north, for I was bound a Christmassing to an old farmhouse among the hills and wolds of Derbyshire.

There are few localities left in "merrie" England where the observance of our ancestral customs is so properly acknowledged, and few people retain so many of the rites and ceremonies of bygonedom as the mid country folk that dwell in secluded nooks and corners of the Peak mountains; and I was anticipating a rare treat.

There I knew that the yule-log would burn brightly, and that the bonnie lassie that first saw it drawn up to the broad hearth, would faithfully look for a husband within seven weeks and a day. There I was sure of the big, flaring dish of Snap-Dragon, and the mighty bowl of posse! made of brown, home-brewed ale and creamy white milk—none of your tins of compressed quackerries to be found in this land of pastoral richness—and the fishing with wooden spoons for the lady's wedding ring out of a glorious jorum of frumenty.

Hither I knew would come the mummers with fantastic dress and time-honoured drollery, and the morrice dancers with white duck trousers, variegated ribbons, and coats of a dozen hues; and I saw in my mind's eye the lovingness with which we welcomed the waits and plied them with hot elderberry wine to keep the cold out and give them lusty voices to sing their song of grateful remembrance.

Here, too, I knew that a plum-pudding meant a plum-pudding, and not a petty apology of a cannon-ball-sized thing, like an overgrown dumpling, such as Londoners believe in; but a substantial twenty-pounder, with a sprig of holly as big as a geranium stuck in its sugary top.

Here, too, I knew that the noble Baron of Beef lorded it in all his majesty, and that turkeys, geese, fat capons, rabbits, hares, and such small deer, were simply thrown into the feast as make-weights, hardly to be accounted for.

Of all these good things I had anticipatory visions, and my heart leapt

at the prospect that lay before me. It is true that since I was a boy of ten—and I have now seen nearly thirty Christmas Days—I had not been to the land of spa and heather, but had spent my life in London, and was looked upon as a cockney by country people; but my heart was always true to my native county, and I thought that going there meant almost the same as going home.

A few words are necessary to tell you whom I was about to visit, and, as there is a little bit of romance attachable to it, you will, I am sure, pardon me the necessity of the explanation.

My father was always supposed during his lifetime to be a man of considerable means, but, upon his death, to the astonishment of all his neighbours, his estate turned out to be heavily mortgaged, and there was little or nothing left for his widow and two sons. My elder brother, Francis Henry, then twenty-five years old, and fifteen years my senior, resolved upon seeking his fortune in Australia, and my mother and I with heavy hearts saw him on board the emigrant ship at Gravesend, ere we dropped into our places as atoms of the great world of London life.

Years passed by, and we heard nothing of Frank, beyond that he had joined an exploring expedition, and had been since lost sight of. In course of time my mother went to her grave in the full belief that her first-born was no longer a living man, and this opinion of hers I fully shared.

After many vicissitudes and ups and downs of fate, I found myself, as I have told you, in the secretaryship of the benevolent institution to which I have still the honour to belong.

One day a farm-labourer, in presenting himself to me as a candidate for aid in migration, gave as the name of his last employer, Francis Henry Holbrooke, gentleman farmer, Ashleigh Magna, Derbyshire. Struck by the name, I questioned him, and learnt the further particulars that this gentleman had only lately settled in the neighbourhood, that he had spent many years in Australia, and that he was about forty-five years old.

Feeling it my duty to leave no stone unturned to discover my lost brother, but fully assured that it would simply turn out a curious coincidence, so certain was I in my own mind of poor Frank's death, I wrote to the address given, and told him who and what I was.

The answer I received was laconic enough in all conscience, and from its sheer practicability would, I am afraid, have greatly shocked all the learned gentlemen now trying to solve the mysteries of the Tielborne labyrinth. He simply said, "If you are my brother Walter, write and tell me the name of the ship I went out in, and what I gave you, and what you gave me on board of her at Gravesend." To this I as curtly replied, "The ship was the *Western Star*; I gave you a clasp knife with a buckhorn handle and four blades, and you gave me a green leather purse, with a crown piece and a shilling in it."

Then came a letter full of brotherly affection, deploring our long separation, and begging me to come to his house, and stay as long as I liked.

And thither upon the twenty fourth day of December I was bound, with a heart as light as that of any one of the top-coated and muffled-up pleasure-seekers that left London on that bitterly cold winter's morning.

The train reached Derby all right, but here I found that my troubles commenced, for I had to travel along two local branches to reach my destination and, the railway authorities perversely declining to make any extraordinary preparations for the pressure of Christmas time, the lines were choked, and the traffic was delayed.

At last, fully three hours behind my time, I arrived at the junction of Mudborough, only to find that the train had left for Milton, the place I was directed to get down at, and that there was little chance of continuing my journey that night. But the station-master, doubtless touched at my misfortune, and with a heart softened by the genial influence of the season, promised me a ride in the guard's van of a luggage train that would be passing at midnight, and would drop me at Milton about one o'clock in the morning.

It was after one though when I got there, and the only living soul to receive me was a cheery, good-tempered, though half-frenzied signal-man, who, after a pull at my brandy flask, which he declared to contain "main good liquor, any how," informed me that Ashleigh Magna was "better na' six mile away, and welly seven," that there was no possibility of getting any kind of conveyance at this roadside place, that the station was locked up, and that the only thing I could do was to walk it.

"But," said I ucolicus, "where be ye goin' to, mon?"

"To Mr. Holbrooke, of the Grange."

"O! know 'un; his tit and dog-cart were waitin' here welly two hour, an' t' coachman swore he were starved to death wi' the cold."

"Which way had I better go?"

"Whoy y u mun keep t' high road till you get to Newton old Church, about fur moile ayon; then, if thee was to crass through the spinney, thee canst get over the stubble into the forty-acre, an' the Grange lies just in the hollow below you.

"After I get to the church, shall I turn to the right or the left?"

"Roight mun, roight: the Staactite cave be on thy left. Thee munna go there, for there be as many holes i' the spinney o' that soide as there be burrows in a warren."

Leaving my friend my portmanteau I lit my pipe, and set out at a good, swinging, five-mile-an-hour pace, that, much sooner than I had anticipated, brought me to the old church at the roadside, which was little better than a ruin, having long fallen into disuse. Here the road dived between two "spinneys," but for the life of me I could not remember which side to take for the short cut that was to lead me to my brother's house.

I will try them both, I thought, and see from the other side which looks likeliest.

It was to the left I turned for there was an inviting gap in the hedge that led me to the fatal mistake. It was a bright moonlight night, a small fall of snow had been frozen on the ground and trees, and lent their leaves and branches the appearance of having been crystalized. Brushing aside the frozen underwood, with a steady step I advanced; but in a moment—how I hardly knew, for the shock was so sudden—the ground seemed to open beneath me, and I fell into a yawning chasm of impenetrable darkness. So



sudden was it that there were to me but two sensations—the one of elinging wildly to the yielding brushwood, the other of a sharp, convulsive jerk that stunned me. My first impulse when I came to my senses was to rise, but the agony at once sufficed to show me that I had broken my leg and badly hurt my shoulder. Still my presence of mind did not forsake me. Although every movement gave me the most excruciating pain, I managed to draw from my pocket my box of wax matches, and with extreme difficulty to strike a light; but being able to see but little with this, I placed a pile of them on the ground and lit them. Then what a sight met my gaze. I was in a lofty cavern whose walls were hung with glistening crystals; massive pillars rose here and there in fantastic shapes, while great blocks of glistening ores flashed back their rays of gold and silver from a hundred sides. At my feet ran a black, slimy stream, that I could hear in the distance falling with a sullen roar into some hidden depths below. In a moment I knew all. I was in the stalactite cavern!

Then the matches went out, and left me to the impenetrable darkness, the drip, drip, dripping of the crystals, and the hollow, distant moan of the falling stream. Heaven help me! what was to become of me? I shouted, and from twenty echoes my voice came back to me, like the mocking of demons. Then the pain in my leg and shoulder became unbearable, and I pictured to myself my going delirious and dying of hunger and of being found weeks hence, perhaps months, for few visitors I knew came to these places in the winter time, lying dead where I then lay.

Then, in spite of pain and anxiety, the cold drove me into a kind of fitful doze, and for an hour I almost slept. When I awoke, a faint ray of light quivered round me, and I was enabled to see somewhat more of my whereabouts. Just above me was the hole through which I had fallen, and around me lay some of the debris that I had brought down with me in my struggles.

I could see into the bright air above, and once more I gathered up all my strength to shout; but my voice seemed like me to be bound in that terrible dungeon, and wasted itself in vain echoes, weaker and weaker, till in the blank distance it died altogether away.

I pictured to myself the joyous crowds going to church, and the happy day all England would have but me. I teased my fancy by imagining rich dainties and fresh drinks, for I was faint and feverish, and then I fell into a torpid stupor of deadened despair that lasted for hours. From this I was awakened by the sharp, clear-ringing tinkle of a sheep bell. Then once more I shouted. I yelled and shrieked with all the agony of desperation, and fell back exhausted on the cold rock.

Then, in a few minutes, my heart gave a great bound as I heard something splashing in the stream higher up from where I lay. I turned my eager gaze there, and with aching eyes tried to penetrate into the blackness. Nearer something came, and nearer, and at last, shaking the water from him on all sides, a noble colley-dog crept from the stream into the light before me. At first he refused to come close to me, but at last he yielded to my coaxing, and I clasped him round the neck. The splendid brute seemed then for the first time to realize that I was wounded; with gentle softness he licked

my face and whined his sympathy, and then with intense agony I managed to tie my handkerchief round his neck and sent him on his errand for help. I heard him splashing through the water, and prostrated by the exertion, I fainted.

When I came to myself I was lying in a large, comfortable chamber, whose walls were lit up by the ruddy glow of cheerful fire, and by my bedside stood an elderly gentleman, anxiously watching me. Near him was a lady, who seeing me try to rise, spoke to me in a gentle tone.

"Do not move, Walter, you are now in your brother's house; I am your new sister; keep up a brave heart, and all will be well yet. Lie still, dear, for we must have no exertion."

The grave gentleman, whom I afterwards learnt to be the kindest doctor I ever knew, gave me a draught, and in a few minutes I was in a sound, refreshing sleep.

My kind nurse told me at last how it was that I was rescued, and I cannot do better than give the narrative of my preservation in her own words:—

"At four o'clock on the afternoon of Christmas Day, we were sitting down to dinner, when the shepherd came to Francis, and said that his dog Ranger had come to him dripping with wet, and with a handkerchief tied round his neck, which, upon examination, was marked "W. Holbrooke." The man thought the incident sufficiently important to be mentioned, and I was going to send him away with a laugh at his puzzled air, when I saw your brother turn pale, lay down the carving-knife, and leave the room in evident agitation."

"He returned in a moment. 'Nelly,' he said to me, 'Ranger's feet are covered with mud from the copper stream. He has been into the stalactite cavern, and as true as Heaven, Walter has got in there somehow or other.' He then went in search of you leaving us before an untasted dinner, as miserable a party as ever sat down on a Christmas Day.

"We were not kept long in suspense, for in less than half an hour the waggoner's lad came running back with a message for me to get warm blankets, send for the doctor, and have all ready; 'For,' little Jim added, 'they've found a poor gentleman frozen to death, and master's crying like a school-boy.'"

Thus passed my Christmas Day, but I have spent many a merry one since then at Ashleigh Grange. Through Frank's intervention, the lord of the manor has made such a belt of protection round the treacherous spinney, that I think it will be a long time ere another wanderer spends his Christmas Day in the stalactite cavern."

---

"And what became of Ranger?" said Frank Barrington. "By Jove, sir, I would have bought that dog a silver collar and kept him on the lands of the land as long as I had a sixpence to call my own, if I had been you."

"So I did," replied Holbrooke; "I brought him to London, where he came to a melancholy end—whether he was poisoned by an old maid who

lived near me and kept cats, or whether he tried to swallow a piece of London fog which stuck in his throat and choked him, I do not know—but he died. We buried him in the back court, and a friend wrote his elegy—an acrostic—which, if Ranger had been a spaniel, which he wasn't, and if the 'humble mound of earth' had not been a flagged pavement, which it was, would have been very appropriate:—

'Reader, beneath this mound of humble clay  
A favourite spaniel's sad remains decay;  
No dog as he so learn'd in sporting lore,  
Gay was his bark, and quick his progress o'er  
Each field and cover where the game would dwell.  
Ranger! dear honest fellow, fare-thee-well!'

"But I see that Grey is longing to distinguish himself, so I will light my pipe and pass the office of tale-teller to him."

"So be it," I said; "then I will relate to you the wonderful experiences of a friend of mine, which I shall entitle

HOW HAROLD MACFARLANE WENT THROUGH THE FIRE.

**A**NDREW MACFARLANE was not a pleasant old man. There was nothing reverend about his appearance, manners, or habits; when he smiled, his face relaxed into a contortion, between a grin and a sneer; and a scowl sat more accustomedly on his features, that seemed chiselled in some hard, uncuttable wood. He was thin, tall, and angular in his proportions, and his knuckles were very bony, and gave his clawy fingers the appearance of having been tied into knots. His voice was feeble, and always in the utterance of a long sentence, degenerated into an inarticulate snarl. In his dress he was slovenly and dirty; and his small eyes peered with a sharp cunning from beneath his shaggy eyebrows.

In fact, Andrew Macfarlane was as objectionable an old party as you would find in a long day's march: but Andrew Macfarlane had one redeeming quality, one great virtue, that spread a cloak of utter concealment over all his inferior infirmities; he was rich, so rich, that there was a report in the Village of Milton, where he lived, that he could not count his own money. So rich, that the Vicar, when he met him, put on a fat, unctious smile, shook his hand with the warmth and impression due to the owner of thousands, and enquired with well expressed anxiety after the health of his esteemed parishioner and his amiable son.

Talking about his son, reminds me to tell you that Andrew Macfarlane

had one boy, the apple of his eye, whom he loved, if possible, more than his bags of gold.

Harold Macfarlane was not a bit like his father. Had he been brought up by a careful hand, he would have turned out a fine manly fellow; but what healthy plant could grow up under the sickening shade of that up-a-tree-of-a-father of his?

At twenty years of age he had many excellent qualities; but his whole disposition was saturated with selfishness. He was a mass of contradictions too—at one moment joyous, at another moment sullen—now wildly demonstrative, now stupidly phlegmatic—to day cold and calculating, to-morrow ready to act impetuously on the spur of the moment; in fact, you might be acquainted with Harold Macfarlane for a long time, and yet be unable to describe his disposition.

He had but few associates; for the Village of Milton could boast of no young men of his age and rank in life, and it was not very remarkable then that he was to be found daily at the lodgings of our curate, the Reverend Edwin Loder, who had assumed the curacy of Milton for about two years. This gentleman was essentially what you would call a broad churchman, not very particular in his creed or his habits; there was a want-of-wash-iness about his linen, a stale smell of last week's bird's-eye about his clothes, and the collars of his coats were invariably oleaginous, and looked as if they had lately been scraped. Nevertheless, on the whole, he was a kind hearted, good man, and there was not a cottage in the place where his knock was not more welcome than that of even the dignified Vicar himself.

Old Macfarlane approved of his son's acquaintance; he thought it a cheap way of keeping him from more expensive amusements.

So things went on until the whole village was thrown into a state of curiosity, by the arrival on a long visit of the Reverend Edwin Loder's sister.

Divers were the opinions expressed by the Miltonions as to the qualifications of their new lady guest. The Miss Hargraves, the parish doctor's daughters, who were themselves gloomy young ladies of five-and-thirty with dark features and a mission for tracts, hoped that she had been well brought up, but thought her very vain and very frivolous; Miss Pry, who kept the post-office, described her as insipid and fade—which last expletive she had seen in one of her own library-books, and marked especially for the occasion; Miss Wilks, the dress-maker, called her wax-doll-like and red-headed, but upon receiving an order for a silk costume, confessed that she very much improved upon acquaintance; Mr. Tomc the book-seller, vowed that she was beauty personified; and it was very generally believed that Mr. Pillbury, the chemist's assistant and local poet, had written some exquisite lines, where "divine and shrine," and "heart and dart," "love and above," "rang: ill and angel," had served to beatify her as a saint or a goddess.

And what did Harold Macfarlane think of her? At first he was dazzled with her beauty; then, as he became more intimate with her and was put at ease by her genial manner and unsophisticated kindness, he fell helplessly, helplessly, head over heels in love with her.

One day old Macfarlane sat alone in his library, chuckling over the fire, with a letter in his hand. There was some curious, indefinable similarity between the old man and the ancient oak chair he sat in; it looked a crabbed, stiff backed, can't-be-comfortable piece of furniture, with a rugged, impossible seat, and it had about it a general air of coldness, hardness, and twistedness of character.

The letter evidently pleased him; he read it again and again, and every time he read it, the grin that turned into the sneer was more and more apparent in his face. "Two thousand a-year on coming of age," he chuckled, "and eight thousand down on her marriage! and as his little mix of a niece will be visiting in my neighbourhood, he hopes it will please Providence that Harold and she will meet and like each other. Like her! he shall like her—how could he help liking her with such a dowry? Oh, we'll have her here; we'll give her a welcome; we'll —— Well, what do you want?"

The last part of his sentence he jerked out like the snap of the lid of a snuff box. And well he might stare: for at the door there entered an apparition past all powers of description. It was a withered, shrivelled-up old woman of eighty, toothless, with nose and chin almost touching, and crowned with an enormous coal-scuttle bonnet. She stood like some resuscitated mummy.

"Well," repeated the old man testily. "what do you want?"

"Which I curtsies when I sees yer!" said the ancient, making two straight bobs up and down.

"In the name of goodness," cried Macfarlane. "who are you?"

"Which I seed 'em in the back sitting-room with the green curtains, and Mary Anne says she to me, 'do you go straight and tell Mr. Macfarlane their doin's.' He was a-kissin' of her, and she says, 'never till death do us part, for ever and ever. Amen.'"

"Whom did you see? What did you see? Where did you see it?" ejaculated the mystified old man, when his visitor, whose breath seemed all gone, made a pause and sat down exhausted on the very edge of the chair, with a mittened claw resting on each knee, and staring him wildly in the face.

"And he says to her," went on the old woman, when she had recovered sufficient breath to speak, "'though seas do us sever—from morning till night—which I never loved any one but you.'" Pausing once more to recruit her energies, she wound herself up again and went on,

"Which I see it from the very beginning, and him owing four weeks' rent—not as I hold with Roman candles and crosses, which was the first we had—but her designing ways was dreadful, and I says to Mary Anne, 'Master Harold Macfarlane will marry her, and that'll be the end on't.'"

"Marry whom?" almost shrieked the miser.

"That's just what I said it was—he never knows one word about it. I'll go and tell him, and now I'm come. Oh, dear, oh, dear, that I should ever live to see the day."

Unable to endure the suspense any longer, Macfarlane vehemently rang the bell, and his house-keeper, Mrs. Deborah Bland, appeared. She was

an austere woman of sixty, with a frowning, dejected face, and the tones of her voice came harsh and grating, like the echo of a stone wall. In her answers she was laconic almost to insolence.

"Who is this creature?" cried Macfarlane.

"Mrs. Wilderspinn, where the curate lodges."

"What does she want?"

"She only means to tell you that Master Harry is courting Miss Loder, and she saw them at it."

"Courting Miss Loder!" said the miser, aghast at news so antagonistic to his wishes.

"Yes," croaked the housekeeper, "Master Harold takes after his mother, and has none of his father's prudence."

Hastily dismissing the two cronies, after having made Mrs. Wilderspinn promise that if she saw any more billing and cooing on the part of the young couple, she would let him know, Mr. Macfarlane settled himself once more in his chair for reflection.

For a time his looks wore a puzzled and harassed exterior, but by-and-by the grin that turned into a sneer came back to his features, and he seemed to solace himself in his trouble.

"I must send him away for a month or two to London for a change of scene; he shall forget all about this young person; if I offer decided opposition, the idiot will think himself a martyr, and marry the girl in spite of me. No, he shall go away and forget her, and then, leave me to get rid of the parson and his confounded petticoats."

And so it was arranged that Harold should go on a visit for the first time to an aunt then residing in Bayswater.

A few days sufficed to make the necessary preparations, and on the eve of his departure Harold found himself in his father's presence in the library.

"Now about to-morrow," said the father, "you are going for the first time to leave home and get into the way of temptation. Remember my words; money is the great source of all the comforts of this life; with money you can command the respect, nay, the very adoration of all men; if you have it, the proud and insolent will bow down before you; with it you can buy the love of sweetheart, the affection of wife, and the admiration of friends. There is nothing in the wide world you cannot buy for money."

"And how much of the precious treasure do you intend to give me?" was the pertinent question of the stripling.

"How much? Ah, there it is. Now, Harold, do you think you can take care of it, keep it, look at it day after day, handle the golden, shining sovereigns, and not want to spend them?"

"I do not know. You have kept me so short all my life, that I cannot tell what I may do with it when I have any."

"Well, we will try you; here are twenty pounds; more I cannot spare; let us see how you manage your first fortune. Why, God bless the boy, he's not astonished,—he handles them as if they were coppers,—and puts them into his pockets without counting them. Oh, Harold, Harold, I fear all my precepts are lost upon you."

Hastily wishing his father adieu, Harold retired to his room, where, after lying awake half the night thinking of his fair inamorata he went to sleep.

In the morning he started on his travels, and was soon swallowed up as a drop in the great ocean of London society.

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Mr. Augustus Jackson, or Gus Jackson as he is called by his more intimate associates, resides in a large private house at a West End square. In front of his mansion hangs a glowing red lamp, that in the distance you would take for the symbol of a medical man's habitation, but on closer approximation would find it ornamented with a gilt legend recording the fact that here they provide "Billiards and Pyramids, Public and Private," while underneath on a black board is volunteered the further information that there is "Pool every evening after eight." On entering the passage, and mounting some provokingly spiral stairs, you come upon a red-baize door, in the middle of which is a round glass window, like an eye in the head of a Gorgon, and underneath this is suspended an elaborate card bearing the inscription, "Pause till the stroke is made." Having paused till the stroke is made, you find yourself in a large room, containing two billiard tables; and having accustomed yourself to the hazy and smoky atmosphere of the place, you further discover that it is ornamented by the presence of several fast-looking, slangy, sealskin-waistcoated, horsey, ringy and pinny human bipeds called men-about-town.

Upon exploring the further recesses of this temple of the green cloth, you are surprised to observe a neat little chamber, where, enshrined among glittering pewter tankards, piles of shining glasses, small mountains of cigar-boxes, and fat little electro-plated kegs of ardent spirits, the presiding goddess of the place, Miss Bella Fleetlove, holds her court.

She is essentially a fine young woman, demonstrative in dress and action, her hair is absolutely illuminated with stars of steel and gaudy ribbons, while her dress is resplendent with yards of glistening bugles.

Opposite to this charming priestess of Bacchus, with his arms resting on the back of a chair, stands Harold Macfarlane. It is scarcely four months since he left the little unsophisticated Village of Milton, and already he has glided into the torrent of London fast life.

His pale cheeks and sunken eyes tell tales of nightly debauchery, while the intimate terms on which he is apparently with the young lady, show that he is no unfrequent visitor at the house.

"Bella, you look charming to-night."

Bella giggles, and tells him to "go along."

"No, but you do," continues Master Hopeful, with more seriousness of manner, "and without any joking I'm uncommonly fond of you; besides, you've got more sense in your little finger than many other women in their whole bodies."

"Oh, Mr. Macfarlane," simpers Bella.

"And I'll tell you what it is, Bella, I want to ask your advice on a very important matter."

"Indeed!"



"When I was in the country I was spoony upon a girl who came to visit our village. The governor wished to cut off the connection, and sent me to town. I came first on a visit to an aunt of mine; but after a time got a kennel of my own, and I don't intend to go back to any one else's roof in a hurry, I can tell you."

"Quite right too."

"Well, all this has cost money. The governor is not sufficiently liberal, Bella, and I'm in a deuce of a fix for the needful. Of course I don't care a button for the girl now, but as long as she's at Milton I can't go back again, so what am I to do?"

"Have you tried Jackson?"

"What, borrow money from him," says Harold in a tone of intense disgust.

"Yes, my dear, Jackson's one of the most accommodating creatures in the world; he's a perfect conjuror; he'll take a little dirty slip of paper, with one or two insignificant autographs written upon it, and in ten minutes turn it into a heap of shining gold—to say nothing of wine, and coals, and ancient pictures of the last century, that are worth any price—if you do not want to sell them."

"What, draw a bill?"

"A post-obit," says the syren, who shows by her familiarity with the term that this is not the first time she has been engaged in such allurements.

Harold requires a little clearer definition of the plan, and, being satisfied with it in all particulars, lights another cigar, and declares that Bella is "the most delightful young lady he ever came across in his life time."

This was the first step in the ladder of ruin that Harold took, and it was marvellous with what a power of adaptability he plunged into the downward career of vice and its attendant disgrace.

*Facilis descensus averni.* It is astonishing how easy it is to go down hill. In six months' time Harold found himself involved in a perfect quagmire of difficulties. To his other accomplishments he had added that of betting upon horse-racing, and as the good things that his sporting associates "put" him on were always "scratched," or "roped," or had some petty accident that just prevented the certainty of their winning, day after day found him more deeply involved with the book-makers.

At last his position grew desperate. Jackson was importunate for the repayment of various sums he had advanced to him, worse than importunate, for he treated him with an air of familiarity more galling than the very annoyances of his dunning. The young man's blood boiled against the petty tyranny of his creditor, and things were looking as black as they could do.

Then the crisis came. Harold vows to this day that he never knew how it all happened. There had been a great dissipation at the billiard rooms; he had an indistinct remembrance of signing an agreement under the dictation of Jackson and a Jewish attorney of low proclivities, whom he had often met in the place—of sitting with his arm round Bella's waist—and of singing a comic song with much pathetic tenderness, to the delight of the assembled company; he had visions, too, of a pair-horse fly with a coach-



man in white gloves—of an avenue of little boys—of a limp pew opener, perpetually bobbing up and down in a continued series of curtsies—of a clergyman putting to him some personal questions as to his future intentions respecting a young lady by his side, on whose finger he placed a little gold ring—of a repeated reiteration on his part that that was the happiest moment of his life—of oceans of champagne—of much protracted hilarity—and he awoke to the dull reality of life to find himself married!

Married! What a jingling of bells and odour of orange blossoms there is in the word; but to Harold it was but the tolling of the knell of his worldly career. When his brain cleared itself of the fumes of the wine, and the fermentation of the excitement of the last few days, marriage seemed to him little better than a moral transportation for life.

When he found himself and Bella the occupants of his lodgings in Duke Street, he awoke to the extent and depth of his misery. Nay, his fickle mind soon exaggerated every imperfection of the poor girl, until she became to him a hideous deformity—a horror—a ghost that was to haunt him through life. In addition to this feeling of incompatibility came want of means, and

“When Poverty enters the door, young Love  
Will out at the window fly.”

Now, as in this case there was no young Love at all, but only a spurious little fiend, begotten of sensuality and recklessness, he did not fly out at the window, but sat brooding and plotting mischief in the heart of the unhappy Harold.

Then came to his aid the Demon of Drink. He tried to drown his cares in sparkling wine and ardent spirits; but the cares evidently could swim well, for they rose to the surface, even more grasping, and gnawing, and harrying than ever.

The worst of it all was that old Macfarlane was unaware of his son's disgrace; he only knew that Harold was constantly writing to him the most importunate letters, begging for monetary assistance, which he responded to with a very sparing hand.

After the lapse of a few months, Harold and Bella were sitting by their “ain fire-side.” He in a dilapidated coat, no collar on, and unshaved; she with a perfect snow-storm of curl papers on her head, dowdy, drabby, and unwashed.

“Bella,” said Harold, “what a cursed thing this waiting is to be sure. If the governor would only write and say he wouldn't lend the money, I should know what to do, but the anxiety of uncertainty is terrible.”

“He lend you twenty pounds!” said Bella, with a toss of the head, that set each individual curl in a quiver, “I wouldn't give you that!”—and she snapped her fingers with a savage little bang—“for all you get from such a greedy, miserly old curmudgeon as he is.”

“What must I do?” sighed Harold.

“What must you do!” sneered Bella. “I don't believe you've got any more courage than a school-girl. Do you think, if I were you, with a father rolling in money, I'd be one day in this state of poverty?”

“What would you do?”

"I'd go to Abrahams and take his offer." She uttered this sentence slowly, so as to give full emphasis to each word.

It seemed as if she had summoned an evil spirit to her elbow; for, as she spoke, a low tap came to the door, and in obedience to an order to come in, an old, unreverend man entered the apartment. Hideously ugly, with features of the most pronounced Hebrew type, Lewis Abrahams stood the incarnation of human subtlety.

"Goot morning, ma tears," was his salutation.

Bella jumped up, and eagerly welcomed him.

"Goot morning, Mr. Macfarlane," continued the Jew, suffering himself to be relieved by Bella of his hat and stick, and seating himself by the fire.

"And how is it mit you to-day, my fine gentlemen?"

"Abrahams," said Harold, turning savagely to his visitor, "when I look at you I can almost lead myself to believe in the existenee upon earth of a devil."

"Ha, la, ba!" laughed the Jew, rubbing his hands, and chuckling at the joke.

"I could You come at a time when my mind is distempered by trouble to put temptation before me, and you *are* so infernally ugly."

"Oh, vat a merry gentlemen," said Abrahams in actual glee at the compliment, "why how you talk, and me not spoken a word this blessed mornin'."

"Not spoken—no, but you look it; your very eyes, man, tell your tale. Drop all your humbug, and come to the point at once."

"Vell, then, look you now, you owe me von hundred and seventy poundsh."

"Of which I never had forty."

"No, no, but you owe it me—von hundred and seventy poundsh."

"Well?"

"Vell! but it ish not vell. You have not paid me my moneysh, and I must have it."

"If you can get it."

"But, ma tear young friend, I will get it. Now, look you, I don't vant to be hard on such a nice young gentlemen and his beautiful lady"—here a bow and a smile to Bella, who acknowledged the compliment with an expressive shrug—"but I must have my moneysh."

"Drive me! hound me on, curse you!" cried Harold, starting up in a frenzy of excitement, "but, do what you will, I won't have anything to do with that villanous document you are always harping upon There! I see it sticking out of your pocket; take it away, man, hide it, burn it, don't try to tempt me with it, or I'll beat your shrivelled old carcase to a mummy!" He got up and set down again in his passion, and then gloomily stared at the fire.

"Why, look you how you storm! And see vot a little bit of writing it is to make such a bobbery about. Vell, vell, if you vo'nt, you vo'nt young mans, so I'll just lay it on the mantel-piece, and call again as I come back from the City." So saying he took his departure, Bella following him into the passage, where an earnest whispering ensued between the two.

Bella came back full of smiles : wild, hoyden playfulness had taken the place of the sullen acerbity of her manners.

"Harold," she said, "don't be so foolish; Old Methusalem isn't half such a brute as he looks: let us take a peep at this piece of paper, and see what it's all about."

She opened the document, and read the contents aloud. It was a deed of assignment of some property, valued at two thousand pounds, situated at Milton. It was cunningly devised, and gave the holder and his heirs possession of certain houses at the expiration of leases, varying from seven to nine years. At the end was written in pencil a singularly accurate facsimile of old Macfarlane's signature and the names of two attesting witnesses.

"And so," she continued, "all you have to do is just to ink over this little bit of pencil-work and take it to Abraham's friend in the City, who will give you one thousand pounds money down. Why, bless my life, it's like coining money!"

"Forging, Bella, forging."

"Forging, what nonsense! Is'nt it all in the family? Does'nt it belong to you as well as him? Besides, who's to know? The chances are a thousand to one he'll never live to see one lease die out, and Abrahams vows it shall all be kept as secret as the grave for seven years."

Eve tempted Adam, and he ate the forbidden fruit. When Abrahams came back at night the tracing was effected, and, after a visit to the City he relieved Harold of his pressing necessities by the advance of a thousand pounds.

Then came the expected letter from his father; how anxiously he had awaited it, and now he hardly cared to open it. On breaking the seal, he took out four five-pound notes, and read as follows;—

"I am sorry to find that you cannot make your exceedingly liberal allowance meet your expenses. When I was your age, I lived upon fifteen shillings a week, and saved out of that; but young people will be young people, and I hope the experience you have bought will be valuable to you. I have some very startling news to give you. You may remember making the acquaintance of an exceedingly amiable young person, Miss Loder, the sister of our friend and late curate. Shortly after his removal from the parish (for unfortunately for us all, the rector was induced to dispense with his services,) I discovered that she was the niece of an old and worthy friend of mine, a man of large means, and moreover, his adopted child. Hearing much of her high personal character and sweetness of disposition, I went to the place of her brother's present residence, a neighbouring village, and they are now both frequent guests in my house. I beg you at once to come home and cultivate an acquaintance that always gave me so much pleasure to see you forming. I shall take no denial, and shall expect to see you at the end of the week at the latest. I enclose you £20. Take the number of the notes carefully, and use them judiciously."

"Too late, too late!" groaned Harold, as he crushed the letter in the grasp of his clammy hand.

Then Bella took it and read it. She sat some time poring over it, at last she said :

"Is this the girl you were making love to before you came up to town?"

"Yes."

"Well, see here, I don't believe you care a rush for me. Oh, it's no good looking like that—I know you don't; let's make an end of this, for my life has been wretched ever since I was tied to you. I'm sick to death of my share of the bargain. Give me three hundred pounds—you've three-fifty left now you know—and make me an allowance of a couple of hundred for life, and, I'll never let you see my face again."

Harold started as if he was stung.

"And so you would sell my love for that?"

"Your love!" sneered the wife, "if you show your love by talking and worrying a poor girl to death, it would be dear if it were given away. Lor," she added, "are you such a poor pitiful fool as to think that I can't see through you? Let us have no hypocrisy, but get the matter settled at once. I am not going to lead this life any longer. If I have married so much above me, why am I not taken to your friends? Why haven't I a house of my own, and a carriage to ride in, and servants to wait upon me? If I am the wife of this fine gentleman, I will no longer be hidden away as if I was the wife of a--a." No simile sufficiently applicable occurred to her, so she hid her face in her hands and tried to weep.

It did not take Harold long to make up his mind to a step so consonant with his own feelings. Sick to death of the terrible turmoil of his London life, he longed for the peace of his native village.

The Jewish lawyer was called in, and after having effected a legitimate deed of separation, the man and wife, whom but two months before the priest had joined in bonds of wedlock, went on their separate ways of life.

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They killed the fatted calf at Milton Hall when the heir came back again. Even old Macfarlane and the ante-diluvian Mrs. Bland turned their wrinkles into smiles, and forgot the first principles of their economical natures in the delight at the advent of their darling. But what Harold prized more than all was the kind reception of the Loders. The curate squeezed his hand with the warmth of an old and loved friend, and Gertrude Loder gave him a timid but hearty welcome.

Have you ever noticed in all the works of nature the marvellous effects of re-action? The burst of a thunder storm leaves a soft and gentle zephyr to fan the placid summer air; the roar of the fall of an avalanche is succeeded by unnatural stillness; in the din of war culminates the anger of a nation, so soon to drop into the serenity of peace; the outbreak of emotional passions in the breast of a man leaves him after his paroxysms subdued and gentle as a child. And so the great moral and physical element of reaction told its tale on Harold; from the turmoil and dissipation of London to the lethetude of Milton was a change that gave a shock to his whole system.

With a natural taste for a rustic life, the calm quiet of the village fell upon him like a spell. The joints of his disposition had been dislocated

and torn asunder by the rack of disquiet, and now Peace, the gentle healer, came to pull them back into their places again.

Of all the moments of his life-time these were the most impressionable. Subdued in mind and body, he was plastic in all things, and as the hand of heaven willed it, he fell into the guidance of good people. The Loders were his salvation; under the influence of their companionship his mind soared from the filthy, muddy slough into which it had sunk, and the honest grain of manly thoughts displaced the rank weeds of his nature.

A year elapsed, and who would know Harold? Who would recognize in the genial, high-minded young man the sickly, broken-down rake of Duke Street? It is true that every now and then an ashy whiteness of despair comes like a ghost to overcloud his features; but even the recurrence of his momentary sadness becomes less and less frequent.

Encouraged by the curate and urged by his father, possessing, too, all the advantages of opportunity, no wonder that his heart, now more purified, yielded to the seductive influence of his former love. He had to worship his idol in secret, however, for he dared not breathe one word of the depth of his affection. All the gossip in the village were astonished as time flew by that Miss Loder remained a spinster; but it was universally agreed upon that Harold was engaged to her, and that they must be married eventually.

At last a report was prevalent in the village that old Macfarlane was ill, and this was speedily followed by the news of his death. A wet season had brought bad crops; the miser had taken one of his largest farms from the hands of his tenant, thinking to make more of his acres, when the deluge came, and crop after crop was mildewed and spoiled. The loss was too much for him, and hurried him to his grave.

Thus Andrew died and Harold ruled in his stead.

In a brief time a great change came over the hall—young and cheerful servants glided about the house, the gardens assumed an air of neatness, and Mrs. Bland retired on a pension to adorn a modest cottage at the back of the rectory.

The whole village felt the change. There was more work to be done, more money spent, more given away, and the young squire was the most popular man in the county.

In the library before the fire sat Harold one dark November afternoon shortly after his accession. He was in one of his fits—as the domestics termed his periods of despondency. At his feet lay a noble Labrador dog, between whose paws nestled a tiny black-and-tan terrier. He was deep in his reflections of the past; vision after vision floated across his imagination; when suddenly he was startled from his reverie by a servant entering the room and presenting him with a card. It was a dirty little bit of paste-board, and yet as Harold read its superscription, his countenance became livid, and an involuntary "Heavens!" burst from his lips.

"What did you say, Sir?" said the surprised domestic.

"Tell him—tell him—I—I will see him, and send him here." Then he looked once more at the card and read, "LEWIS ABRAHAMS, Outfitter, Clothier, and General Dealer, 6, Scragg's Court, Houndsditch. N. B. Gentlemen's wardrobes bought for cash."

The words seemed to him written in letters of flame: they burnt into his very soul.

The Jew entered the room. Until the servant had closed the door, he stood respectfully, bowing to his host, who eyed him with a fierce glance of hatred, like an animal at bay.

"Vot," said the Jew, and is this the vay you receive an old friend? Ma tear young gentlemans, this is not goot manners."

"Hold!" said Harold. "I will secure the outer door of the passage to prevent interruption. Then let no unnecessary word drop from your lips. Say all you have to say—say it quickly, and be gone."

"Bless my heart! just the same high-spirited, joking gentlemans he always vos."

"You have come about that deed."

"Just for a settlement. It's true there's four more years to run, but I thought now you was such a great gentlemans, you'd like to have the matter put an end to. Sho for old friendship's sake, I went to all the expense of coming down here to see you."

"Have you got the deed with you?"

"Ma friend has down stairs."

"Well, what am I to do?"

"Vhy, you see, Mr. Macfarlane, ve've made a very sad discovery—the names on the deeds, Sir, are forged, every one of 'em. Ve've the witnesses attesting it ready to swear they never wrote a letter of their names, moreover your respected father mentions in his will these very leases, and declares them free of mortgage. Oh, Mr. Macfarlane, Mr. Macfarlane, vot ish to become of you?" and the old hypocrite held up his hands with an air of intense commiseration.

"How much do you want?" said Harold, sternly.

"Oh, it ish'nt me, ma tear gentlemans, I wouldn't hurt a hair of your head; but, look you, it's ma friend in the City; bless your lives, he's a terrible bad man, and he declares he'll transport you."

"How much does *he* want?"

"Oh, tear, tear, vot a funny gentlemans it ish," and he laughed aloud in admiration of the joke.

"Vell, look you, Sir, ma friend thought under the circumstances that as you'd come——"

"To the point at once!" cried Harold, impatiently.

The old Jew looked all around the room with a mysterious air, then dabbing one fat finger emphatically on the palm of his hand at every syllable he uttered, he said,

"Thir-teen thousand—pounds."

Waiting to enjoy the blank look of utter astonishment depicted on his victim's countenance, he added, "ten for ma friend in the City and three for me."

For a few minutes Harold was silent. Then turning upon his persecutor with all the intensity of a fixed desperation, he said,

"I will not pay you one penny more than five thousand pounds."

"Now, ma tear young gentlemans," said the Jew, with an air impudent-



ly soothing, "be persuaded by an old friend, turn over in your mind vot I offer, for it ish not pleasant to be transported, and vot vill poor Mrs. Macfarlane think? Besides the gentlemen in the City vill not drive you to your vit's end; he vill not ask you for an answer till you have time to think of it. By this day eight months you will have all your moneysh free from the hands of trustees and other meddlers, and on that day I shall come for your answer. But, by Israel, you must say yes or no for I vill—I mean he vill—not bate a farthin'."

"Then I have eight months for reflection."

"You have."

"So be it. And now let me put a few questions to you. What has become of my—my—my—"

"Wife? Vell, you see, Mr. Macfarlane, poor Bella,—I mean Mrs. Macfarlane—took to drinking; she's very goot all other vays, but she trinks, trinks, trinks morning, noon and night, and, look you, so much brandy is goot for no one."

"And she is staying—"

"Vell, ma tear Sir, if you vant her, send to Gus Jackson, and he'll let her know."

Having enjoined Abraham's secrecy in the neighbourhood upon all matters relating to his private history, Harold terminated the interview, consenting to pay the earnest demands of a few pounds for expenses.

\* \* \* \* \*

Five months of the eight had wafted away upon the wings of time, and April had brought its showers and its flowers, when Harold resolved to pay a visit to London upon some necessary business.

Tottenham Court road on a Saturday night is not a very likely place for a gentleman to select for a promenade, but Harold had strolled out of Oxford Street, and impelled by curiosity, had continued his walk among the busy crowds of the poor man's street-fair. Here stood a woman selling green-groceries, there a man with stationery: cauliflowers, toys, rings, keys, watch-guards, pictures, hardware, and all the requisites and ornaments of a poor man's home, covered the stalls in unlimited profusion, while the flaring naphtha lights lent quite a picturesque glare to the scene. Harold's attention was presently attracted to where a small crowd had assembled at the corner of a street. A young woman stood defiant in front of a man, who threatened her with fierce imprecations. They were better dressed people than one generally finds in a street broil, and consequently their quarrel excited considerable attention. At last the man struck the woman, not once, but twice, severe blows with his open hand on her cheek. To Harold's intense disgust, not a man among all those present, attempted to interfere; a few women gave it as their opinion that it was a shame; and there the affair would have ended, had not our hero sprung in front of the woman, and before another blow could fall upon her, stretched the bully at full length on the pavement, where he lay, for the moment stunned and motionless.

Harold then turned to say a word of encouragement to the woman. The

gas-lamp now glared fully on her features, and revealed to his utter astonishment the terror-stricken countenance of Bella!

Haggard, wan, with the weald the ruffian's fingers had made across her cheeks, her face looked up into his like some ghost's: she stared at him with a wild frightened look, and the next moment was gone.

She had disappeared in the crowd, and in vain he sought everywhere for her, and the man had meanwhile sneaked away, and Harold stood utterly amazed at the adventure. Had it not been for the presence of the crowd, he would have thought it some wild delusion of his brain that had conjured up a shadowy phantasy.

Feeling that Bella might have got into trouble through not having a sufficient allowance, he forwarded her fifty pounds, with a promise to pay that additional sum annually.

\* \* \* \* \*

On the day before the eventful day that was to bring Harold a visit from Mr. Abrahams, that respectable gentleman was an inmate of the inner temple of Mr. Gus Jackson's Billiard Establishment; the worthy proprietor was also there, and Bella graced the room with her presence. There was an unwholesome smell of yesterday's smoke, hanging about the place, that would not be overcome even by the strong flavour of kippered herring that pervaded the atmosphere from the remnants of Mr. Jackson's breakfast.

Presently there entered an oleaginous duplicate of Abrahams himself, who was facetiously introduced by that gentleman as "ma friend from the City."

The friend from the City begged that they would at once commence business, for business, he philosophically observed, was the soul of life.

Jackson thereupon took from a box some papers, and sat down at a round table in the centre of the room. "Gents," he began, after clearing his throat and apologizing for a bone that had stuck fast there, "tomorrow's pay-day at Milton; young Macfarlane 'll have to disgorge thirteen thousand pounds, and we must divide it among our home charities. Do you all understand that?"

"Yes, yes."

"Well then, what are our plans? Shall we all go down together from Euston by the nine train?"

"Yes."

"Mr. Isaacs," turning to the last comer, "is it understood that you are perfectly obdurate, and, notwithstanding our earnest entreaties, are determined to punish the unfortunate beggar?"

"In the interest of commercial rectitude, certainly," snuffed Isaacs.

"But that in consideration of his youth and natural verdancy you will consent to receive the sum of thirteen thousand pounds as a penalty for his transgression, and forgive him the proper punishment for his wickedness?"

"Certainly."

This very important matter being agreed upon, the trio went out together, leaving Bella alone in the room.



The moment they were gone she drew her chair to the fire, and crouched over it. She had a nasty way of muttering to herself when unduly excited.

"Yes, yes," she cried, "I'll sell him, if I die for it. He has beaten me like a dog, sold me as he would a beast, driven the very soul out of my body, and now I'll turn upon him. That poor flat was kind to me; he didn't care for me, but he was kind to me, and they shan't ruin him, for I'll sell the lot of them."

In her fury she almost screamed.

Then getting up from her chair, she took a small key from her pocket, and opened the box from which Jackson had extracted the papers.

"Here it is," she continued, "Deed of assignment between Andrew Macfarlane on the one part, gentleman, and Joseph Isaacs on the other part, merchant. Now for a blaze!"

Seating herself once more, she held the paper over the fire, and glanced over its contents.

With the lithe, noiseless step of a tiger when he crouches on his prey, Jackson crept into the room, his eyes gleaming with unnatural ferocity; his right hand clutched a billiard cue, and the nervous twitching of his countenance told of the passion that was working within him.

Bella's hand was poised over the fire, when there came a blow, a crash, a wild, despairing shriek, and the hapless woman fell senseless across the fender.

"By heavens, I've done for her!"

First taking the papers and putting them carefully into the box, he and the two Jews, who had entered the room, turned their attention to the victim of his violence.

She lay without symptom of life, her face crushed in by the terrible blow that had been dealt her. They carried her into an adjoining chamber and laid her on a bed. They chafed her hands, and poured brandy down her throat, and then they looked eagerly and anxiously into each other's faces, and Jackson, pale and horror-stricken, muttered "She's dead!"

The two Jews, trembling in every limb, implored him to act at once with decision. So assuring themselves that Bella was absolutely dead, they locked up the room and adjourned to the parlour, where, having carefully removed every trace of the scuffle, they began to devise the best means of escape and concealment.

"Oh, tear, oh, tear, this is a terrible bad job," sighed Mr. Abrahams ruefully, "vot vill become of you I don't know, Gus Jackson, indeed I don't."

"Become of us, you mean," said Jackson savagely, "don't think to shirk out of your share, for we shall all sink or swim together."

The Jews looked in no way comforted by this assurance. "Let us buy some petroline, get some shavings, and when all the customers are gone to-night, set fire to the place." The suggestion was Isaacs'.

"No, no," said Jackson, "that will never do. When a man wants to burn a house down, the fire, curse it, won't do its work; wood won't burn, paper won't blaze, and if it failed it would only cause the quicker discovery of the body."

"That's true enough, Gus Jackson," said Isaacs, "I had a friend, a most industrious young man, who insured his goods for five hundred pounds, and although he placed little heaps of shavings lighted all over the floors, and poured gallons of turpentine down the walls, the firemen put his blaze out in ten minutes."

"No good trying that," repeated Jackson. "I think I had better keep that room where she lies locked up, give a notice in the saloon that in consequence of the tables wanting re-covering and cushioning, we shan't open for a day or two; go down to Milton and get Macfarlane's money, and get off to America as fast as I can go."

And so this plan was agreed upon, and the Jews departed.

In a few hours the saloon was filled with visitors. Jackson was rallied again and again by his patrons on his seediness. Every now and then he went to listen at the door where the corpse lay, eagerly hoping to hear the faintest movement inside. Had a thousand pounds depended upon the effort, he dared not have entered the chamber. At every fresh entrance into the billiard room his craven heart sunk deeper into despair. At last a wild delirium of panic-fright seized him, and as soon as he could prevail upon all to go away, he collected some little valuables, locked up the house, called a cab, and drove to the Euston station. Depositing in the cloak-room his luggage, he proceeded to the West-end, where in wild dissipation he endeavoured to drown the terrible phantom that drove him to a frenzied madness.

\* \* \* \* \*

Harold on the eventful day was mournfully prepared to receive his visitors.

He was not alone this time, for he had in his hour of bitterness confided the whole of his terrible secret to his friend, Mr. Loder, who sat with him anxiously awaiting the catastrophe.

It came at last.

Jackson and the Jews were somewhat confounded to find a second person present to receive them. The former then, with an air of consummate impudence, held out his hand to Harold, and jauntingly hoped he was well. Harold, indignantly, motioned them to seats, and this being accomplished, he bade them instantly state their business.

"Is the reverend party confidential?" asked Jackson, in no way abashed by the coldness of his reception.

"He is my friend, and perfectly aware of all the incidents of this sad affair. To save you the trouble of recapitulation I will then myself proceed to business."

"Very goot. Be quiet, Gus," said Abrahams.

"You see, sir," said Jackson, turning to Mr. Loder, "my friend, Mr. Abrahams was applied to by Mr. Macfarlane, in his father's lifetime, for a loan on a deed of assignment on some houses, and not being able to advance the money himself, he persuaded his friend, the gentleman sitting there, to oblige him. He agreed, and now he has made the discovery that the signatures of the deed were forgeries."

"And what have you got to do with this?" demanded the clergyman.

"What have I got to do with it! That's a good 'un. Didn't that fellow," pointing to Harold, "come up to London a stranger, didn't I treat him like a brother, open my house to him, lend him money, and introduce him to my friend—didn't he gain the affections of a young lady, a close relation of my own, marry her, and in seven months desert her and leave her like a dog, when she might have died, for all he cared, if I hadn't taken her back to my house—didn't he borrow money from my friend on a forged document? And then you ask what I had to do with it! Oh, I've nothing to do with it whatever, of course, but if my friends will be advised by me, they'll not stop here to be catechised by a parson, but go and get a warrant cut against him; and when your friend is standing in a felon's dock, he will find that Augustus Jackson has something to do with it."

"Do not be so impatient, Mr. Jackson. I fully understand your position, and having heard all that has occurred, I may as well state at once, that I see, alas, no way of saving my friend's reputation, but by compromising the matter. The only difficulty we shall have will be about terms. Let us, therefore, come to this point at once," Mr. Loder said quietly.

"Oh, there's no difficulty there," sneered Jackson, "because my friend has made up his mind, and all the parsons in the world won't alter it."

"You have not mentioned the terms."

"No, I have not, and don't intend to. Harold Macfarlane knows what they are. You don't catch me compounding felony, Gus Jackson gets up too early in the morning for that, my reverend gent."

"Then what are we to do?"

"Nothing, if you don't want. Here we are; if you like to offer terms yourselves, do so; if you like to say in a friendly sort of a way, 'Jackson, my dear feller, my friend's been and gone and done a wicked, foolish thing, that is likely to bring him into difficulty. You, as a sort of connection of his, can perhaps persuade the kind-hearted old gentleman he's robbed to have mercy upon him, and we'll pay——'"

"How much?" asked Loder eagerly.

Mr. Jackson disdaind a reply, and Harold here interrupted. Turning to the strange Jew, he said:

"You are the holder of this document. For its restoration to me, I will give you five thousand pounds."

"Thank you, Sir, but I value it at more than double that sum, besides, in the interests of commercial rectitude——"

"Not one farthing more."

"Come along, gents," said Jackson, taking up his hat and moving to the door, "my relative seems determined to run his neck into a noose, so let's go and get a policeman, and——"

"Not need to go very far, Mr. Jackson," said a voice that came from the doorway, and the next moment a florid, full complexioned, middle aged man stepped into the room, followed by another counterpart of himself, and a female closely veiled brought up the rear. "How do you do, Mr. Jackson? Mr. Abrahams, your most devoted; Mr. Isaacs, alias Mr. Sinker, my respects to you, gentlemen, both," turning to the curate and Harold, "good morning."

"Can it be Sergeant Gordon?" stammered the trembling Jackson, with his eyes starting out of their sockets.

"Sorry to interrupt this snug little party," said the sergeant, but business is business, as Mr. Isaacs so often says, and I won't detain you many minutes. May I first ask what you wanted a policeman for, Mr. Jackson?"

"I—I—I—didn't—that is to say—no—no." The words would not come out, the eye of the sergeant seemed to look him through, and he felt that murder was written on his brow like that of Cain.

"You didn't, didn't you? well, that is a pity, for there's one wants you, and he has come all the way down from London for the pleasure of meeting you."

"Wh—a—a-t for?" stammered Jackson, "I didn't do it. Indeed, in deed I didn't. She got drunk and fell over the landing, and ——"

"Liar!" cried the female, advancing to the front, throwing off the veil that concealed her bandaged features, and exhibiting the well-known face of Bella.

The effect was magical. Jackson and the two Jews sat livid with fright. Mr. Loder sprang to her and pressed her into a seat; for, notwithstanding the flush of excitement, she seemed weak and tottering.

"My poor creature, what do you want here?"

"To give my husband in charge!" she shrieked, with a wild frenzy of excitement.

Harold sprang from his seat.

"No, no, Bella, not from you; let not the blow come from you."

"You, poor dupe!" cried Bella, now hysterical in emotion. "No, I mean that pitiful cur sitting there," she pointed to Jackson, and all eyes were turned on him. "Years ago, long before I ever knew you, I married that villain; to carry on his monstrous robberies, I lived as a single woman; for money I let him sell me. It was a deep-laid scheme entered into by Isaacs, Jackson and Abrahams, to hold you in their clutches, that I went through the mockery of marriage with you. Oh, the misery I have endured! My brutal husband beat me and used me cruelly; at last they found out that I had some spark of womanly feeling left in my poor battered nature. Hearing of their scheme for extorting money from you, I seized upon the document upon which they held your ransom, and would have burned it, but when in the act Jackson struck me with a billiard cue and stunned me. Only stunned me, you miserable chicken-hearted coward,"—turning to Jackson—"he thought he had killed me and fled from the house. I lay still enough till he was gone, then I summoned assistance, sought out Sergeant Gordon, and now have come for one sweet moment of vengeance for all my miseries."

She stood like a Nemesis, withering with a look of supreme disgust, the cowering Jackson.

"I don't see," said Isaacs, who, watching how things stood, had plucked up some courage, "how this little matrimonial squabble affects our business. Harold Macfarlane, I accuse you of forgery. Sergeant Gordon, do your duty. This document, on which I advanced two thousand pounds, is forged—is forged, I repeat, by that man there."

"A lie! a lie! a lie!" screamed Bella, "Harold Macfarlane never touched it. Abrahams pencilled the signatures, and I inked them over. I gave Abrahams the forged document, and Abrahams got the money. No, no, Abrahams and I committed the forgery—didn't we, Methusalem?"

"I think we'd better go," said Abrahams, getting up nervously from his seat; but Gordon and his assistant stood so provokingly in the doorway, that the suggestion was not carried out.

"Mr. Gordon, could I speak to you for one moment in the lobby?" said the curate.

"Certainly, Sir," said the obliging detective. "Bill," he added, "keep a skinned eye on these cusses, and call me if they move."

In a few minutes the door was reopened, and Mr. Loder made his appearance alone, whilst at the same time Gordon beckoned to his assistant and Bella to leave the room, and the party was left as before the interruption.

The clergyman sat ominously at the table. The deepest anxiety was depicted in the countenance of the conspirators.

"Mr. Jackson, Mr. Abrahams, and Mr. Isaacs, if I acted according to my own sense of duty, I should persuade my friend to allow Mr. Gordon to take you into custody, on a charge of conspiracy to defraud by threats, and an assault with intent to murder, but, as doubtless you are cunning enough to see, we should be sorry to disclose to the world family secrets, therefore I now offer you these terms, which I am sure my friend will accede to.

"First. That you deliver up all claim to the document now in the possession of Sergeant Gordon, forged by Lewis Abrahams and Bella Jackson, upon payment of the sum of two thousand pounds, to be invested in the hands of trustees, for the sole use of the said Bella Jackson.

"Secondly. That Jackson signs a deed of separation from his wife, and leaves England for ever, under pain of instant apprehension on his appearing again in Great Britain.

"And, Thirdly. That the strictest silence is observed towards all matters connected with this unpleasant affair. Further punishment I think unnecessary. From what Mr. Gordon says, Mr. Isaacs and Mr. Abrahams, you are drifting fast towards a sentence of transportation; and, Mr. Jackson, your actions fully assure me of your weaving the net of your own retribution."

Crest-fallen and cowed, the three villains sneaked back to town, and by the principal actors in my little story were heard of no more. It is true that a few years afterwards a man named Augustus Jackson, and answering the description of our friend, suffered, in Carolina, the last penalty by Lynch law, for having foully murdered his wife, under peculiarly atrocious circumstances, but whether this was the Simon Pure or not, we have no means of ascertaining.

Harold and Gertrude Loder were married, and now live at Milton Hall, while Mr. Loder, an inveterate old bachelor, resides at the rectory.

\* \* \* \* \*

At a fashionable southern watering-place, Mrs. Jackson's Boarding-House is known far and wide for the comfort of its interior and the kind

ness and propriety of its landlady, and in the summer months the hall of the establishment is sadly lumbered with diminutive spades and buckets and straw hats, the property of certain little visitors, annually increasing in number, who come under the charge of their nurse from Milton Hall.

"Now," said I, looking to my right-hand neighbour, "Irving, it is your turn."

There needed no pressing, for the ice was broken, and he at once proceeded with the adventure at the WHITE HOUSE AT MIDNIGHT.

### IN THE WHITE HOUSE AT MIDNIGHT.

**A**T one end of our village, down beside the brook, with seven gaunt poplar trees in front of it, stood the White House. It wasn't white; it had been once, but now it wore a dingy, yellowy aspect, and towards the basement was green with wall-moss.

Of course the walls were low and gloomy, and in the garden the rank and unhealthy grass and weeds had it all their own way; of course the gates creaked when they were opened, and the doors groaned when they were closed; for the White House was, according to well-authenticated topographical history, haunted.

For years it had been untenanted, and after dusk any smock-frock'd native having to pass that way, hurried his pace, and nervously looking over his shoulder, got out of the unhallowed locality as fast as his legs would carry him.

Of course there had in by-gone days been a murder committed there, and popular prejudice lent such an odium to the place that the proprietor, an old maiden lady living in the neighbourhood, could induce no one, even under most advantageous terms, to occupy it.

Thus year after year it remained empty and desolate. It is quite true that at different periods strange lights had been seen at the windows, and more than once some terror-stricken passer-by swore to having been terrified out of his wits by a figure in white flitting about among the attenuated poplar trees, or beating its breast at the casement of one of the upper stories.

To the truth of these facts, that the light did burn, and the figure did appear, I myself can testify. Again, you will find a most elaborate account of the whole occurrences immortalized in the Reports of the Association for the Elucidation of the Mysteries of Haunted Houses contributed by a very distinguished member of that learned society, who came to take notes upon the spot.

I said I was an authority upon the matter, and now I will tell you why.

I was the ghost. My hand placed the lights in the windows, my form flitted about among the poplar trees, my voice uttered the shrieks that chilled the hearts of the villagers. Not all mine was the work though, for Jack Charters shared in the glory, or discredit, of the transaction.

Naturally fond of a practical joke, we had again and again availed ourselves of the character of place to spread terror through the whole neighbourhood, and with such success that our exploits frequently found their way into the monstrosity paragraphs of the local newspaper.

At last we were all astonished to hear that the White House was let, and our surprise soon culminated by the fact that it was occupied.

The family that came to it consisted simply of three persons. An elderly, white-haired, smooth-faced gentleman, a beautiful young lady of nineteen, and a small maid of all work. They led a peculiarly retired life, and there was about them an air of mystery, that would have made them objects of considerable curiosity, had they not possessed the attraction of living in a haunted house. As it was every eye was turned upon them, and every tongue talked of them.

But the gossips could make nothing of them. Mr. Garston, the gentleman, followed no occupation, was very reserved in his conversation, made no acquaintances, and repelled the advances of the doctor, the parson, and other respectable inhabitants, who tendered him on his first arrival various little courtesies. Miss Foster, the young lady, although called upon by the *élite* of our fair society, was universally "engaged," and made no friends. The maid-of-all-work was impenetrable and unpumpable. Not a word could be got out of her, even when subjected to the hydraulic pressure of the cross questioning of the vicar's eldest and elderly daughter.

At length came the dreadful news—they didn't go to church. Only those who have lived in a country village can understand the full meaning of this discovery. Is it to be wondered at then, that in the course of a few weeks it was universally agreed upon on all sides that they were no better than they ought to be. These damaging aspersions soon gained additional colour by the fact that Mr. Garston was addicted to talking to himself—an eccentricity, that, in the minds of the neighbours, gave rise to many unpleasant surmises. These were strengthened by the story of the curate, who asserted that walking down a by-lane one afternoon, he suddenly turned a corner, and came upon the stranger, beating his breast, wringing his hands, and vociferating wildly.

The reverend gentleman could not clearly understand what he uttered, but he distinctly heard the words "murder," and "remorse;" and upon making himself seen, Mr. Garston, displaying the deepest confusion, hurried away in the opposite direction.

Again, Miss Foster was noticed to be sad and pensive, as though perpetually depressed by some hidden grief. All these facts, added to the perverse silence of the diminutive hand-maiden, substantiated the impressions of the villagers, and various surmises were afloat respecting the strangers. Moreover, who but some utterly hardened and fearless evil doers would consent to occupy a house known to be haunted? why that fact alone was enough to condemn them as out-casts from society.



At this time I was artieled to Blair and Smoothly, Lincoln's Inn Fields, and consequently left the village, but I continued to receive periodical reports of all that went on there.

The marriage of a sister filled our house with visitors, and as I was expected to take part in the ceremony, it was agreed that I should take up my quarters in Jack Charters' lodgings.

A few days before going down into the country, I had been attracted by a sale of some theatrical properties, and had laid out a few shillings in the purchase of curious dresses, that I knew would be useful to me some day or other.

One was a tight-fitting demon's costume, black body, tail, hideous mask, three pronged fork and all, that doubtless figured in some Christmas pantomime. This was so suggestive of fun to be got out of the unsophisticated Boetians I was about to visit, that I tossed it into my portmanteau to be made use of if opportunity occurred.

Jack Charters was delighted with it. He made me put it on for his especial inspection, and vowed it was perfection itself.

"My dear boy," he said, "it must have dropped from the clouds for the very purpose I want it."

"What's that?"

"Why, all the prestige we got up about the ghost at the White House is waning away. The people are so involved in the mystery of its occupants that they forget all about the ghost. This mustn't be."

"Certainly not,"

"That confounded old prig, Garston, too, hasn't a bit of reverence for us, and vows that if all the ghosts of the other world came, he wouldn't run; and if we could only give him a good fright, the success of our spiriting would be immortal."

"How shall it be done?"

"I don't know. You see there's that pretty girl there, and I shouldn't like to frighten her."

"There's no one else there but the girl and the servant?"

"Well yes, there is to day a stranger. I went into the Red Lion this morning for a glass of bitter, when a spruce old gentleman, rather a stout party, came to enquire where Mr. Garston lived. He was immediately set upon by the landlady, who tried all she knew to pump him, but it was no go. So I blandly informed him that Mr. Garston lived at the haunted house. 'The what?' says he. 'The haunted house,' says I, very solemnly, and looking all over as if I meant it. 'What, a house with a ghost in it?' 'Yes,' says I. 'And do you mean to say that in these days of steam engines and daily news-papers there are to be found fools in England, stultified enough to believe in ghosts?' So saying he caught up his carpet bag, which by-the-bye clearly demonstrates his intention of stopping all night, and went away. I should amazingly like to frighten that old party."

"I've got it," I said.

"Got what?"

"An idea. It'll want a little pluck to carry it out, but still it's feasible."

"Quick then, what is it?"



"You know the lumber room that leads from the stable-loft to the house?"

"Yes."

"And the back stairs that lead from the lumber room to the sitting room?"

"Every inch of them."

"Well, what more easy than to get into the lumber room—You and I know how to do that, old fellow, don't we?"

"I should think so," said he with a grin.

"And," I continued, "to creep down the stairs, open the door and show oneself. One peep will be enough for them I guess. The old fogies are sure to be alone, and if they are not, I can but come back again."

"Good, very good," said Jack enthusiastically.

And so it was proposed, seconded, and unanimously carried, that the plan should be put into operation that very night.

At nine o'clock, according to arrangement, I proceeded *in personâ diaboli* on the expedition.

Jack stood in the lane to hold the top-coat with which I had covered my satanity while going through the village. I was not long in reaching the lumber room; this feat I accomplished easily enough; but the difficulty was to find my way in the dark to the top of the stairs.

I am not naturally timid, but that night I seemed to feel a shivery sensation as I crept through the blackness, perhaps occasioned by the strange stories I had heard about the inhabitants of the place. Once I paused determining to give up the adventure, when to my horror I heard a wild, unearthly shriek, so piercing, so agonizing, that my heart stopped beating and I was frozen to the spot with terror.

All round me was black as a plague of Egypt, and you know well what cowards darkness makes of us. Then in an utterance broken with sobs came a pitiful, wailing, woman's voice, imploring forgiveness and pardon. The tone was so plaintive, so despairing, and yet so sweet, that the words entranced me. It was an agonized appeal, and was succeeded by a heavy fall.

There was murder being done. I could hear the scuffling of feet, the dragging of a heavy body, and then came the fierce, stern voice of a man, "Traitor, you shall die!"

"Die," cried the sweet voice "Oh, my father, not yet, not yet. So young, so unprepared, spare me, spare me."

Unable to endure it any longer I rushed to the stairs, crept cautiously down them, and with beating heart, gazing through a chink in the door, beheld a sight that chilled the very blood in my veins.

A young and beautiful woman lay upon the ground, grasping Garston's hand, who tried to throw her off. Her dishevelled hair fell loosely over her shoulders, and her face looked up with an expression of agony and terror I shall never to my dying day forget. He stood like a maniac over her, his eyes starting from their sockets in the wildness of his fury. In his right hand gleamed an open knife. One wild flourish and he plunged it into her breast.

I saw her fall, saw her eyes swimming in death as she rested one moment with her hands on the floor, and the next dropped lifeless at his feet.

My heart was bursting: I could not speak or move, I was stunned with with horror—I fainted.

When I came to myself I was sitting in front of a large fire: a stout old gentleman was pouring down my throat a stiff dose of brandy, while Garston, the murderer, was chafing my hands; and, could I believe my powers of vision! Miss Foster, the victim, was composedly doing up her back hair in front of the mirror.

"It's all right, he's coming round," said the stout one cheerily. "By jingo! but it was sublime, beat Leah into fits; it'll bring the house down. That scene would be a fortune in itself, but," he added, seeing I was conscious, "how the dickens came you there?"

"I d-do-do-n't know," I said, my teeth chattering so I could hardly speak.

After a time explanation followed. It turned out that Mr. Garston was an actor of no mean note, that he had discovered in his niece, Miss Foster, the germs of marvellous tragic talent, and that she might pursue her studies without interruption under his own experienced guiding, he had taken the White House, being moreover assured that as the house had the reputation of being haunted, it would be free from visitors at the times of these rehearsals.

The stout gentleman was the manager of one of the largest London Theatres, and had come on this especial night to form his judgment of the result of their labours.

The fright had not been all on my side; for hearing me fall on the stairs they had opened the door and found me—but Mr. Garston was too familiar with stage demons to be taken in, and justly guessing that I was some one come with the intention of frightening them, and that I had been myself frightened into a fit by their own handiwork, they dragged me into the room and acted the part of the good Samaritan.

I spent with them a very pleasant evening, having received permission to go and change the costume I wore for less diabolical garments, and to bring back with me Jack Charters, who had been waiting ingloriously in a drizzling rain, considerably astonished at my continued absence.

We are both going with passes to see the first performance of the piece, and if Miss Foster act one-half as well then as she did on that memorable night, she deserves to be styled the Queen of Tragedians.

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Massey was the next victim, but he was ready for the sacrifice.

Davy, however, insisted on an intermission for the brewing of a fresh bowl, and this being accomplished, the narrator related all the incidents and misfortunes of

## DR. WINSOM'S WOOING.



DR. WINSOM, M.D., was an eminently respectable man. His residence, a handsome modern mansion in a west-end square, was the perfection of respectability.

Respectability blazed in the shining brass plate on his hall door, it glowed in the deep red velvet of his dining-room curtains, it peeped modestly over the precise muslin blinds of the upper chambers, it resounded in the sonorous blows of his massive knocker, it pealed in the metallic tinkle of his area bell, it vivified itself in the demure propriety of his immaculate man-servant, it stared at you from the busts and pictures that adorned his walls, and awed you into a state of nervous admiration in the mahogany substantiality of the equipments of his consulting room.

But the double distilled essence of the intensity of respectability culminated in the person of the doctor himself. It pervaded his whole presence, from his cravat to his boots.

Medical opponents might sneer at his skill, question his nerve, or laugh at his pedantry, but they could as soon have robbed him of his shadow as of his respectability. It was his stock-in-trade, and he throve upon it. Canton might make the blind see, and Yearsley the deaf hear, but men of all ailments flocked to Winsom simply because he was such a respectable man.

"Pompous brute!" said Johnson.

"Ignorant as a pig!" said Robson.

"Knows literally nothing of even the elements of his profession!" said Dodson.

But the voices of Johnson, Robson, and Dodson were drowned by the calls of costermongers in the slums of Whitechapel; and Winsom lived and moved, and had his being in Belgravia.

Dr. Winsom confessed to one fault, he was short-sighted. It was a vulgar failing, but he rendered it exquisitely respectable by the supreme classicality of his gold-mounted spectacles. He had lived the two score and ten years of his life unblessed by much of the society of ladies, and he was peculiarly reserved and retired in their presence; but as only vulgar people are confident and assuming, this was a failing rather in his favour.

He had several admirers; maiden ladies of uncertain ages, who came to receive his alimentary admonitions, and expressed their vehement anxiety as to the accurate carrying out of his prescriptions by repeated visits to his sanctum.

One young lady of fifty peculiarly distinguished herself by the warmth of her fossilized affections. Miss Euphemia Dodd had long set her cap at the doctor. For years she had hunted him down, but although he would pocket all the superfluous guineas the ancient maiden could spare from her attenuated resources, not one word of love came from his recalcitrant lips.

By every art in her power she tried to fire the spark of Hymen in the doctor's bosom, and the only consolation she attained was the fact that

"—No other fairer rival  
Gained the dowry of his love."

And yet Cupid shot a straight shaft at last right into the centre of the doctor's unsusceptible heart.

To Acacia cottage, the dwelling place of the chaste Euphemia, came on a brief visit a niece of that lady, one Lucy Dodd. She was a fair haired girl of two and twenty, full of animation, vivacity and coquetry. Like Imperial Cæsar, she came, and saw, and conquered. At the first interview the doctor admired her, at the second liked her, and at the third adored her.

It was amusing to see how the aged spinster copied her youthful relation in dress, in manners, and coiffure; and to hear her relate the fable of some personal friend having taken them for sisters, was refreshing in the extreme.

Lucy's sojourn was to be short, and the doctor felt that he must make hay whilst the sun shone.

The natural respectability of his disposition developed itself even in his love-making. He did not come empty-handed to the shrine of his devotions, but brought his offering of jewels and of gold—a pair of bracelets—and he determined to seize the occasion of presenting them as a fit opportunity for the momentous proposal.

The day arrived. With less respectability of demeanour than the doctor had evinced in any action for years, he hastily got into his brougham, and bade the coachman drive to the habitation of his charmer.

The wheels of the carriage had almost rolled him to his destination, when, with a sudden start, he felt in his pockets, in his cushion bag, burst into a most plebeian perspiration, and muttered:

"Heavens!" I've forgotten my spectacles. "What shall I do? Drive back and fetch them?"

Alas, he had judiciously timed his arrival when he knew, cunning man, that the aunt would be absent from home at a Dorcas Meeting, of which she was a distinguished member, and upon reflection, too, he thought that the accident was a fortunate one, the absence of his glasses would make him look younger, so he resolved to go at once to his fate.

"Are the ladies at home?" he blandly enquired of the domestic. "Miss Dodd is out, sir, but Miss Lucy is in the drawing-room."

Glorious opportunity! The very hour, too, seemed to favour his mission, for it was dusk; and to his delight he found the lamps unlit, and the object of his devotion enjoying a quiet musing in the twilight.

Hurried out of propriety by the nervousness of his emotion, like all bashful men, he plunged at once without preface, *in mediis res*.

"My dear young lady, do not move I beseech you. I am really most delighted to find you alone. I have come in fact with that hope."

The lady begged him to be seated.

"Will you do me the honour—I may say, give me the unbounded

happiness of receiving this little present—these tiny bracelets, that——” said the doctor, taking her unresisting hand, and clasping them on her wrists. “shall have the happiness of—of—”

The lady gave a sigh.

“Oh, thank you, thank you, Dr. Winsom!”

“Adorable creature!” cried the stricken one, falling on one knee before the lady, “from the moment that I saw you I was struck by your beauty and grace. I worship you, I adore you. I know I am old!”

“No, no, no!” faintly cried the lady, as she grasped both his hands in hers.

“May I hope? Will you return my affections? Will you be my wife?”

“Yes! yes! yes!” with an eagerness that electrified the doctor with joy.

“Oh, how happy you have made me; but we have one difficulty, my dearest child——”

“None whatever,” sighed the maiden, “I am my own mistress.”

“Yes, but your aunt?”

The lady started wildly and clasped his hand tighter.

“Do not be alarmed,” continued the doctor, “I shall go to the old lady and say boldly, ‘I want your niece to be my wife. I must, can, and will marry Miss Lucy.’”

“Lucy!” shrieked the damsel.

“Lucy, then, be it,” cried the enraptured suitor, “dearest Lucy, I—— Why, mercy! what’s the matter? she’s fainted.”

Too true. The lady fell back upon the sofa apparently lifeless, while the doctor, frightened half out of his wits, rushed to a side table, seized a bottle of Eau-de-cologne, that opportunely stood there, and saturating his handkerchief with it bathed her temples.

What a position for him to be caught in if any one came into the room! Each instant, too, expecting Miss Euphemia’s return, he was paralyzed with apprehension.

She came to herself again at last, and faintly desired him to let her retire to her chamber.

“Merely a little hysteria, my darling,” he muttered, and led her tenderly to the door, not half sorry to be rid of the dilemma. Then hastily wiping the perspiration from his brow, he rushed to his carriage.

Having a patient’s house to call at on his way home, where he expected to be delayed, he dismissed his brougham, and resolved to walk the rest of the way home.

On knocking at the door, to his surprise the servant began to titter.

“How is your master?”

“He-he-he,” laughed the man, “he’s better,” then unable to conceal his merriment any longer, he burst into a smothered roar.

Utterly indignant, the doctor turned on his heel and left the house, intending to write a protest to the fellow’s master.

As he went along, to his amazement, the passers-by stared at him and laughed; every person had a grin on his face as he strode along the street;

at last, unable to endure it any longer, he turned angrily on a labourer who was more demonstratively cacchinatory than the rest, "What are you grinning at, fellow?"

"Whoy, you be so black!"

"Black!" said the doctor, "who the dickens would look anything else, annoyed as I am by a parcel of fools?"

But the crisis of his astonishment came when his own dignified man-servant, who rarely even smiled, burst into a vulgar guffaw the moment he saw him.

Running to his dining-room mirror he found to his horror that his face was black—black as that of the Moor of Venice. Merciful Providence, what did it mean?

Rushing to his lavatory he scrubbed with soap and water his offending features, but *miserabile visu*, his efforts were useless.

More soap more hot water, scalding water; alas, all in vain, *he was dyed as black as a negro*.

Then in a paroxysm of the most undignified trepidation he sat down in a chair to think.

Suddenly he started up.

"That accursed harridan! I see it all. The old fool has a camera and takes portraits; she has emptied a bath of nitrate of silver into that Eau-de-cologne bottle, and by all that's sacred, I've deluged Lucy with it!"

Sending for some solution of cyanide of potassium and other chemicals, he managed to change the colour of his countenance into a dirty yellow, and awaited further amendment from the hand of time.

Securing immediately the services of a brother physician to attend upon his most pressing patients, he took to his bed, and ordered no interruption.

On the next day a card was brought up to his bedside, and he was told that a lady desired to see him, who would take no refusal.

It was Lucy.

Hastily dressing, with beating heart, he hurried down stairs.

She was there, closely veiled, alas, he knew the cause, and opposite to her sat a young gentleman of five and twenty, with a supercilious grin upon his features.

"Miss Lucy," stammered the doctor, turning his back upon the young man, and trying to address his lady-love confidentially, "has your complexion suffered much?"

"Mine? Certainly not, Dr. Winsom."

"Thank goodness."

"But, Sir," said the young lady severely, "when on Tuesday last, I returned from the Dorcas Meeting whither I had been in Aunt Euphemia's place, I found her in an almost fainting condition, with her face as black as ink."

"And," cried the young gentleman, starting angrily from his seat, and continuing the story, "she says that you presented her with some jewels, which she will keep as evidences of your perfidy, proposed to marry her, and upon her refusing, dashed some terrible drug in her face that has occasioned this disfigurement."

"Are you mad?" groaned the miserable doctor.

"Now, Sir, as I am about to be immediately allied in marriage to Miss Lucy here, and shall so become a connection of the lady you have so grossly ill-used, I take it upon myself to offer this unprotected woman my assistance to shield her from your brutality. and as such is the case I warn you to take care of yourself."

"He ought to be severely punished," said Luey, who forthwith sank in the Doctor's estimation from summer heat to zero.

"He shall be!" cried the gentleman, "a magistrate's summons shall be immediately issued against him."

Saying which and offering his arm to the lady, he led her from the room, and banged the door to with an explosion like the discharge of a park of artillery.

Poor Dr. Winsom? He feels that the brightness of his respectability is dimmed for ever. At every knock that comes to the door his heart beats, every policeman he meets he thinks is looking suspiciously at him, and he goes about in a daily dread of exposure.

But up to this period he has received no notice of an action, nor the return of his rubies, but he has been much cheered by a report that has just reached his ears, that Miss Euphemia Dodd is going to bless with her heart and hand a Baptist missionary lately returned from a ten years' residence in Africa, and of strange, ancient-maidism proclivities.

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Frank Barrington was the only one who hesitated to begin a story, but at last he overcame his innate modesty and said "My life has been eventful enough but at the moment I can think of nothing more interesting than an incident of my boyhood which I shall entitle

## THE SHADOW.

**A**T the age of fifteen I left the grammar school of my native village to take my place at the desk of a distant relation of our vicar, one Arthur Grindley, who traded in a dingy, slippery, bye-street of the City of London, under the style and title of Grindley and Co., Accountants. It was very little accountancy that I saw carried on during the two years that I was there, for the truth is that "old Grab," as we called him, was neither more nor less than a bill discounter and money lender. I say as we called him, and by we I mean Mr. Archibald Hare, Sneaking Jemmy, and myself.

Mr. Archibald Hare was old Grab's chief clerk and cashier, and was about the last man you would have expected to find occupying such a place. He was young, handsome, genial, and open-handed, and but ill-adapted by nature for the unclean ways of usury, but, as Fate had driven him into such muddy paths, he trod over the mire as gingerly as he could, and contaminated himself as little as possible whilst diligently doing his master's bidding.



Sneaking Jemmy, or Samson Ogden, as he signed his name in decrepit, rheumatic letters, for his hand-writing was cramped and twisted as his own evil disposition, was old Grab's general information-hunter. When any unlucky individual came to our place to borrow money, we always charged him a substantial fee for "enquiries," and these were conducted, for the modest consideration of twenty-five shillings weekly, by Mr. Samson Ogden. He was eminently adapted for his occupation. A meek, little insignificant, stooping, shabby-genteel figure covered a spirit as full of wiles and subtleties as a serpent's. He had a retentive memory, and to aid this he locked in the recesses of a fat dropsical old pocket-book the secrets of a hundred houses. He could tell you how Jones, the rich tea dealer, just before his daughter married a baronet, was driven to realize his superfluous plate and jewels, how the Reverend Theodore Chantwell, the popular west-end preacher, did little bills at forty per cent. per quarter, and how Lord Scattergold, the privy councillor, borrowed two hundred pounds from his butler to keep the bailiffs from his door. He could tell you all this, and more, but he wouldn't, for, true to his calling, he was preternaturally unpumpable.

Now for a few words about old Grab himself, and then I will go on with my story. If you had met Mr. Arthur Grindley in society you would have ejaculated, "What a remarkably benevolent man that must be!" His face wore the aspect of a patriarch, and, like Massey's friend Doctor Winsom, in every movement of his body respectability glowed and gleamed; from his gold eye-glass to his unerumpled cravat he was one personification of benevolence. If a client came to him to complain of cruel brutality, cold-blooded rapacity, and actual legal robbery under the cloak of "Bill of sale" or "deed of rights," he would wash his hands in invisible soap and water, gently utter a few words of sympathy, and oilily insinuate into the mind of the victim an absolute reverence for his persecutor; for, you must know, Mr. Grindley was far too sensible a man to carry on at our office any of the work of collecting the moneys lent in different quarters. This was always done by a low firm of solicitors who refused no act of meanness at his bidding. None of us knew where he lived, or how he lived—there had been various canards afloat, that he had been seen to enter a gorgeous carriage in the Poultry, which carried him home to a palatial mansion at Brompton, that he changed his clothes every night at a coffee shop, and putting on mean habiliments, crept to a miserable attic in Leicester Square, and that he was positively known to spend his spare evenings in sitting to a great painter as a model of biblical patriarchs.

When not at the office in Old Broad Street, I lived with Mr. Hare in a neat little house at Peckham, my friends paying a trifle for my board, but not half enough to compensate him and his dear little wife for the comforts they provided me with. He and Roselyn Grey had been married about eighteen months, and a better looking couple it would be hard to find in a day's march. One little chubby, good tempered baby blessed their union, and was, of course, the idol of its doting parents.

But all of a sudden, when it exactly began I do not know, Hare became



subdued and thoughtful—even irritable at times, and more than once a tear was in Roselyn's eye at a harsh word, to which she had been heretofore unaccustomed. To all her enquiries from me as to whether anything was worrying "Arochie" at the office I could but answer that I knew of nothing, neither was I able to deny that I saw the change as well as herself.

Sometimes when there was an especial press of business, Hare and I were kept in the City until a late hour in the evening, not that my services were absolutely required, but I really stayed to accompany him on his way home. Letter after letter he had to answer, column after column of figures he had to justify, and bill after bill he had to enter in the bulky ledgers, that were so heavy with their records of human miseries that I could hardly lift them. I often used to speculate in my own small mind, what a blessing it would be to humanity if No. 57, Old Broad Street were burnt to the ground, and these volumes of iniquity destroyed. Our offices consisted of four large rooms, two on each side of an entering passage. The left-hand ones were occupied by old Grab, and the right hand ones by Mr. Hare and myself: the outer of the two being the clerks' room, and the inner one being devoted to the use of clients as a waiting chamber.

One afternoon old Grab, who usually left at five o'clock, come into our room with a large roll of papers in his hands.

"Mr. Hare," he said in his oiliest accent, "I am sorry to keep you, but I must get you to attend to these little matters before you go."

"With pleasure, Sir," Hare replied cheerfully.

"I have jotted down a list of notices you will kindly pen. This account of Bell's must be closed—Putney cannot have the loan without further security—Greatorex must take the consequences of his own imprudence, tell him I can do nothing for him—Moore must pay or sell at once—and Sir John Gore may count upon my immediate attention to his request."

He then blandly bade us "Good night," and withdrew; but he came back in a moment and said, as if it had been a matter of second thought, "And, Mr. Hare, you may as well enclose Mr. Gregory these three five-pound notes he sent this morning, and tell him that nothing shall induce me to renew his bill, which you may also post on to Smirke with orders to sue at once—without a moment's delay."

Hare, who had listened mechanically, started at this, and turning on his stool confronted his master.

"Sir, excuse me making the remark, but I do most earnestly beg you to think twice over the step you are taking. When I went at your bidding the other day to Mr. Gregory's house, I saw his young wife, and—and," he seemed ashamed of his weakness, "it will break up his home—ruin him. They have one little child, and they seemed so like myself and my wife and little one that—"

"You grew sentimental."

He heeded not the sneer. "Moreover, Mr. Gregory," he continued, "has been grossly misled—swindled I may say—by an old school-fellow, a young man of fortune who has gambled away his means and dragged his friend into the mire with him."

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"Really, Mr. Hare," said Grindley, "I must beg you, as I have had occasion to do before, to obey my instructions without commenting upon my right to give them—" then, as if waiving all further disputation, "Good night—good night, be careful with the gas," and he was gone.

Hare sat sullenly for a few moments, then unlocked a desk and took out Gregory's promissory note, over which he pondered for some time before he took his pen to write.

It was a habit of mine to retire into the waiting room, put out the gas, and have a nap on a particularly soft couch that adorned the apartment, and this evening I was very tired, for we had had several late nights in succession, and the scratch, scratch, scratch of Hare's pen was a potent lullaby, and I fell asleep. How long I slept I do not know: but suddenly I woke up for moment, forgetting where I was. From the door-way of the other room there was a broad ray of light across the floor, and half-way up the opposite wall; and for an instant *there passed across this the shadow of a man*. So strongly did the prof'c come out, that I could see the very guise it wore; it looked like the figure of a crouching man, with one curious curl on the top of his head,—a sticking up piece of hair, that at school we used to call a top-knot, and a long straggling imperial on the chin, and in his hand he carried a cane, with a large ring at the top. Before I could recover my senses it was gone, and rubbing my eyes, I ran into the other room, but there, at the side-desk, sat Hare, with his back to me, hard at work as ever, and scratch, scratch, scratching with his inevitable pen.

I was so fully convinced that what I had seen was a mere reflex of my dream, that I thought no more of it until long afterwards, when the remembrance of it gave me cause for vexation, that I had not paid sufficient attention to it at the time. It was eleven o'clock, and Hare said, "Harry, I am dead-beat, I cannot do any more to-night, put away those papers, and let us go home. I am quite done up, for I have twice found myself nodding over my work, and once I believe I fairly went to sleep. Heigho! Rosey will be tired of waiting for us."

He looked pale and haggard, and this was the first time I had ever known him to leave his work undone, but of course it was only my duty to do as I was bid.

That night, just as I had dropped off to sleep, I was awakened by Hare, who was standing at the side of my bed, looking very haggard and restless.

"Mr. Barrington," he said, "I am sorry to disturb you, but do you remember putting away Gregory's bill, for I cannot recollect seeing what became of it when we left the office?"

I rubbed my eyes, for I was only half awake, and tried to collect my thoughts.

"No," I said, "I know nothing about it. I never saw it after Mr. Grindley gave it to you."

"Then I suppose I must have put it away with the other papers, but I am not half satisfied. Good night."

Not half satisfied about it! no, that I was sure he was not, for he went away looking very dejected and care-worn.

On the next morning we were at the office fully an hour before opening time, and searched in every hole and corner for the missing bill, but all in vain, for it was nowhere to be found. Poor Hare was almost distracted. "I would not have had this happen for a thousand pounds. Mr. Grindley has again and again accused me of more interest in Gregory than mere sympathy instigated, and now I do not know what he will think."

He very soon did know what Mr. Grindley thought, for the two were closeted together in the inner sanctum, and I heard old Grab's voice speaking in a tone of bitter indignation, and Hare's in earnest remonstrance. Presently the door opened, and Hare came out with his face flushed with shame, whilst Grindley stood majestically on the threshold, and, like some patriarch of a transpontine theatre, declaimed,

"Go, ungrateful and miserable robber, but be assured that your ill gotten gain will do you no good, for the money that Gregory gives you will be a poor recompense for the loss of place and character. Go, but remember you go not punishmentless, for I will make honest men point their finger on you and call you THIEF, and I will follow you up to the very end."

To my surprise Hare answered nothing, he seemed dazed and horror-stricken, then collecting his little properties that lay about the office, he left without even a word to me, and I was too much affected to break in upon his trouble, even though it was to assure him of my belief in his innocence.

In a few minutes Old Grab called me into his room, and after a long diatribe against the immorality, ingratitude, and dishonesty of Hare, informed me that I was of course to be no longer an inmate of his house, but that other quarters would be prepared for me, and that I was from that time forth to drop all acquaintance with the Hares. To this I manfully replied,

"Mr. Hare never stole your bill, and I will sooner go home than obey you. I shall not give up his acquaintance until I know that he is a thief."

Mr. Grindley seemed vexed at my obstinacy, but muttering something about "the rash confidence of youth," evinced, to my surprise, no external anger.

I did not give up the acquaintance of the Hares, although my new whereabouts was at the other side of London. I was greatly pained at the sufferings they had to endure, for month after month dragged them into deeper difficulties. Baffled on all sides Hare could obtain no employment, and having first sold every available article of luxury, he at last disposed of his furniture, took his wife and little one into lodgings, and so step by step I watched with intense chagrin their progressive decay. Few could recognize in the seedy, shabby, broken down unfortunate, the light-hearted Archie Hare, who but a few months ago was in the prime of youth and buoyancy of spirit; Rose, too, sank into a haggard shadow of her former self, but, by her faint attempts to be cheerful, kept up her husband's courage.

Meanwhile a year had elapsed, and Christmas was again approaching. One morning to my surprise, Rose, so careworn and different from her former self, came into the office and desired to speak to Grindley. "I am going," she said, "to plead for Archie; he can get no work to do so long as Mr.

Grindley refuses him a character. Let the place be ever so menial, I will implore him to give him a chance of living."

I ushered her into the room without giving notice, contrary to all rule, for I was afraid he would refuse to see her. Rooted to the spot I did not offer to leave them. Rose made a passionate appeal to the hard-hearted old man in the name of her ruined husband, of her helpless babe, and her own bitter sorrow, nay, she even went down on her knees to the flinty hearted old money lender, but he sternly refused her prayer, so she went away more heart-broken than ever, and the last words he said to her were, "if he were my own son, and had done such a deed, I would let him die in a ditch before I would stretch out my hand to save him."

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I had for a long time encouraged in my own mind a desire to see more into the private life of my employer, and at last I made up my determination to follow him home from the office. It was quite an adventure: for there was such an air of mystery attachable to him that I was prepared for no little discovery, though hardly for so important a one as I was about to make.

So, in accordance with my intentions, I followed him one evening, keeping close after him all the way home. That home was a very pretty suburban mansion at Highgate, and as he got down from the omnibus a beautiful young lady of seventeen, one of the sweetest girls I ever saw in my life, came half way down the gravelled walk to meet him. There was something so angel-like in her beauty, that I stood at the gate watching them into the house, regardless of being seen, but they were too engrossed in their meeting to notice my presence.

It was as though I had seen a vision of Paradise, I was chained to the spot, and bound by some strange fascination. It was not that I had any chance of seeing her again that I waited, but I found a satisfaction in watching her shadow on the drawing room window blind as she occasionally flitted to and fro.

At last she came and stood close to the window, and was immediately joined by another—but that other shadow! the sight of it sent through me a thrill of amazement and wonder; *it was the shadow of the man that I had seen on the night that Gregory's bill was lost.* Of this I was convinced, for ambiguous and fleeting as shadows are, there was about this one unmistakable evidence. I do not for one moment mean to assert that I could recognize a person from seeing his shadow even under the most pronounced circumstances, but I felt sure that the shadow I was looking then at and the shadow I had seen in Old Broad Street were made by one and the same figure.

Hastily making up my mind to a course of action, and goaded on by the remembrance of all the wrongs my friends the Hares had suffered, I boldly rang at the garden gate and asked to be shown into the presence of Mr. Grindley. Whilst I was speaking to the servant the young lady I have told you of crossed the hall, and hesitated for a moment to ask in a petulant tone of voice, which showed how much her will was law in the place, what was the matter. Something within me seemed to whisper to me that it was better that I should speak to her than to old Grab, so stepping

boldly inside I said, "I have a matter of the deepest importance to communicate to Mr. Grindley, but perhaps it would be as well that you should bear my message, if you will kindly do so, as I should not like to intrude upon him disagreeable news without preparation."

She bowed me into an adjoining room with the most condescending wave of her hand, and closing the door awaited my announcement.

In a few hurried but expressive words, for the deep interest I felt in the matter lent me an eloquence that surprised me, I laid before her all the injustice that my injured friend had received, and by the earnestness of my manner made her a convert to the opinion that the realities of the two shadows were one and the same person.

"Let us not be hasty," she said, "for it is his son—my kind, good uncle's only son, whom he idolizes, but who, I have strong reason to believe, is utterly unworthy of his affection."

Almost while she spoke the door opened, and there entered Mr. Grindley, followed by a young, handsome, dissipated looking man, who glanced at me with supercilious impertinence. Not so Mr. Grindley. He turned upon me a vexed and anxious face, and said sharply, "Well, Sir, what do you want?"

Before I could answer, the young lady spoke.

"Uncle," she said, "this gentleman has come to communicate to you a great discovery. He has found out,——" here she turned fully round and faced the younger gentleman—"the person who purloined from your office a bill, for the loss of which your late clerk has been unjustly reduced to want and misery."

"God bless me," said the old gentleman, visibly affected, "what do you mean?"

"I mean," I said decisively, "that Mr. Hare is perfectly innocent of all the charges you have brought against him; and that he is innocent, that gentleman there, your own son, will, I am sure, give his testimony."

For the moment I was frightened at the effect of my words. The colour fled from his cheeks and lips, and he gasped in a vain effort to speak.

Guilt was written on his brow as clear as murder was on Cain's. This evident self-acknowledgment of complicity led me to a bolder accusation.

"There, Mr. Grindley, stands the man who can tell about Mr. Gregory's bill. And he knows well what I am saying when I remind him that I was in the office when he possessed himself of it."

"Did-you-you-you take it?" stammered the old man, appealing to his son. A look of abject humiliation was all the answer he received; but that was enough to convince him of the truth of my statement.

"It is too dreadful," sighed the father, "I can bear no further explanation now; leave me, and do you give me, my son, a written statement of it all. If there is one loop-hole of mercy you shall have the benefit of it, but you have broken my heart—for from what I have heard of your actions elsewhere I feel that there is little hope for any vindication."

His manner was painful and subdued, and I felt heartily sorry for him.

"You, Mr. Barrington, had better return home, and to-morrow I will communicate further with you."

MS. A. 1. 1. 1. 1. 1.

On the morrow I was at the office betimes, and waited anxiously for the coming of my employer. But I waited in vain. At last, to my surprise, I heard the *frou-frou* of a lady's dress on the stairs, and the next moment Mr. Grindley's niece stood before me.

"First of all," she said, "before I offer a word of explanation, take me to Mrs. Gregory, for every moment that that cruel wrong remains unredressed is an additional sin."

We found the Gregorys in great trouble, and considerably surprised at our arrival. But after a good cry on the part of both the ladies, who from that moment for long afterwards became good fast friends, and much reciprocity of joy between Hare and myself, an explanation followed. It appeared that Albert Grindley had got into debt and difficulty, and, among his other liabilities, had induced Mr. Gregory to lend him money. This gentleman afterwards became himself embarrassed, and in the course of time got into the hands of Grindley *père*, who threatened him with the immediate execution of the law. In his dilemma Gregory insisted on the younger Grindley returning the bills or enduring immediate exposure. Albert Grindley, distracted with the crisis of his position, determined to communicate with Mr. Hare, and for that purpose visited our office. On entering he found Mr. Hare asleep, and the much dreaded bill lying unheeded at his elbow. The temptation proved too great for him. He stealthily seized the bill and hurried with it to Gregory, who was quite ignorant of the means by which he had acquired possession of it.

And after all, what a silver lining there came to the dark cloud that lowered over the fortunes of the Gregorys! That day before Christmas day was the turning period of their fortunes. Just retribution was done by Mr. Grindley, who not only gave them temporary help, but stayed not until he had laid the foundation of their fortunes. Albert Grindley emigrated and did well in the colonies, for the fellow had some good in him after all, and the fair niece with the golden locks is a portly dame with a husband of aldermanic proclivities, who bids fair one day or other to become Lord Mayor of London, but I will warrant that not one forgets the joys and the sorrows, the relief and the disappointment that were born of that momentary, visionless, vague and fleeting glimpse I got of *THE SHADOW*.

"Come, Davy, it's your turn, so fire away," said Barrington.

"I can no tale unfold," cried the little man striking a tragic attitude.

"You must—you must!"

Now the punch had wrought its work upon Davy; his eyes twinkled with unwonted excitement, and his face was flushed and hair ruffled, or to put it in plain terms, he was slightly incensed.

"I cannot tell a tale, but I'll sing a song."

"Bravo!"

"You must all join chorus. I composed it myself, so never mind blunders."

Thus saying, he flourished his meerschaum and began, with a good deal of energetic action, to sing to the rollicking tune of 'The Men of merrie England,'

## THE MEERSCHAUM.

The sailor may boast of his free-going bark,  
 The soldier his colours may prize,  
 The poet may sing of the heaven wing'd lark,  
 And the lover of Annie's bright eyes ;  
 The schoolman may gladden his life with his books,  
 The statesman ambition desire,  
 The maiden may dream of her darling's good looks,  
 And the matron of costly attire.

But give me the Meerschaum—the bonnie brown bowl—  
 With its ruddy cheeks, glowing and ripe ;  
 And I'll sing, as the smoke-clouds up heavenwards roll,  
 Of the glorious joys of a pipe !  
 A pipe, boys, a pipe

Like Venus, she sprang from the froth of the sea,  
 Pure and white as your lady-love's hand ;  
 And they sought the rich amber her husband to be,  
 And they bound them both fast with a band  
 Of glowing white silver, a wedding ring there,  
 That clasps the bright tapering stems,  
 He, all golden clouded—she, dainty and fair,  
 Like a queen from the kingdom of gems.

Then give me the Meerschaum—the bonnie brown bowl—  
 With its ruddy cheeks, glowing and ripe,  
 And I'll sing as the smoke-clouds up heavenwards roll,  
 Of the glorious joys of a pipe !  
 A pipe, boys, a pipe !

Should your lover prove false, should your friend prove a foe,  
 And your fortune a castle in Spain,  
 Should your heart be crushed down by its burden of woe,  
 And your mind be distracted with pain,  
 Why, light up your pipe, boys, bid sorrow good-bye,  
 See the smoke to the ceiling up-curl,  
 And you'll find, as you follow the wreaths with your eye,  
 The dark clouds of your sorrows unfurl.

Then give me the Meerschaum—the bonnie brown bowl—  
 With its ruddy cheeks, glowing and ripe,  
 And I'll sing as the smoke-clouds up heavenwards roll,  
 Of the glorious joys of a pipe !  
 A pipe, boys, a pipe !

We were all flourishing our favourites, and roaring out the chorus with a spirit inspired by the punch and Davy's energetic example, when the



door opened, and in walked the Gorgon, followed by Mrs. Douglas, while Mr. Archibald Shuffles brought up the rear.

We were too much astonished at the apparition even to rise from our seats, but were more surprised to see the nonchalance with which Davy accepted the *denouement*.

He stood with his back to the fire, stuck his pipe in his mouth and his thumbs in the arms of his waistcoat, and smiled blandly at the incomers.

Mrs. Bleakiron was the first to break silence. "My dear," she said to her daughter, "I am afraid we are intruding. This dreadful atmosphere will kill you. Oh, dear—cough, cough, cough!"

"Shuffles," said Davy patronizingly, "pat her on her back."

Shuffles! had a bomb-shell exploded, it could not have caused greater consternation. He, the pet essence of divinity of a whole paradise of ladies, to be called Shuffles!

This was more than Juliana could hear, and springing to the front, she launched forth.

"David, how dare you? What does this all mean. My friend insulted—my house—mamma don't cry—turned into a pot-house, and—boo-hoo-hoo—" she buried her face in her pocket-handkerchief.

"Never mind me, Mrs. Douglas," said Mr. Shuffles, with an air of sweet resignation, "If my opinion is asked, I must candidly say that I am grieved to find Mr. Douglas in such a position; but these little crosses——"

"Shuffles, don't be a fool," said Davy, "Have a glass of punch like a man, and leave Juliana alone; you've got quite enough to attend to at home, without spooning about with other men's wives."

"Really, Mr. Douglas!" began the victim indignantly.

"And really, Mr. Shuffles," sneered Davy "I must speak plainly to you, I don't like your visits here. What am I to think when I come home day after day and find you at my house? Your attention, Sir, must either be devoted to my wife, or my mother-in-law."

"Oh, the base wretch!" shrieked Mrs. Bleakiron.

"And in either case they are discreditable."

"It's a slander. Your words are actionable."

"Bring an action, bring forty of them, bring the whole Court of the Common Pleas. Here, I take these gentlemen to witness. My wife and her precious mother pretend to go to Brighton——"

"We missed the train, and went to spend the evening with Mrs. Shuffles," shrieked the Gorgon.

"And," continued Davy, "at twelve o'clock at night turn up with you. It's very suspicious, sir,—very suspicious."

"Good gracious!" ejaculated the old gentleman, utterly aghast at the absurdity of the accusation.

"Leave my house, Sir," cried Davy, "and never set foot in it again."

Livid with fear or rage the abashed Mr. Shuffles, without even a word of adieu to the ladies, took his departure.

"I will go too," sobbed Mrs. Bleakiron, "My poor, poor child, what have you come to?"

"I will go with you, mamma. Oh the cruel wretch!"

"Go!" cried Davy, "go, if you like, but, if you do, you'll never come back again. If you put your foot outside my door, I'll sell everything in the house to-morrow, and, by Jove, I'll—I'll—go off to America."

"He'll break my heart!"

"He'll do no such thing," said Davy. "If you'll only act like a reasonable woman, he'll make you a good husband."

"You do not love me!"

"Not a bit," interrupted Mrs. Bleakiron. "Oh that I should have nestled such a viper!"

"I do," said David firmly, "but I have made up my mind to one thing. I'll be master of my own house, and I begin my authority by ordering a cab for Mrs. Bleakiron." He rang the bell as he spoke.

That infuriated lady rushed out of the room, followed by her daughter, and in a few moments, by the violent banging of doors, we knew that she had left the house.

We did not long delay our departure, and, although we were glad to see Davy make a stand for his rights, we were all grieved at the unpleasant nature of the explosion, and we trembled for our poor little friend's personal safety, for Juliana in a temper was no joke.

But our sympathy was all wasted, for I met the little man a few days afterwards, and he assured me that the effects of the eruption had been wonderful; his wife was a changed woman: and for the first time in her life she respected her husband. Woman is a paradox. As long as Davy bent to her will, and bowed on every possible occasion to her opinion, she treated him with an indifference bordering on contempt. The moment he turned round upon her, and showed his authority, she began to admit his position as her husband.

Weaned from the prejudicial influence of her mother—who entirely broke off what little communication existed between them by marrying a decayed curate, who, having vegetated on sixty pounds a year for a quarter of a century, and thinking that her jointure would be a pleasant addition to his income, had taken his prize to an out-of-the-way village in Northumberland—Mrs. Douglas' union improved rapidly.

In fact, I may say that she is one of the pleasantest, cheeriest women of my acquaintance. Many a snug little supper we have at her house.

Davy to this day wonders however he found courage to take the bull by the horns, and vows that he never dared have done it had it not been for **THAT BOWL OF PUNCH.**



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